

TRIP TO BALI

Bali is one of the most exotic islands in Indonesia or most probably in the world. The island reflected many mystical images which pictured in most of statues placed in the temples. Bali has extremely charming scenery, rice fields, volcanoes as the backdrop, rain forest and beauty of the sea.

Day 1 - 13 March 2005

We arrived Denpasar airport at 3.30 pm, welcomed by the big pouring rain and the first thing we need to do is finding place to stay for the night. Kuta is mostly the best choice to stay because it is close to the airport and has plenty of choices for budgeted and nice lodging places which are near to the beach. Finding the lodging is not really hard either, taxi driver should know where to drive you should you give the name of the hotel. We stayed at Suka Beach Inn at Poppies II street. Place is clean and simple which cost Rp. 80,000 per night with a hot shower but not including breakfast. After the rain finally stop, we walked down to the beach. It took around 5 minutes walk from the hotel to the beach. Kuta beach is famous with the cramped tourist either local or international and also cramped with the people who sells the souvenirs or people who offered you massage, hairdo and tattoo. During the low tourist season or non school holiday season, the place is not too bad and you have more space to swim but if in the peak season, it will be very hard just to find place for sun bathing.

Day 2 & 3 – 14 & 15 March 2005

The real trip begun! At 10 am, we got our car (manual Suzuki Jimny; Dewa Agus HP +62-818556357) which we rent for several days of our trip here in Bali. Rental price of a Jimny is mostly at a standard price of Rp. 100,000 per day. Soonest we check out from hotel, we drove our Jimny, passed the little and crowded road of Kuta and Legian. Driving in Indonesia mostly is not easy since in many places you have to race around with the crazy suicidal bus drivers, motorcyclists and pedestrians. Driving in Kuta and Legian was even worst – road mostly is one way, small and cramped. Our next destination is Tanah Lot and Bedugul.

Tanah Lot

Tanah Lot is famous with the sea side temple. Tanah means earth and Lot (lod) means South or sea. Thus the meaning is something like “temple of the earth in the sea”. Like so many other temples in Bali, Tanah Lot is connected with famous Brahman priest, named Danghyang Nirarta who wondered from Java to Bali in the 16th century. On one of his journey he decided to sleep in this beautiful spot and then afterwards the Balinese to erect a temple here. This is one of the six most holy temples for all of Bali.

We came when it was high tide with the big waves which hitting the side of the temple made magnificent photographs. When it is low tides you can walk down to the temple and around the temple which have several caves that you can visit and one of them is the snake cave. We didn't manage to do that at this trip but never the less, the big waves served wonderful views.

Bedugul (Candi Kuning)

We leaved Tanah Lot and droved the way up to the damp mountain countryside to Bedugul and Danau Baratan (Baratan lake). Along the way up, we passed by colorful market which sells strawberries and fruits and before reaching to the temple, we mistakenly stop at the place for water sport on the lake. Place for the water sport also provided small boat to take you crossed to the other side of the lake to Goa Jepang (Japanese cave). The boat also can take you to the Candi Kuning, further side of the lake which has beautiful temple. We decided to went back and droved our car to Candi Kuning instead of taking the boat.

Candi Kuning temple area is not too big but the temple and the scenery itself was very beautiful. Place was peaceful and cool. Too bad there were rain heavily again which made the place cloudier and we have to go.

We drove back down and find our way to Ubud. It was a very long drive from Bedugul to Ubud and we managed to reach there in the late afternoon.

Ubud

Ubud is well known as 'place of the artists'. You can find many paintings and handy craft along the way of Ubud. After driving a long way and exhausted, we tried to find lodging at the center of Ubud. Again, the road is a one way road and the moment you missed the place you have to do the same round again. We found a nice lodging placed name Dewi Accommodation. The place was cozy with the price of Rp. 45,000 including the banana pancake and big jar of hot tea as breakfast. Ubud was completely different from Kuta, especially in the low tourist season like this, the street, the bar and eating places were quite and cozy.

Monkey Forest

Monkey forest located in line with the hotels and shops, on the top end of the road. Admission fee is Rp. 10,000. It's inhabited by band of monkeys and there is a temple in this area called 'Pura Dalem Agung' (High temple of the dead).

Other Ubud Temples

We visited 3 temples in Ubud: Pura Samuan Tiga, Pura Pusering Jagat and Pura Penataran Sasih. Those 3 temples located around the city and didn't bring much good impression on the structure and the architecture compared to the temple at Tanah Lot and Bedugul. In the entrance, the keeper would ask you to fill in the guest book and indirectly asking you some money for the temple donation. They will indicate donation around Rp. 20,000 to Rp. 50,000 or higher as you pleased.

Trekking in Ubud

It is very pleasant to walk through the fields surrounding Ubud... At the confluence of Sungai wos and Sungai Cerik is Campuan. An obvious path passes the Ibah hotel and leads north along the ridge between the rivers and through rice field towards the Neka Museum and Bangkiang Sidem village.

Day 4 – 16 March 2005

Pura Besakih

Two days in Ubud was really good and relaxing surrounded by lot of paintings and handy crafts. But the journey must go on. From Ubud we drove up and down to Besakih Temple. You have to pay the admission and parking fee on the very front entrance of the complex. In the entrance near to the temple, we were stopped by the group of guide forcing us to take their guide for the price of USD 25. We declined to pay for that amount and managed to lower the price to Rp. 100,000. The practice of those guide association was really disappointing but in spite of the accident in front of the gate, the visit to this temple was entertaining. A 'sarong' must be wear inside the temple. You can be bought or rent 'sarong' at the entrance and tourists are not allowed to go inside the temple (praying place).

View from the top of the temple was beautiful especially on that day where the weather was good and sky was not covered by the mist.

Kedisan lake – Gunung Batur volcano

In the afternoon we drove to Kedisan Gunung Batur.

The road was steep, small and quite difficult with the old Jimny especially on the way up. The view from the top was superb with the mountain and the lake.

We managed to find our lodging named Hotel Astra Dana with price of Rp. 70,000 including hot water and breakfast. Without the hot water, the shower was cool especially at night and in the morning. Hotel was located right on the lake's edge and you can swim in the lake if you can bear with the cold water. The place is very nice, quite and seems to be completely dead by the time the sun down. The hotel also served 'ikan bakar' (grilled fish) with the reasonable price.

Day 5 – 17 March 2005

Climbing Mount Batur (1717 m)

Hotel provided the guide if you want to climb the mount Batur with price of USD 40/person. And the climb will start at 3.30 am to have a sun rise experience and breakfast in the summit. Since Igor has the experience on mountain climbing, we decided to do the climb by ourselves in the morning and skip the sun rise to avoid waking up too early in the morning.

So, we wake up at 8 am and by the time we finished our breakfast and drove the Jimny to the mountain feet, it's already 9.30 am. We leaved our car down and walk up to the mountain. The road was quite smooth at the entrance to the mountain feet. We managed to climb to the summit in 1 hour and 15 minutes time and coming down in 1 hour time. Although the air was good and you can hardly feel the sun, it's suggested that you put enough sun cream because we have suffered severed bad sun burn around our face and neck. View from the summit was wonderful and the air was very refreshing.

After Mount Batur, we drove up to Tejakula and stop at Les. The road was small and there were no petrol station. If you are run out of petrol, you have to stop in one of the shop along the way which sell 'Premium' and the price will be slightly expensive than the petrol station.

We stop at Les and try to find hotel and diving place. But later we found that the price was too expensive for either the dive (which cost Euro 35 for one dive) or the hotel (which cost Euro 60 / night). We drove again further to Tulamben.

Day 6 – 18 March 2005

Tulamben

In Tulamben we managed to find reasonably nice lodging named Aries bungalow price of Rp. 40,000 per night / address, including breakfast; instead of checking out at 12pm, you can keep the room in the afternoon for additional Rp. 10,000. Our room served very nice view of 'Gunung Agung'. We can see the mountain clearly in the morning and saw the cloud slowing growing the tip of the mountain and swallowing it.

Diving: The diving cost USD 25 per one dive and USD 30 for two dives including the guide and complete equipment. Igor did 2 dives (1 hour each dive). The major attraction here is the submerged wreck of the US cargo ship Liberty. 30m from the beach the wreck lies on its starboard side. Parts of the superstructure are broken up, but the wreck is still large and impressive, stretching more than 100 meters along the steeply sloping black sand. The water visibility is good 15-20m. The wreck is simply a wonderful place to dive, as there are hundreds of species of fish, and in great quantity. Another beautiful dive is along the "Coral wall" on the opposite end of the beach...

Tulamben sea water was superb clean and clear. No sandy beaches instead the beach was all covered with nice dark rocks.

In the afternoon, we tried to do the snorkeling and managed to saw couple of beautiful yellow and black strips fishes but later the sun was out and the weather become moody thus we have to stop.

Candidasa

After the short snorkeling time at Tulamben, we checkout from the hotel and start the journey again. This time we drove along the coast way and stop at Candidasa. We stayed at 'Homestay' with the price or Rp. 65,000 including breakfast. We have a room that facing directly to the sea. We can hear the sound of the sea hitting the shore at night in our room. It gave the peaceful feeling. Nothing much to see at Candidasa, you can find plenty of café and places to eat or listening to the life music. The heart breaking thing is that you will not find beaches anymore in Candidasa. People has ruined the place by building their hotel or houses too near to the sea and sacrifice the beach and changed it with ugly concrete block and bridge. You will find a hard time if you try to walk by the small space of beach especially when the high tide time. We saw an old man shouting and swearing at himself because he was caught between sea and the concrete block when he tried to walk along the beach. He was considered lucky although he was smashed many time and pushed by the big wave.

In front of Candidasa there is a small island which you can visit. Some people will come to you and offer to bring you there. But we were not too keen to go there so we stayed back in our room and rest.

Day 7 – 19 March 2005

Uluwatu Temple

Uluwatu temple perches high on the needle of rock at the south-west extremity of Bali. History recall that a Hindu saint recognized this spot about 700 years ago as a particularly powerful site for a temple. Pura Luhur Uluwatu is also one of Bali's important sad Kahyangan temples, in which swell major deities and in Uluwatu's case ie Bhatara Rudra, God of the elements and of cosmic force majeures. In the 15th Century the great pilgrim priest Dhang Hyang Dwijendra, who establish the present form of Hindu Dharma religion, chose Pura Uluwatu as his last earthly abode. History records that Dijendra achieved moksa (oneness with the godhead, in the flash of blazing light) while meditating at Uluwatu. The temple is regarded, by Brahmins island wide, as

his holy "tomb". Legend also tells us that Dwijendra was the architect of beautiful temple on Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa.

The view from Uluwate is really awesome with the beautiful cliff and especially when there come the big waves. There are plenty of monkeys spread around the temple and the complex. Some of these monkeys are just sit there but some are quite aggressive. Try not wear any jewelries and be careful with your camera or purse. Some of these monkeys can just come from nowhere and snatch or grab your belonging. If that happened, you can ask the temple guard to redeem it from the monkey. What they will do is they normally will persuade the monkey to return the things with exchange of some eggs or food.

Uluwatu Beach

Uluwatu also well known as Surfer paradise because of its beautiful beaches which served with the big waves. You can easily access to the surfer beaches on the way back from the temple. The beach is awesome either by the view from the top or from the beach itself. From the top you can see many surfers playing and waiting for the waves to carry them and you can also go down to the sandy beach from the narrow stairs in no time. The rocks surrounded the beach can be a beautiful background for the pictures. We were so astonished and happy to see the big waves and to play in the water.

Back to Kuta

After the good fun at Uluwatu beach, we drove back to Kuta. There were many days of fun and hard works during these past days. Seeing and experiencing beautiful view, walked and drives for so many hours. It was time to be relax in the beach. We arrived in the afternoon and managed to settle in Baneyesa I inn – at poppies II street. The place is better than the first Kuta hotel we stayed in. This hotel only charged Rp. 50,000 complete with breakfast. Although the room wasn't provided with hot water but the cold shower was actually nice and refreshing. We decided to spend another 2 days here before our journey continued to Yogyakarta on Java island. We managed to find flight to Yogyakarta with the price of Rp. 178,000 per person with Lion/Wing air. The flight is a non stop 1 hour flight....