



# 36 hours in Bali

Richard Moore is spoiled for choice in Indonesia's island playground

**8.30pm Saturday** After the Schapelle Corby case I'm a little nervous going through Customs at Denpasar's Ngurah Rai International Airport. But the officer doesn't give my bag a second glance. He does, however, notice that I have three bottles of duty-free wine. The limit is one litre of any alcohol. The extra bottles will be confiscated unless I pay a 100,000 rupiah 'fine' (about \$20). It's a small amount to fork out when even the cheapest plonk here can cost as much as French champagne at home.

**9.30pm** Arrive at the villa we've rented in the fashionable Seminyak area, just two villages up the beach from the package holiday hotspot of Kuta but worlds apart in style. Serene Garden Villa is moored in a sea of rice paddies. Its simple white walls and contemporary neutral-toned furniture set off the Balinese paintings and sculpture and traditional *alang-alang* (thatched) roofing to perfection.

Before heading out to sample the local nightlife I grab a quick shower and discover a pleasant surprise that my en suite is open to the sky. It's like washing in a tropical rain shower.

**11pm** Bali's nightlife starts late and continues through until morning. Spy

Bar on Jalan Dyana Pura is a good place to start. The crowd is a mix of locals, Jakarta residents escaping the big city, Aussies and Kiwis plus a healthy smattering of Eurotrash. They spill out on to the pavement sipping cocktails or clutching bottles of the local Bintang beer as the DJ plays sultry house music. Then it's as if a timer goes off and the crowd moves on to the next venue, DeJaVu, for more of the same. The bar is over the road from Legian Beach and I'm drawn outside by the roar of the surf and moonlight gleaming on the ocean. I decide I've had one too many margaritas and head home, forgoing the dancing till dawn and bungy-jumping into the pool at Double Six nightclub down the road.

**9am Sunday** The smell of freshly brewed coffee rouses me from the comfort of my Egyptian cotton sheets. The villa staff have set up breakfast by the swimming pool – a smoothie, toast and a tropical fruit platter. Daylight reveals the landscaped garden in all its verdant glory – brilliant flowers, gnarled frangipani trees and lots of dark green foliage. The row of sun loungers beckons but first there's

shopping to be done. After a quick dip we head into town.

**10am** In addition to Western-style shops selling designer clothing, jewellery and homewares at fixed prices, there are still many stalls on the main drag, Jalan Raya Seminyak, where the price depends on your bargaining abilities. Start by offering a third to two-thirds of the asking price, but remind yourself that you may be arguing over \$1. The Balinese believe an early sale brings good luck, though, so early birds like me really do get the worm. I filled my backpack with bracelets, belts, sarongs and other souvenirs at "morning price".

**12 noon** Traipsing up and down the street in over 30°C is hard work. We need to go back to the villa for a swim. Luckily it's never difficult to hail a cab – they hail you. "Transport?" is the catch-cry of every minivan, car and even motorcycle owner in Bali. They'll overcharge you outrageously if you don't know the going rate, and we even need to insist my taxi driver Wayan puts his meter on. The traffic is chaotic. I'm sure there are some road rules in Bali.

**1pm** Diving into the pool is like sliding between sheets of liquid silk. Suitably refreshed, we make our way to La Lucciola restaurant for lunch. Right on the beachfront, it serves Italian food under a cathedral-like *alang-alang* roof. The chicken salad and passionfruit and guava granitas are divine. A walk up Petitenget Beach sounds a good idea but in the heat we make only as far as Callego Massage and Warung, where we hire sun loungers and while away the afternoon. The soothing twang of a traditional gamelan orchestra on the radio floats above the pounding surf. After a few firm refusals the hawkers leave us alone and return to playing cards. The loungers, umbrella, drinks and snacks and a one-hour massage total less than \$20.

**6pm** Kuta, Legian and Seminyak enjoy Bali's most dazzling sunsets, so

we head back down the beach to ultra-chic Ku De Ta for a sunset cocktail. It's recently introduced a family programme on Sundays but the little ones are long gone as we sip on Sea Breezes and try to blend in with the beautiful people while the sun plunges into the Bali Strait in a blaze of orange glory. Instead of the mod-Oz megu and world music we opt for something quieter – cheap and cheerful pasta and pizza at Trattoria on the way home.

**8am Monday** I'm woken by what sounds suspiciously like an alarm clock but it turns out to be the onomatopoeic call of one of the island's many small lizards. I wander sleepily out to the garden, where a breeze softens the already hot sun on my shoulders. What will it be today? More shopping, a temple visit, a day trip to the craft village of Ubud, or simply more sun worshipping?



## NEED TO KNOW

**Garuda Indonesia's** flights from Auckland to Bali, via Brisbane, is the most direct route on offer. Phone (09) 366 1457, toll-free 0508 650 014, email [goaki@goh.co.nz](mailto:goaki@goh.co.nz), website [www.garudaindonesia.com](http://www.garudaindonesia.com).

**Renting villas** in Bali is the latest trend for smart holidaymakers. You'll find Serene Garden Villa and many more at [www.serenevilla.com](http://www.serenevilla.com).

**Lonely Planet's Bali** guidebook is one of the best available. For local recommendations on shopping, restaurants and nightlife, check out **The Beat** magazine online, [www.beatmag.com](http://www.beatmag.com).