

# East Bali



East and West Bali vie for the title of the 'real' Bali. Certainly it has many good arguments: it's home to Gunung Agung, the 3142m-high volcano known as the 'navel of the world' and 'Mother Mountain'; its rice terraces are beautiful, pervasive and appreciated on myriad back road drives. It's also home to Bali's holiest temple.

But maybe it is the water that sets East Bali apart. Temples line the shore, some meant to protect the island from the demons said to lurk in places such as Nusa Penida offshore. Towns such as Padangbai and Candidasa delight visitors with their relaxed pace and seaside vibe. Amed and nearby the little coastal villages revel in the kind of mellow charm that travellers have always sought. And Tulamben adds another dimension when people venture below the waves for amazing diving.

With the completion of a new coastal road, all of East Bali is more accessible than ever. Getting to Padangbai and other points is now an hour quicker. Better yet, the road makes possible all sorts of circle tours from South Bali and Ubud. Now you can take in seaside temples, beaches, the royal city of Semarapura, the awesome Sidemen Road, the mountain scenery near Muncan and the towns of Bangli and Gianyar, all in an easy day with plenty of stops.

Tourism aside though, East Bali also remains a traditional place. Starting with mountain towns (such as Tirta Gangga or Sidemen), you can take walks that put you in touch with the rhythm of day-to-day life. Follow the ducks across a rice field, avert your eyes from bathers in a river and seek out a hidden temple on a peak.

One way or another, you're sure to find your own real Bali.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoying the new, easy access on the coast road to beaches like **Saba Beach** (opposite)
- Climbing the often cloud-shrouded **Gunung Agung** (p219)
- Hearing the echoes at Semarapura's **Kertha Gosa** (p214)
- Diving the WWII wreck off **Tulamben** (p238)
- Following the rice terrace of your dreams at **Sidemen** (p215)



## BALI'S 'NEW' BEACHES

The new coast road from Sanur east has made it easy to get to large stretches of shore that were until recently pretty inaccessible. Here are some beaches we believe are worth exploring, starting in the west and heading east. Swimming is generally dangerous. **Ketewel** (Map p128) and **Lebih** are good spots for surfing; see p79 for details.

- **Saba Beach** has a small temple, covered shelters, a shady parking area and a pretty tropical drive from the coast road; it's about 12km east of Sanur.
- **Pura Masceti Beach** has an architecturally significant temple with gaudy statuary and a few drink vendors.
- **Lebih** has a beach made of mica that sparkles with a billion points of light. There's a couple of cafés.
- **Tegal Basar Beach** is a turtle sanctuary with no shade but with a good view of Nusa Lembongan.
- **Pantai Beach** is oxymoronic using two languages (*pantai* means beach). There's a tiny café and a long row of dunes at this picture-perfect spot.
- **Pura Klotek Beach** has a small temple and some very fine black sand.

Note that swimming in the often pounding surf is dangerous. You'll need your own transport to reach surfing areas and you'll find services are few, so bring your own drinking water and towels.

## COAST ROAD TO KUSAMBA

☎ 0361

After several years of construction and staged openings, the new coast road (for now called the Sanur-Kusamba Bypass, but these things change so we'll just say Coast Road) serving East Bali opened in 2006.

It promises to revolutionise the way people travel in the region. For one it means that places such as Padangbai, Candidasa and points east are now one to two hours closer by road to South Bali. No longer is all traffic funnelled onto the choked and meandering route through Gianyar and Semarapura. Now it's a straight shot a few hundred metres inland from the coast, which also means that the many beaches along here are now easily accessible (see above).

Inland, towns like Semarapura will finally have a chance to breathe, now that traffic is greatly reduced. Given its royal sights, this could help the city add lustre to its charms.

The coast east of Sanur is striking, with seaside temples, black-sand beaches and pounding waves. The entire coast has great religious significance, and there are many temples. At the many small coastal village beaches, cremation formalities reach their conclusion when the ashes are consigned to the sea. Ritual purification ceremonies for temple artefacts are also held on these beaches.

**Pura Masceti**, 15km east of Sanur, is one of Bali's nine directional temples (see p63). It is

right on the beach. The large Sungai Pakerisan (Pakerisan River), which starts near Tampaksiring, reaches the sea near **Lebih**.

The impressive **Pura Segara** looks across the strait to Nusa Penida, home of Jero Gede Macaling – the temple helps protect Bali from his evil influence.

At **Pura Batu Kolok**, it's difficult without your own transport. It's quiet and of great significance. Sacred statues are brought here from Pura Besakih (see p218) for ritual cleansing.

## Sleeping

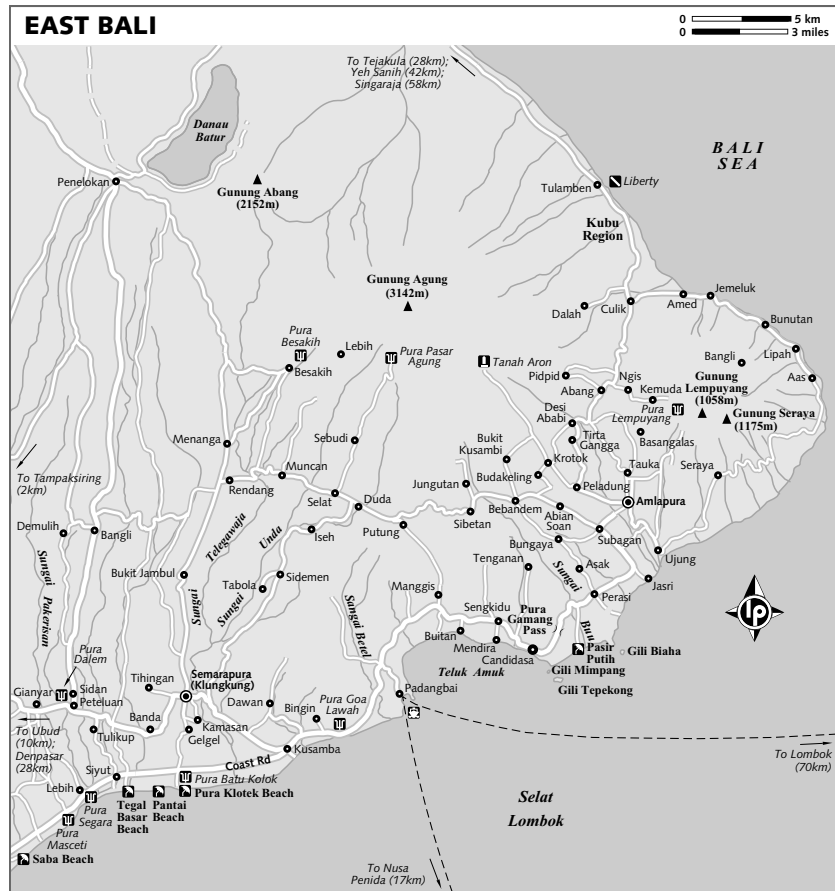
With the ease of access and increased traffic, expect a boom in places to stay. Already rental and expat villas are popping up among the rice fields and tropical palms.

About 11km east of Sanur near Saba Beach, **Lor-In Villa Resort** (☎ 297070; www.lorinresortsababai.com; villas US\$120-300; 📶 🚽) is a modern and impressive beachside resort. The 32 villas are set in gardens of grand proportions. The best ones have private plunge pools and sea breezes from their upper-levels. Service is very good at this luxurious 'escape'.

## GIANYAR

☎ 0361

This is the affluent administrative capital and main market town of the Gianyar district, which also includes Ubud. The town has a number of factories producing batik and ikat



fabrics, and a compact centre with some good food.

## Sights

It dates from 1771, but **Puri Gianyar** (Jl Ngu-rah Rai) was destroyed in a conflict with the neighbouring kingdom of Klungkung in the mid-1880s and rebuilt. Under threat from its aggressive neighbours, the Gianyar kingdom requested Dutch protection. A 1900 agreement let the ruling family retain its status and its palace, though it lost all political power. The *puri* (palace) was damaged in the 1917 earthquake, but restored soon after and appears little changed from the time the Dutch arrived. It's a fine example of traditional palace architecture. While tourists are not usu-

ally allowed inside, if you report to the guard inside, you may be given a quick look around, or you can see some of it through the gates.

## Eating

People come to Gianyar to sample the market food, like *babi guling* (spit-roast pig stuffed with chilli, turmeric, garlic and ginger – delicious) for which the town is noted. The descriptively named **Gianyar Babi Guleng** (meals 5000-8000Rp; ☎ 7am-4pm) is favoured by locals among many competitors. (There are lots of cops and *bemo* (small minibuses) drivers here – they know.) It's in a tiny side street at the west end of the centre. Look for the large sign.

Nearby are numerous stands selling fresh food including delectable *piseng goreng* (fried

banana). Also worth sampling for *babi guling* and other local treats are the food stalls in the **food market** (☎ 11am-2pm) and the **main market** (☎ 6-9pm). All of these places line both sides of the main section of Jl Ngu-rah Rai.

## Shopping

A must for any fashionista or lover of hand woven fabrics. There are a few textile factories at the western end of town on the main Ubud road, including **Tenun Ikat Setia Cili** (☎ 943409; Jl Astina Utara; ☎ 9am-5pm) and the adjacent **Cap Bakti** (Jl Astina Utara), as well as **Cap Togog** (☎ 943046; Jl Astina Utara 11; ☎ 8am-5pm). These places have showrooms where you can buy material by the metre, or have it tailored. You can at times see weavers at work and see how the thread is dyed before weaving to produce the vibrantly patterned weft ikat, which is called *endek* on Bali. Prices are 50,000Rp to 75,000Rp per metre for cotton fabric, depending on how fine the weaving is – costs will rise if it contains silk. Handmade batik is also for sale here.

## Getting There & Away

There are regular bemo between Batubulan terminal near Denpasar and Gianyar's main terminal (8000Rp), which is behind the main market. Bemo from Gianyar's main terminal also serve Semarapura (8000Rp) and Amlapura (16,000Rp). Bemo to and from Ubud (8000Rp) use the bemo stop across the road from the main market.

## SIDAN

When driving east from Gianyar you come to the turn-off to Bangli about 2km out of Peteluan. Follow this road for about 1km until you reach a sharp bend, where you'll find Sidan's **Pura Dalem**. This good example of a temple of the dead has very fine carvings. In particular, note the sculptures of Durga with children by the gate and the separate enclosure in one corner of the temple – this is dedicated to Merajapati, the guardian spirit of the dead.

## BANGLI

☎ 0366

Halfway up the slope to Penelokan, Bangli, once the capital of a kingdom, is said to have the best climate on Bali.

It has an interesting temple, **Pura Keihen**, and the town makes for a good rest stop during a day of exploring.

## HISTORY

Bangli dates from the early 13th century. In the Majapahit era it broke away from Gelgel to become a separate kingdom, even though it was landlocked, poor and involved in long-running conflicts with neighbouring states.

In 1849 Bangli made a treaty with the Dutch. The treaty gave Bangli control over the defeated north coast kingdom of Buleleng, but Buleleng then rebelled and the Dutch imposed direct rule there. In 1909 the rajah (lord or prince) of Bangli chose to become a Dutch protectorate rather than face suicidal *puputan* (a warrior's fight to the death) or complete conquest by the neighbouring kingdoms or the colonial power.

## Information

The compact and well-organised centre has a Bank BRI with international ATM, and there is a nearby hospital. There's also a police station and post office. The **market** is worth a stroll.

## Sights & Activities

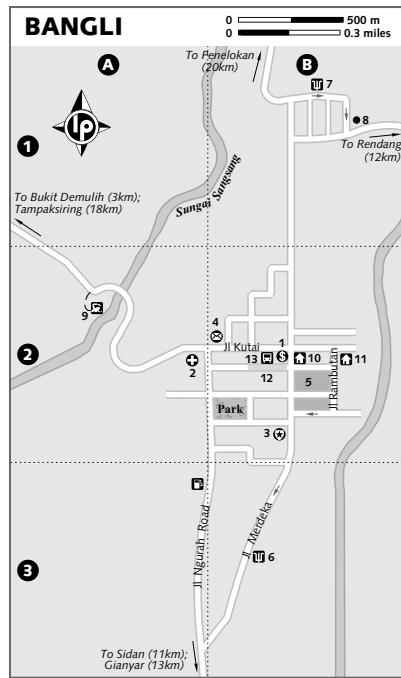
### PURA KEHEN

The state temple of the Bangli kingdom, **Pura Keihen** (admission 4100Rp; ☎ 9am-5pm) is one of the finest temples in eastern Bali – it's a miniature version of Pura Besakih (p216). It is terraced up the hillside, with a flight of steps leading to the beautifully decorated entrance. The first courtyard has a huge banyan tree with a *kulkul* (hollow tree-trunk warning drum) entwined in its branches. The Chinese porcelain plates were set into the walls as decoration, but most of the originals have been damaged or lost. The inner courtyard has an 11-roof *meru* (multi-roofed shrine), and there are other shrines with thrones for the Hindu trinity – Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. The carvings are particularly intricate.

There's a counter opposite the temple entrance where you pay your admission. Sarong and/or sash rental costs 2000Rp (see Avoiding Offence, p42).

### PURA DALEM PENUNGGEKAN

The exterior wall of this fascinating 'temple of the dead' features vivid relief carvings of wrong-doers getting their just desserts in the afterlife. One panel addresses the lurid fate of adulterers (men in particular may find the viewing uncomfortable). Other panels portray sinners as monkeys, while another is a good



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### Sleeping & Eating

A *pasar malam* (night market), on the street beside the bemo terminal, has some good *warung* (food stalls), and you'll also find some in the market area during the day.

**Artha Sastra Inn** (☎ 91179; Jl Merdeka; s/d 35,000/50,000Rp) Still run by descendants of the last royal family, this bare-bones former royal residence is cheap and friendly.

**Bangli Inn** (☎ 91419; Jl Rambutan 1; r 120,000Rp) Somewhat modern, but just as friendly as the Artha Sastra, the 10 cold-water rooms are clean and include breakfast.

### Getting There & Away

Bangli is located on the main road between Denpasar's Batubulan terminal (10,000Rp) and Gunung Batur, via Penelokan.

### SEMARAPURA (KLUKUNG)

☎ 0366

Once the centre of Bali's most important kingdom, Semarapura is today a great artistic and cultural focal point on the island. Now the capital of Klungkung district, with its distinctly Chinese character, is coming to terms with the sudden decrease in traffic thanks to the new coast road. Many people predict that it will find new appeal as relaxed country town.

Officially named Semarapura, it is still often commonly called Klungkung. The Kertha Gosa complex is a 'must-see' site and is definitely worth a detour from the new coast road, or as part of a circle tour from the south or Ubud.

representation of evil-doers begging to be spared the fires of hell. It's just to the south of Pura Kehen.

### SASANA BUDAYA GIRI KUSUMA

Supposedly a showplace for Balinese dance, drama, gamelan (Balinese orchestra) and the visual arts, this large arts centre rarely has anything on. But it's well maintained, so it's always worth asking if something will be on.

### BUKIT DEMULIH

Three kilometres west of Bangli is the village of Demulih, and a hill called Bukit Demulih. If you can't find the sign pointing to it, ask local children to direct you. After a short climb to the top, you'll see a small temple and good views over South Bali.

On the way to Bukit Demulih, a steep side road leads down to Tirta Buana, a **public swimming pool** in a lovely location deep in the valley, visible through the trees from the road above. You can take a vehicle most of the way down, but the track peters out and you'll need to walk the last 100m or so.

### History

Successors to the Majapahit conquerors of Bali established themselves at Gelgel (just south of modern Semarapura) in around 1400, the Gelgel dynasty strengthening the growing Majapahit presence on the island. During the 17th century, the successors of the Gelgel line established separate kingdoms and the dominance of the Gelgel court was lost. The court moved to Klungkung in 1710, but never regained a pre-eminent position.

In 1849 the rulers of Klungkung and Gianyar defeated a Dutch invasion force at Kusamba. Before the Dutch could launch a counter attack, a force from Tabanan had arrived and the trader Mads Lange was able to broker a peace settlement.

For the next 50 years, the South Bali kingdoms squabbled, until the rajah of Gianyar petitioned the Dutch for support. When the Dutch finally invaded the south, the king of Klungkung had a choice between a suicidal *puputan*, like the rajah of Denpasar, or an ignominious surrender, as Tabanan's rajah had done. He chose the former. In April 1908,

as the Dutch surrounded his palace, the Dewa Agung and hundreds of his relatives and followers marched out to certain death from Dutch gunfire, or the blades of their own kris (traditional dagger). It was the last Balinese kingdom to succumb and the sacrifice is commemorated in the large **Puputan Monument**.

### Information

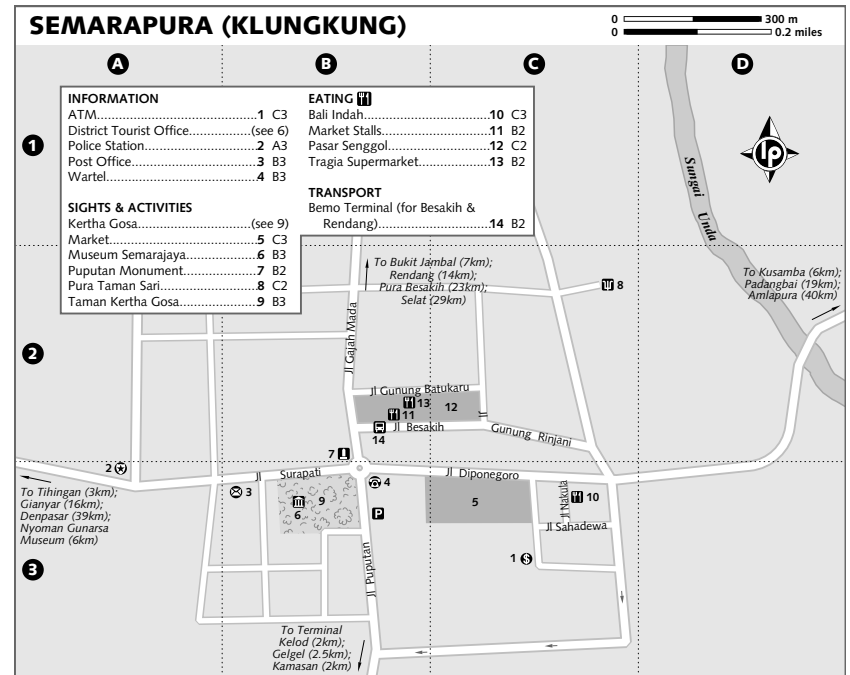
Jl Nakula and the main street, Jl Diponegoro, have several banks with international ATMs. The post office and wartel are further west. **District tourist office** (☎ 21448; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) The small office is in the Museum Semarajaya building of Taman Kertha Gosa. It means well.

**Police station** (☎ 21115)

### Sights

#### TAMAN KERTHA GOSA

When the Dewa Agung dynasty moved here in 1710, the Semara Pura was established. The palace was laid out as a large square, believed to be in the form of a mandala, with courtyards, gardens, pavilions and moats. The complex is sometimes referred to as Taman Gili (Island Garden). Most of the original





palace and grounds were destroyed by Dutch attacks in 1908 – the Pemedal Agung, the gateway on the south side of the square, is all that remains of the palace itself (but it's worth a close look to see the carvings). Two important buildings are preserved in a restored section of the grounds, and with a museum, they comprise the **Taman Kertha Gosa complex** (adult/child 5000/2000Rp, parking 1000Rp; ☎ 7am–6pm). Parking is easy, and vendors are persistent.

### Kertha Gosa

In the northeastern corner of the complex, the 'Hall of Justice' was effectively the supreme court of the Klungkung kingdom, where disputes and cases that could not be settled at the village level were eventually brought. This open-sided pavilion is a superb example of Klungkung architecture. The ceiling is completely covered with fine paintings in the Klungkung style. The paintings, done on asbestos sheeting, were installed in the 1940s, replacing cloth paintings, which had deteriorated.

The rows of ceiling panels depict several themes. The lowest level illustrates five tales from Bali's answer to the *Arabian Nights*, where a girl called Tantri spins a different yarn every night. The next two rows are scenes from Bima's travels in the afterlife, where he witnesses the torment of evil-doers. The gruesome tortures are shown clearly, but there are different interpretations of which punishment goes with what crime. (There's an authoritative explanation in *The Epic of Life – A Balinese Journey of the Soul* by Idanna Pucci, available for reference in the pavilion.) The fourth row of panels depicts the story of Garuda's (mythical man-bird creature) search for the elixir of life, while the fifth row shows events on the Balinese astrological calendar. The next three rows return to the story of Bima, this time travelling in heaven, with doves and a lotus flower at the apex of the ceiling.

### Bale Kambang

The ceiling of the beautiful 'Floating Pavilion' is painted in Klungkung style. Again, the different rows of paintings deal with various subjects. The first row is based on the astrological calendar, the second on the folk tale of Pan and Men Brayut and their 18 children, and the upper rows on the adventures of the hero Sutasona.

### Museum Semarangaya

This recently renovated museum has an interesting collection of archaeological and other pieces. There are exhibits of *songket* weaving and palm toddy (palm wine) and palm sugar extraction. Be sure not to miss out on the moving display about the 1908 *puputan*, along with some interesting old photos. The exhibit on salt-making gives you a good idea of the hard work involved (see Working in the Salt Brine, p237).

### MARKET

Semarang's sprawling market is one of the best in East Bali. It's a vibrant hub of commerce and a meeting place for people of the region. You can easily spend an hour wandering about the warren of stalls as well as shops on nearby streets.

### PURA TAMAN SARI

The quiet lawns and ponds around this temple make it a relaxing stop. The towering 11-roofed *meru* indicates that this was a temple built for royalty.

### Eating

Snack stalls line the parking area. The best bet for food locally are the **market stalls** with all manner of lunch items.

**Bali Indah** (☎ 21056; Jl Nakula 1; dishes 10,000–20,000Rp) A veteran Chinese sit-down place with simple meals. Sumba Rosa almost next door is similar.

**Pasar Senggol** (☎ 4pm–midnight) A night market, this is by far the best spot to eat if you're in town late. It's the usual flurry of woks, customers and noise.

**Tragia supermarket** (☎ 21997; Jl Gunung Batukaru) This has a large choice of groceries and sundries.

### Getting There & Away

The best way to visit Semarang is with your own transport.

Bemo from Denpasar (Batubulan terminal) pass through Semarang (15,000Rp) on the way to points further east. They can be hailed from near the Puputan Monument.

For a bemo heading north to Besakih (10,000Rp), they leave from the centre of Semarang, a block northeast of Kertha Gosa. Most of the other bemo leave from the inconvenient Terminal Kelod, about 2km south of the city centre.

## AROUND SEMARANG

East of Semarang, the main road crosses Sungai Unda, then swings south towards Kusamba and the sea. Lava from the 1963 eruption of Gunung Agung destroyed villages and cut the road here, but the lava flows are now overgrown.

### Gelgel

Situated about 2.5km south of Semarang, Gelgel was once the seat of Bali's most powerful dynasty. The town's decline started in 1710, when the court moved to present-day Semarang, and finished when the Dutch bombarded the place in 1908.

Today the wide streets and the surviving temples are only faintly evocative of past grandeur. The **Pura Dasar** is not particularly attractive, but its vast courtyards are a real clue to its former importance, and festivals here attract large numbers of people from all over Bali.

A little to the east, the **Masjid Gelgel** is Bali's oldest mosque. It was established in the late 16th century for the benefit of Muslim missionaries from Java, unwilling to return home after failing to make any converts.

### Kamasan

This quiet, traditional village is the place where the classical Kamasan painting style originated, and several artists still practise this art. You can see their workshops and small showrooms along the main street. The work is often a family affair, with one person inking the outlines, while another mixes the paints and yet another applies the colours. The paintings depict traditional stories or Balinese calendars, and although they are sold in souvenir shops all over Bali, the quality is better here. Look for smooth and distinct line-work, evenly applied colours and balance in the overall composition. The village is also home to families of *bokor* artisans, who produce the silver bowls used in traditional ceremonies.

To reach Kamasan, go about 2km south of Semarang and look for the turn-off to the east.

### Bukit Jambal

The road north of Semarang climbs steeply into the hills, via Bukit Jambal, which is understandably popular for its magnificent views. There are several restaurants here that provide buffet lunches for tour groups. This road continues to Rendang and Pura Besakih.

## Sungai Unda & Sungai Telagawaja

East of Semarang, the main road crosses the dammed-up Sungai Unda. Further upstream, the Telagawaja is used for white-water rafting trips (see p77).

### Tihingan

Several workshops in Tihingan are dedicated to producing gamelan instruments. Small foundries make the resonating bronze bars and bowl-shaped gongs, which are then carefully filed and polished until they produce the correct tone. Some pieces are on sale, but most of the instruments are produced for musical groups all over Bali. It's not really set up for tourists, but the workshops with signs out the front will receive visitors (albeit sometimes grudgingly); the work is usually done very early in the morning when it's cool. From Semarang, head west along Jl Diponegoro and look for the signs.

### Nyoman Gunarsa Museum

Dedicated to classical and contemporary Balinese painting, this beautiful **museum complex** (☎ 22255; adult/child 20,000Rp/free; ☎ 10am–5pm) was established by Nyoman Gunarsa, one of the most respected and successful modern artists in Indonesia. The vast three-storey building exhibits an impressive variety of well-displayed older pieces, including stone- and woodcarvings, architectural antiques, masks, ceramics and textiles.

Many of the classical paintings are on bark paper and are some of the oldest surviving examples. Check out the many old puppets, still seemingly animated – even in retirement. The top floor is devoted to Gunarsa's own bold, expressionistic depictions of traditional life. Look for *Offering*.

There's a large performance space nearby and some fine examples of traditional architecture just outside in the compound.

The museum is about 5km west from Semarang, near a bend on the road to Gianyar – look for the dummy policemen at the base of a large statue nearby.

## SIDEMEN ROAD

☎ 0366

A less-travelled route to Pura Besakih goes northeast from Semarang, via Sidemen and Iseh, to the Rendang–Amlapura road. The area offers marvellous paddy field scenery, a delightful rural character and exciting views of Gunung Agung (when the clouds permit).

Sidemen has a spectacular location and is a centre for culture and arts, particularly *endek* (ikat) cloth and *songket*, which is woven with threads of silver and gold. German artist Walter Spies lived in Iseh for some time from 1932 in order to escape the perpetual party of his own making in Ubud. Later, the Swiss painter, Theo Meier, nearly as famous as Spies for his influence on Balinese art, lived in the same house.

There are many **walks** through the rice fields and streams in the multihued green valley. One involves a climb up to **Pura Bukit Tageh**, a small temple with big views.

Sidemen Road can be a beautiful part of any day-trip from South Bali or Ubud. It connects in the north with the Rendang to Amlapura Rd just west of Duda. The road is in good shape and regular bemo shuttle up and down from Semarapura.

### Sleeping & Eating

Views throughout the area are often spectacular, from terraced green hills to Gunung Agung. Places to stay always have restaurants and can give advice or set you up for walking tours.

Near the centre of Sidemen, a small road heads west for 500m to a fork and a signpost with the names of several places to stay.

**Lihat Sawah** (☎ /fax 24183; r 150,000-250,000Rp; dishes 12,500-25,000Rp) Take the right fork in the road to this very friendly place with great gardens. All nine rooms (the cheapest have cold water) have views of the valley and mountain. The surrounding rice fields course with water.

**Tanto Villa** (☎ 081-2395 0271; r US\$20-40) Views of the Luwah Valley are the appeal at this modern place, which has four large and comfortable rooms with hot water. Two upstairs rooms have the best views of the surrounding chilli, bean and peanut fields.

**Subak Tabola Inn** (☎ 23015; r from US\$25; 🚿) Set in a shockingly green amphitheatre of rice terraces, the 11 rooms here have a bit of style and open-air bathrooms. Verandas have amazing views down the valley to the ocean. The grounds are spacious and there's a cool pool with frog fountains. It's near the 2km hotel signpost.

**Nirarta** (Centre for Living Awareness; ☎ 24122; [www.awareness-bali.com](http://www.awareness-bali.com); Br Tabola; r US\$25-60) Guests here partake in serious programmes for personal and spiritual development, including medita-

tion intensives and yoga. The eight comfortable bungalows have hot water and some are well suited to families and groups.

**Sacred Mountain Sanctuary** (☎ 24330; [www.sacredmountainresort.com](http://www.sacredmountainresort.com); villas US\$90-140; 🚿 🚿) Close to the river, this remote and rusticated resort has a new age vibe and a huge spring-fed swimming pool. The 19 bamboo villas have open-air bathrooms and many artistic touches. The resort can arrange treks of Gunung Agung (from US\$55), as well as a range of courses. Massage is available. The restaurant, where dishes range from 20,000Rp to 35,000Rp, features Thai and vegetarian cuisine.

Elsewhere on the Sidemen Road are these two good choices.

**Pondok Wisata Sidemen** (☎ 23009; r 200,000-400,000Rp) At the south end of Sidemen, this place has four clean, simple rooms with four-poster beds and great views. Accommodation includes a fine breakfast and dinner of traditional Balinese foods. You can arrange courses in local art and music.

**Patal Kikian** (☎ /fax 23005; villas US\$50-70; 🚿) Two kilometres north of Sidemen, look for a steep driveway on the eastern side of the road. This retreat has four spacious, stylishly furnished villas with vast verandas overlooking terraced hillsides – one of the best views in East Bali. Rates include all meals, which are served as private banquets on your own veranda. Rooms have hot water and there is a soaking pool.

### PURA BESAKIH

Perched nearly 1000m up the side of Gunung Agung is Bali's most important temple, Pura Besakih. In fact, it is an extensive complex of 23 separate-but-related temples, with the largest and most important being Pura Penataran Agung. Unfortunately, many people find it a deeply disappointing experience due to the avareice of numerous local characters. See An Unholy Experience on p219 for the details, which may well help you to decide whether to skip it. Another disincentive to visit is that tourists are usually barred from entering the temples.

Besakih, as it is known, is at its most impressive during one of the frequent festivals, when hundreds, perhaps thousands, of gorgeously dressed devotees turn up with beautifully arranged offerings. The panoramic view and the mountain backdrop are impressive too.

### History

The precise origins of Pura Besakih are not totally clear, but it almost certainly dates from prehistoric times. The stone bases of Pura Penataran Agung and several other temples resemble megalithic stepped pyramids, which date back at least 2000 years. There are legendary accounts of Sri Dangkyang Markendaya conducting meditation and ceremonies here in the 8th century AD, while stonies inscriptions record a Hindu ritual on the site in AD 1007. There are some indications of Buddhist activity, but it was certainly used as a Hindu place of worship from 1284, when the first Javanese conquerors settled on Bali, and this is confirmed by accounts from the time of the Majapahit conquest in 1343. By the 15th century, Besakih had become a state temple of the Gelgel dynasty.

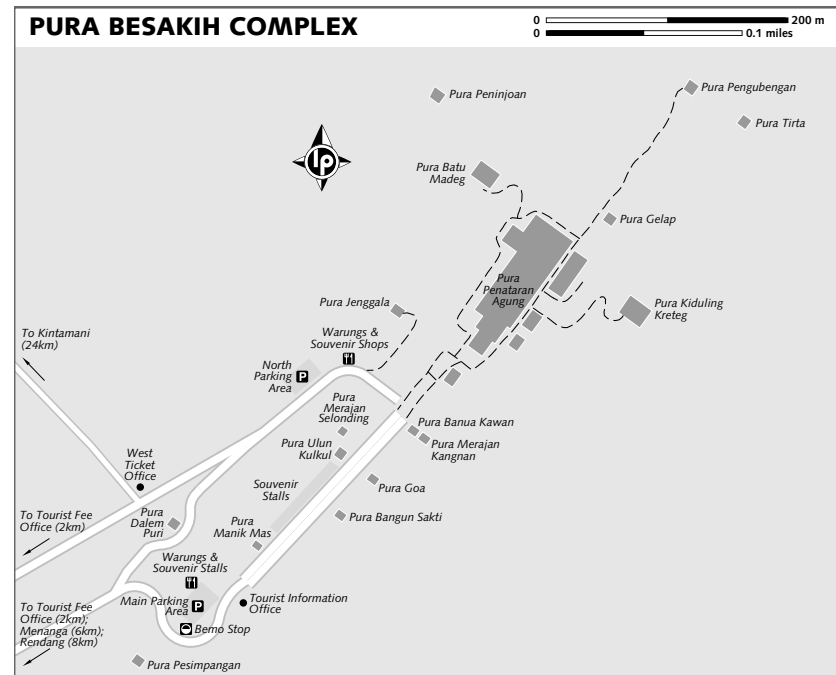
The central temple was added to over the years, and additional temples were built for specific family, occupational and regional groups. The complex was neglected during the colonial period, perhaps because of lack of royal patronage, and was virtually destroyed in the 1917 earthquake. The Dutch assisted

with its reconstruction, and the dependent rajahs were encouraged to support the maintenance of the temples.

### Orientation

The main entrance, the Tourist Fee Office, is 2km south of the complex on the road from Menanga and the south. The fees are as follows: adult/child 5000/6000Rp, still camera 1000Rp, video camera 2500Rp and car park 1000Rp. The fact that you may well be charged for a video camera whether you have one or not gives you a taste of things to come.

About 200m past the ticket office, there is a fork in the road with a sign indicating Besakih to the right and Kintamani to the left. Go left because going to the right puts you in the main parking area at the bottom of a hill some 300m from the complex. Going past the road to Kintamani, where there is the small West Ticket Office, puts you in the north parking area only 20m from the complex. Snack stands and warung are found along the trash-strewn approaches and at both parking lots.



## Sights & Activities

### PURA PENATARAN AGUNG

This is the central temple of the complex – in significance, if not exactly in position. It is built on six levels, terraced up the slope, with the entrance approached from below, up a flight of steps. This entrance is an imposing *candi bentar* (split gateway), and beyond it, the even more impressive *kori agung* is the gateway to the second courtyard.

Tourists are not permitted inside, so for the best view, climb the steps to the left of the main entrance and follow the path around the western side. From here, you can just see over the wall into the second courtyard (do not climb up on the wall), where the *padmasana* (temple shrine resembling a vacant chair) is. In most modern temples this is a single throne for the supreme god, but Besakih stresses the Hindu trinity, and therefore it has a triple throne called *padmasana tiga* (*padmasana tri-sakti*), with separate seats for Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. This point is the spiritual centre of the temple and, indeed, of the whole Besakih complex.

Continuing on the footpath around the temple, you can see quite a few imposing *meru*, the multi-roofed towers through which gods can descend to earth, but otherwise the temple is unspectacular. The upper courtyards are usually empty, even during festivals. One of the best views is from the path at the northeastern end, where you can look down past the many towers and over the temple to the sea.

### OTHER TEMPLES

None of the other temples are striking, except when decorated for festivals, but each one has a particular significance, sometimes in conjunction with other temples. The *trimurti* (Hindu trinity) is represented by the combination of Pura Penataran Agung as Shiva, Pura Kiduling Kreteg as Brahma and Pura Batu Madeg as Vishnu. Just as each village in Bali has a *pura puseh* (temple of origin), *pura desa* (village temple) and *pura dalem* (temple of the dead), Pura Besakih has three temples that fulfil these roles for Bali as a whole – Pura Basukian, Pura Penataran Agung and Pura Dalem Puri, respectively.

The Balinese concept of *panca dewata*, which embodies a centre and four cardinal points, is represented by Pura Penataran Agung (the centre), Pura Kiduling Kreteg (south), Pura Batu Madeg (north), Pura Gelap

(east) and Pura Ulun Kulkul (west). Each district of Bali is associated with a specific temple at Besakih, and the main temples of Bali are also represented by specific shrines here. Some temples are associated with families descended from the original Gelgel dynasty, and there are shrines and memorials going back many generations. Various craft guilds also have their own temples, notably the metal-workers, whose Pura Ratu Pande is built onto the side of the main temple.

### FESTIVALS

Besakih is at its best when a festival is on, and with so many temples and gods represented here, there seems to be one every week or so. Ask at a tourist office anywhere on Bali, and try to identify which part of the Besakih complex will be the focus of attention. The founding of Besakih itself is celebrated at Bhatara Turun Kabeh around the full moon of the 10th lunar month (usually in March and April), when all the gods descend at once. The annual rites at Pura Dalem Puri, usually in January, attract thousands who make offerings for the dead. In addition, each individual temple has its own *odalan* (Balinese temple 'birthday festival'), held annually according to the 210-day *wuku* calendar.

Even more important are the great purification ceremonies of Panca Wali Krama, theoretically held every 10 years, and the Eka Dasa Rudra held every 100 years. In fact, the exact dates of these festivals are determined after long considerations by priests, and they have not been exactly regular. An Eka Dasa Rudra was held in 1963, but was disrupted by the disastrous eruption of Gunung Agung, and restaged successfully in 1979. The last Panca Wali Krama was in 1999.

### Getting There & Away

Besakih is a major feature on many organised tours of eastern and northern Bali.

The best way to visit is with your own transportation, which allows you to explore the many gorgeous drives in the area.

You can visit by bemo from Semarapura (10,000Rp) but from other parts of Bali this can make the outing an all-day affair. Be sure to ask the driver to take you to the temple entrance, not to the village about 1km from the temple complex. Make certain you leave the temple by 3pm if you want to return to either Semarapura or South Bali by bemo.

### AN UNHOLY EXPERIENCE

So intrusive are the scams and irritations faced by visitors to Besakih that many wish they had skipped the complex altogether. What follows are some of the ploys you should be aware of before a visit.

- Near the main parking area is a building labelled Tourist Information Office. Guides here may emphatically tell you that you need their services. You don't; you may always walk among the temples. No 'guide' can get you into a closed temple.
- Other 'guides' may foist their services on you throughout your visit. There have been reports of people agreeing to a guide's services only to be hit with a huge fee at the end.
- It will require an endless repetition of 'no thank you' and 'please leave' to get the 'guides' to go away, but this is essential as there have been reports of people giving in and allowing the guide to tag along without negotiating a price. Later they are intimidated into paying a fee of 200,000Rp or more.
- Touts on scooters may follow you on your walk up the hill from the main parking area demanding that you pay 8000Rp for a ride. This is another good reason to use the north parking area close to the complex.
- Once inside the complex, you may receive offers to 'come pray with me'. Visitors who seize on this chance to get into a forbidden temple can face demands of 50,000Rp or more.

It should be noted that guides or drivers who accompany you from other parts of Bali are generally not allowed into the temples by the local 'guides'.

## GUNUNG AGUNG

Bali's highest and most revered mountain, Gunung Agung is an imposing peak seen from most of South and East Bali, although it's often obscured by cloud and mist. Many references give its height as 3142m, but some say it lost its top in the 1963 eruption and opinion varies as to the real height. The summit is an oval crater, about 700m across, with its highest point on the western edge above Besakih.

### Climbing Gunung Agung

It's possible to climb Agung from various directions. The two shortest and most popular routes are from Pura Besakih, on the southwest side of the mountain, and from Pura Pasar Agung, on the southern slopes. The latter route goes to the lower edge of the crater rim (2900m), but you can't make your way from there around to the very highest point. You'll have great views of the south and east, but you won't be able to see central Bali.

To have the best chance of seeing the view before the clouds form, get to the top before 8am. You'll have to start at night, so plan your climb when there will be some moonlight. Take a strong torch (flashlight), extra batteries, plenty of water (2L per person), snack

food, waterproof clothing and a warm jumper (sweater). The descent is especially hard on your feet, so you'll appreciate strong shoes or boots and manicured toes.

You should take a guide for either route. Early in the climb the guide will stop at a shrine to make an offering and say some prayers. This is a holy mountain and you should show respect.

It's best to climb during the dry season (April to September), although July to September are the most reliable months. At other times, the paths can be slippery and dangerous and the views are clouded over. Climbing Gunung Agung is not permitted when major religious events are being held at Pura Besakih, which generally includes most of April. No guide will take you up at these times.

### GUIDES

Trips with guides on either of the following routes up Gunung Agung generally include breakfast and other meals and a place to stay, but be sure to confirm all details in advance. They can also arrange transportation.

Most of the places to stay in the region, including those at Selat (see p220), along the Sidemen Road (see p216) and Tirta Gangga (see p233) will recommend guides for



Gunung Agung climbs. Expect to pay a negotiable 250,000Rp to 600,000Rp per person for your climb.

Recommended guides include:

**Gung Bawa Trekking** (☎ 0366-24379; gbtrek@yahoo.com; Selat) A reliable trekking operation near the market.

**Ketut Uriada** (☎ 081-2364 6426; Muncan) This experienced guide can arrange transport for an extra fee (look for his small sign on the road east of the village).

### FROM PURA BESAKIH

This climb is much tougher than from the southern approach and is only for the very physically fit. For the best chance of a clear view before the clouds close in, you should start at midnight. Allow at least six hours for the climb, and four to five hours for the descent. The starting point is Pura Pengubengan, northeast of the main temple complex, but it's easy to get lost on the lower trails, so definitely hire a guide.

### FROM PURA PASAR AGUNG

This route involves the least walking, because Pura Pasar Agung (Agung Market Temple) is high on the southern slopes of the mountain (around 1500m) and can be reached by a good road north from Selat. From the temple you can climb to the top in three or four hours, but it's a pretty demanding trek. With or without a guide, you must report to the police station at Selat before you start. If you don't have a guide the police will strongly encourage you to take one.

It is much better to stay the night near Muncan or Selat so that you can drive up early in the morning to Pura Pasar Agung. This temple has been greatly enlarged and improved, in part as a monument to the 1963 eruption that devastated this area.

Start climbing from the temple at around 3am. There are numerous trails through the pine forest but after an hour or so you'll climb above the tree line. Then you're climbing on solidified lava, which can be loose and broken in places, but a good guide will keep you on solid ground. At the top, you can gawk into the crater, watch the sun rise over Lombok and see the shadow of Agung in the morning haze over southern Bali.

Allow at least two hours to get back down to the temple. If you don't have a car waiting for you, walk down to Sebudi, from where there are public bemo down to Selat.

## RENDANG TO AMLAPURA ROAD

☎ 0366

A scenic road goes around the southern slopes of Gunung Agung from Rendang to near Amlapura. It runs through some superb countryside, descending more or less gradually as it goes further east. If you have your own wheels, you'll find it very scenic, with some interesting places to stop. Water flows everywhere and you can easily exhaust your film, tape or memory card.

Cyclists enjoy the route and find going east to be an easier ride.

You can get to the start of the road in Rendang from Bangli in the west on a very pretty road through rice terraces and thick jungle vegetation. **Rendang** itself is an attractive mountain village. After going east for about 3km, you'll come into a beautiful small valley of rice terraces. At the bottom is the **Sungai Telegawaja**, a popular river for white-water rafting. Some companies (see p77) have their facilities near here.

The old-fashioned village of **Muncan** has quaint shingle roofs. It's approximately 4km along the winding road. Nearby are scores of open-air factories where the soft lava rock is carved into temple decorations.

The road then passes through some of the most attractive rice country in Bali before reaching **Selat**, where you turn north to get to Pura Pasar Agung, a starting point for climbing Gunung Agung. **Puri Agung Inn** (☎ 23037; r 125,000-175,000Rp) has 10 clean and comfortable rooms with rice field views. You can arrange rice field walks here or climbs up Gunung Agung (p219).

Just before **Duda**, the very scenic Sidemen Road (see p216) branches southwest via Sidemen to Semarapura (see p213). Further east, a side road (about 800m) leads to **Putung**. This area is superb for hiking: there's an easy-to-follow track from Putung to **Manggis**, about 8km down the hill.

Continuing east, **Sibetan** is famous for growing *salak*, the delicious fruit with a curious 'snakeskin' covering, which you can buy from roadside stalls. This is one of the villages you can visit on tours and homestays organised by **JED** (Village Ecotourism Network; ☎ 0361-735320; www.jed.or.id; tours US\$25-100), the non-profit group that organises rural tourism (see p348).

Near Sibetan, a poorly signposted road leads north to Jungutan, with its **Tirta Telaga Tista** – a decorative pool and garden com-

plex built for the water-loving old rajah of Karangasem.

The scenic road finishes at **Bebandem**, where there's a cattle market every three days, and plenty of other stuff for sale as well. Bebandem and several nearby villages are home to members of the traditional metal-workers caste, which includes silversmiths as well as blacksmiths.

## KUSAMBA TO PADANGBAI

The new coast road from Sanur joins the traditional route to the east at the fishing town of Kusamba.

### Kusamba

A side road leaves the main road and goes south to the fishing and salt-making village of Kusamba, where you will see rows of colourful fishing *prahu* (outriggers) lined up all along the beach. The fishing is usually done at night and the 'eyes' on the front of the boats help navigate through the darkness. The fish market in Kusamba is really excellent.

Local boats travel to the islands of Nusa Penida and Nusa Lembongan, which are clearly visible from Kusamba (but you can get faster and safer boats from Padangbai; see p355). Both east and west of Kusamba, there are small salt-making huts lined up in rows along the beach – see Working in the Salt Brine, p222.

### Pura Goa Lawah

Three kilometres east of Kusamba is **Pura Goa Lawah** (Bat Cave Temple; admission 4100Rp, car park 1000Rp, sash rental 1000Rp; ☎ 8am-6pm), which is one of nine directional temples in Bali. The cave in the cliff face is packed, crammed and jammed full of bats, and the complex is equally over-

crowded with tour groups. There is a distinctly batty stench emanating from the cave, and the roofs of the temple shrines, which are in front of the cave, are liberally coated with bat droppings. Superficially, the temple is small and unimpressive, but it is very old and of great significance to the Balinese.

It is said that the cave leads all the way to Pura Besakih, some 19km away, but it's unlikely that you'd want to try this route. The bats provide sustenance for the legendary giant snake, the deity Naga Basuki, which is also believed to live in the cave.

## PADANGBAI

☎ 0363

Reflecting the odd patterns of tourism that has some places ascending while others are declining, Padangbai is definitely on the up-swing. Nominally the port for Bali-Lombok ferries and passenger boats to Nusa Penida, Padangbai sits on a small bay and has a nice little curve of a beach. It has a whole compact seaside travellers scene with cheap places to stay and some very funky and fun cafés. A recent town beautification drive has spiffed things up, albeit at the cost of losing some of the colourful food and drink stands that used to line the beach. An esplanade is planned for Jl Silayukti.

The pace is slow, but if you want to pick up your own, there's good snorkelling and diving nearby plus some easy walks and a couple of great beaches. Meanwhile you can soak up the languid vibe punctuated by the occasional arrival and departure of a ferry.

### Information

Moneychangers at hotels and along Jl Pelabuhan offer okay rates. The **Bank BRI** (Jl Pelabuhan) also exchanges money and has an international ATM.

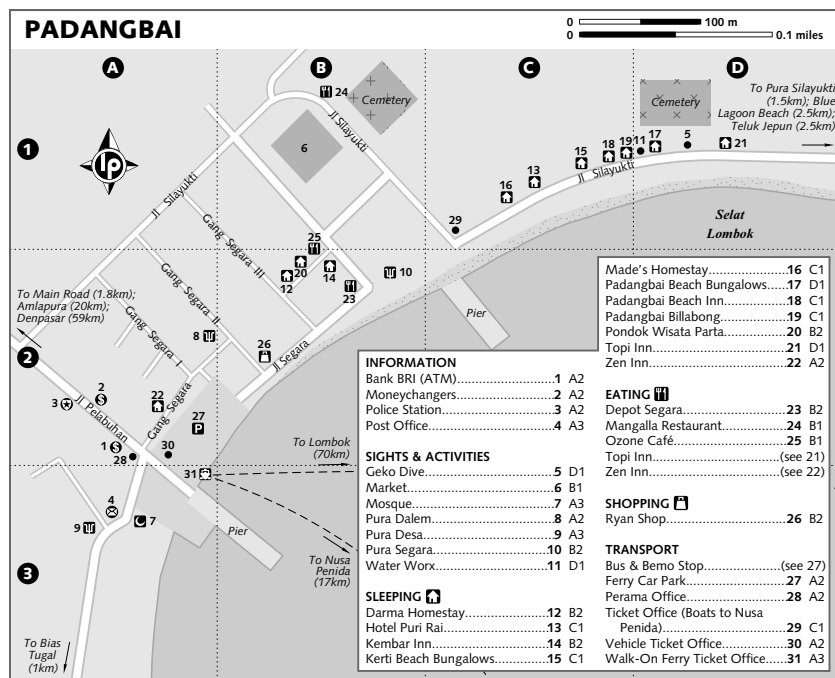
You can find slow internet access (per min 300Rp) at numerous places including Kerti Bungalows and Made's Homestay (see p223).

### Sights

Padangbai is interesting for a little walk. At the west end of town near the post office there's a small **mosque** and a temple, **Pura Desa**. Towards the middle, there are two more temples, **Pura Dalem** and **Pura Segara**, and a new **market** that is home to numerous stalls and various vendors displaced from the beach.

### DETOUR

East of Kusamba and 300m west of Pura Goa Lawah (above), **Merta Sari** (☎ 10am-3pm) serves up a meal for 10,000Rp that's hard to beat. Their renowned *nasi campur* includes juicy, pounded fish satay, a slightly sour, fragrant fish broth, fish steamed in banana leaves, snake beans in a fragrant tomato-peanut sauce and a fire red sambal. The open-air pavilion is 300m north of the coast road in the village of Bingin. Look for the Merta Sari signs.



With its protected bay, Padangbai has a good beach right in front. Others are nearby; walk southwest from the ferry terminal and follow the trail up the hill to idyllic **Bias Tugal**, also known as Pantai Kecil (Little Beach), on the exposed coast outside the bay. Be careful in the water as it is subject to strong currents. There are a couple of daytime warung here.

On a headland at the northeast corner of the bay, a path leads uphill to three temples, including **Pura Silayukti**, where Empu Kuturan – who introduced the caste system to Bali in the 11th century – is said to have lived. On the other side of this headland is the small, light-sand **Blue Lagoon Beach**.

## Activities

The Topi Inn (see opposite) arranges a huge variety of cultural workshops for guests and non-guests. The fee is 100,000Rp for a course of two to four hours.

## DIVING

There's some pretty good diving on the coral reefs around Padangbai, but the water can be a little cold and visibility is not always ideal. The

most popular local dives are **Blue Lagoon** and **Teluk Jepun** (Jepun Bay), both in Teluk Amuk, the bay just east of Padangbai. There's a good variety of soft and hard corals and varied marine life, including sharks, turtles and wrasse, and a 40m wall at the Blue Lagoon.

Several good local outfits offer diving trips in the area, including Gili Tepekong and Gili Biaha, and on to Tulamben and Nusa Penida. All dive prices are competitive, costing US\$40 to US\$90 for two boat dives, depending on the site. Dive courses are available.

Recommended operators include the following:

**Geko Dive** (☎ 41516; www.gekodive.com; Jl Silayukti) The longest-established operator; nice café across from the beach.

**Water Worx** (☎ 41220; www.waterworxbali.com; Jl Silayukti) Another good dive operator, which should have a new diving pool.

## SNORKELLING

One of the best and most accessible walk-in snorkel sites is off Blue Lagoon Beach. Note that it is subject to strong currents when the tide is out. Other sites such as Teluk Jepun can

be reached by local boat (or check with the dive operators to see if they have any room on their dive boats). Snorkel sets cost about 20,000Rp per day.

Local *jukung* (boats) offer snorkelling trips (bring your own snorkelling gear) around Padangbai (140,000Rp), and as far away as Nusa Lembongan (300,000Rp) for two passengers.

## Sleeping

Accommodation in Padangbai – like the town – is pretty laid-back. Prices are fairly cheap and it's pleasant enough here that there's no need to hurry through to or from Lombok if you want to hang out on the beach and in cafés with other travellers.

## VILLAGE

In the village, there are several tiny places in the alleys, some with a choice of small, cheap downstairs rooms or bigger, brighter upstairs rooms.

**Pondok Wisata Parta** (☎ 41475; off Gang Segara III; r 40,000-150,000Rp; ☺) The pick of the 10 rooms in this nice place is the 'honeymoon room', which has a harbour view and good breezes. The most expensive rooms have air-con.

**Darma Homestay** (☎ 41394; Gang Segara III; r 50,000-80,000Rp) The more expensive rooms of the 12 have hot showers. Go for the private room on the top floor.

**Kembar Inn** (☎ 41364; kembarinn@hotmail.com; r 50,000-150,000Rp; ☺) There are six rooms at this inn linked by a steep and narrow staircase. The best awaits at the top and has a nice private terrace.

**Zen Inn** (☎ 41418; www.zeninn.com; Gang Segara; r 50,000-150,000Rp; ☺) Close to the ferry terminal, Zen's four rooms are eclectically decorated with bamboo and rattan interiors and both indoor and outdoor showers. Extra money gets hot water and air-con. The café is a treat.

## JALAN SILAYUKTI

This little strip of beach places a mere two minutes east of the village makes for a mellow hangout.

**Made's Homestay** (☎ 41441; Jl Silayukti; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp; ☺) Clean simple rooms and internet access are the draws here.

**Kerti Beach Bungalows** (☎ 41391; Jl Silayukti; r 50,000-80,000Rp; ☺) Go for the 18 rooms in pretty bungalows rather than the stuffy rice barns.

**Padangbai Bilabong** (☎ 0813-3831 2607; Jl Silayukti; r 50,000-100,000Rp) Go for the bungalows right up front at this scrupulously tidy place, which has found a way to create garden features out of used plastic water bottles.

**Topi Inn** (☎ 41424; www.topiinn.com; Jl Silayukti; r 50,000Rp, f 150,000Rp) Sitting at the end of the bay in a serene location, Topi has six pleasant rooms. The enthusiastic owners offer cultural courses among other diversions. The café is excellent.

**Padangbai Beach Inn** (☎ 41439; Jl Silayukti; r 60,000-100,000Rp) Go with the pleasant bungalows and avoid the rice-barn style two-storey cottages, which can get hot and stuffy.

**Padangbai Beach Bungalows** (☎ 41417; Jl Silayukti; r 75,000-100,000Rp, with air-con 200,000Rp; ☺) The bungalows are attractive, with open-air bathrooms, and set in a classic Balinese garden setting.

**Hotel Puri Rai** (☎ 41385; purirai\_hotel@yahoo.com; Jl Silayukti 3; r 250,000Rp, with air-con 300,000Rp; ☺) The most upmarket option in town, the Puri Rai has 30 rooms, some with fans in a two-storey stone building, pleasantly facing the pool. Others with air-con enjoy harbour views or overlook a parking area.

## Eating & Drinking

Beach fare and backpackers' staples are what's on offer in Padangbai – lots of fresh seafood, Indonesian classics, pizza and, yes, banana pancakes. Most of the places to stay have a café. You can easily laze away a few hours soaking up the scene at the places along Jl Segara and Jl Silayukti, which have harbour views during the day and cool breezes in the evening.

**Depot Segara** (☎ 41443; Jl Segara; dishes 10,000-20,000Rp) Fresh seafood is prepared in a variety of ways at this popular café with a touch of style. Ponder the murals while you gobble down one of their good breakfasts.

**Mangalla Restaurant** (☎ 0813-3850 3618; Jl Silayukti; 15,000-30,000Rp) Well-priced seafood, pizza and fresh local fare are popular here. Relax on the comfy rattan chairs.

**Zen Inn** (☎ 41418; Gang Segara; dishes 18,000-30,000Rp) Burgers and other meaty mains with a Dutch accent are served in this dark café with movies at night and a good bar.

**Ozone Café** (☎ 41501; dishes 15,000-35,000Rp) This popular travellers' gathering spot has more character than every other place in East Bali combined. Incomprehensible slogans painted



on the wall (example: Acting like a monkey when you see a nice girl is so important for you.) set the tone. There's pizza and live music, sometimes by patrons.

**Topi Inn** (☎ 41424; Jl Silayukti; mains 18,000-40,000Rp) Juices, shakes and good coffees served up throughout the day. Big breakfasts and at night fresh seafood from the boats right across the street.

### Shopping

**Ryan Shop** (☎ 41215; Jl Segara 38) A name you can trust for quality. It has a fair selection of second-hand paperbacks, some maps and sundries.

### Getting There & Away

#### BEMO

Padangbai is 2km south of the main Semarapura-Amlapura road. Bemo leave from the car park in front of the port; orange bemo go east through Candidasa to Amlapura (7000Rp); blue or white bemo go to Semarapura (8000Rp).

#### BOAT

##### Lombok

Public ferries (adult/child 21,000/14,000Rp); travel non-stop between Padangbai and Lembar on Lombok. Motorcycles cost 155,000Rp and cars cost 330,000Rp – go through the weighbridge at the west corner of the Padangbai car park. Depending on conditions the trip can take three to five hours. Boats run 24 hours and leave about every 90 minutes; food and drink is sold on board. Passenger tickets are sold near the pier.

Anyone who carries your luggage on or off the ferries at both ports will expect to be paid, so agree on the price first or carry your own stuff. Also, watch out for scams whereby the porter may try to sell you a ticket you've already bought.

Perama has a 40-passenger boat (200,000Rp, four hours), which usually leaves at 9am for Senggigi, where you can connect to the Gilis.

#### Nusa Penida

On the beach just east of the car park, you'll find the twin-engine fibreglass boats that run across the strait to Buyuk, 1km west of Sampanan on Nusa Penida (25,000Rp, 45 min, four daily). The boats run between 7am and noon. Boats back to Padangbai cost 18,000Rp.

#### BUS

To connect with Denpasar, catch a bemo out to the main road and hail a bus to the Batubulan terminal (15,000Rp).

#### TOURIST SHUTTLE BUS

**Perama** (☎ 41419; Café Dona, Jl Pelabuhan; ☎ 7am-8pm) has a stop here for its services around the east coast.

Destination	Fare
Candidasa	15,000Rp
Kuta	40,000Rp
Lovina	100,000Rp
Sanur	40,000Rp
Ubud	40,000Rp

### PADANGBAI TO CANDIDASA

☎ 0363

It's worth prowling some of the beachside lanes off the main road for little places to stay. It's 11km along the main road from the Padangbai turn-off to the resort town of Candidasa, and there are bemo or buses every few minutes. Between the two is an attractive stretch of coast, which has some tourist development, and a large oil-storage depot in Teluk Amuk.

#### Buitan & Manggis

Balina Beach is the name bestowed on the small tourist development at the village of Buitan. It's an attractive area on a quiet coastal stretch, though the beach is being lost to erosion and what's left is black sand and stones. To find the turn-off, look for the small yellow sign 'Balina' from the main road. Nearby is the pretty village of Manggis.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

Two of Bali's best hotels are off the main road along here.

One of Bali's best resorts, the **Amankila** (☎ 41333; www.amankila.com; villa from US\$650; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎), is hidden along the jutting cliffs. About 5.6km beyond the Padangbai turn-off and 500m past the road to Manggis, a discreetly marked side road leads to the hotel. It features an isolated seaside location with views to Nusa Penida and even Lombok. The renowned architecture features classically simple rectangular structures with thatched roofs and lots of natural wood and stone. The three main swimming pools step down

into the sea, in matching shades of blue. The **Beachclub pool** (150,000Rp) is on a stretch of sand and is open to non-guests. It has a café and water sports. The restaurants at the Amankila are open to non-guests. The superb **Terrace** (lunch 80,000-200,000Rp) is more casual and has creative and varied cuisine. The **Restaurant** (mains 140,000-210,000Rp) has complex fusion and Balinese dishes.

Somewhat more accessible to the masses on everyday budgets, the **Alila Manggis** (☎ 41011; www.alilahotels.com; r US\$180-250; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) has elegant, white, thatch-roofed buildings in spacious lawn gardens facing a beautiful stretch of secluded beach. The 55 rooms are very comfortable, with smart modern interiors; the best are the deluxe ones on the top floor with balconies. The restaurant features excellent *nouvelle* Balinese cuisine and you can be served at tables in your room or at the beach. Activities include a kids' camp, a spa and cooking courses. The latter may well tempt you after you enjoy the superb pan-Asian cuisine in the restaurant **Seasalt**.

#### Mendira & Sengkidu

Coming from the west, there are hotels and losmen (basic accommodation) off the main road at Mendira and Sengkidu, before you reach Candidasa. Although the beach has suffered from erosion and unsightly sea walls have been constructed, it's a good place for a getaway if you have your own transport.

#### SLEEPING & EATING

All of the following are on small tracks between the main road and the water; none are far from Candidasa.

The three places listed here are reached down narrow roads from a single turn off the main road 1km west of Candidasa. Look for a large sign listing places to stay.

**Amarta Beach Inn Bungalows** (☎ 41230; r 100,000-200,000Rp) In a panoramic seaside setting, the 10 units here are right on the water and are great value. The more expensive ones have hot water and spiffy open-air bathrooms. At low tide there is a tiny beach; at other times you can sit and watch the bananas grow.

**Candi Beach Cottage** (☎ 41234; www.candibeachbali.com; r US\$70-90, bungalow US\$80-120; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This low-key resort-style hotel has two pools and lovely grounds right at the waves. There are 32 rooms and 32 bungalows, all with satellite TV.

**Pondok Pisang** (☎ 41065; www.pondokpisang.com; r 200,000-350,000Rp) The name here means 'banana hut', and there's plenty of appeal. The six, spacious bungalows are widely spaced facing the sea. Each bungalow has a unique interior, including mosaic-tiled bathrooms. Yoga intensives are held at various times and you can often find women sewing cushions and bags.

The next two places are an easy walk to Candidasa.

**Nirwana** (☎ 41136; nirwana-cottages@telkom.net; r US\$35-60; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This older resort has 12 bungalow-style rooms that are a little dowdy but well maintained. The best units are near the seawall with the pool and café. It's 300m down a forested dirt track from the main road.

**Lotus Bungalows** (☎ 41104; www.lotusbungalows.com; r US\$20-45; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) The 20 rooms here (some with air-con, all with hot water) are in well-spaced bungalow-style units. Four (numbers 1, 2, 13 and 14) are right on the ocean, with the last being the top pick. The décor is bright and airy, and there is a large and stylish pool area.

#### Tenganan

Tenganan is a village of Bali Aga people, the descendants of the original Balinese who inhabited Bali before the Majapahit arrival. The village is surrounded by a wall, and consists basically of two rows of identical houses stretching up the gentle slope of the hill.

The Bali Aga are reputed to be exceptionally conservative and resistant to change with much being made of the fact that things have changed little since the 11th century. Well that's only partially true: TVs and other modern conveniences are hidden away in the traditional houses. But it is fair to say that the village has a much more traditional feel than most other villages on Bali. Cars and motorcycles are forbidden from entering.

The most striking feature of Tenganan is its postcard-like beauty, with the hills providing a photogenic backdrop. As you enter the village you may be greeted by a guide who will take you on a tour of the village – and generally lead you back to their family compound to look at textiles and *lontar* (specially prepared palm leaves) strips. Unlike Besakih, however, there's no pressure to buy anything, so you won't need your own armed guards. For more on *lontar* books see p234.

A peculiar, old-fashioned version of the gamelan known as the *gamelan selunding* is

### A HORSE WALKS INTO A TOWN...

There's a smelly legend about how the villagers of Tenganan came to acquire their land. The story relates how Dalem Bedaulu lost a valuable horse. When the villagers of Tenganan found the carcass, the king offered them a reward. They asked that they be given the land where the horse was found – that is, the entire area where the dead horse could be smelled.

The king sent a man with a keen nose who set off with the village chief and walked an enormous distance without ever managing to get away from the foul odour. Eventually accepting that enough was enough, the official headed back to Bedaulu, scratching his head. Once out of sight, the village chief pulled a large hunk of dead horse out from under his clothes.

still played here, and girls dance an equally ancient dance known as the Rejang. There are other Bali Aga villages nearby, including Tenganan Dauh Tenkad, 1.5km west off the Tenganan road, with a charming old-fashioned ambience, and several weaving workshops. At Asak, southeast of Tenganan, another ancient instrument, the *gamelan gambang*, is still played.

### FESTIVALS

Tenganan is full of unusual customs, festivals and practices. At the month-long **Usaba Sambah Festival**, which usually starts in May or June, men fight with sticks wrapped in thorny pandanus leaves. At this same festival, small, hand-powered ferris wheels are brought out and the village girls are ceremonially twirled around.

### TOURS

To really experience the ambience and culture of the village, consider one of the tours offered by **JED** (Village Ecotourism Network; ☎ 0361-735320; www.jed.or.id; tours US\$25-50). These highly regarded tours include local guides who explain the culture in detail and show how local goods are produced. Tours include transport from South Bali and Ubud.

### SHOPPING

A magical cloth known as *kamben gringsing* is woven here – a person wearing it is said to be protected against black magic. Traditionally this is made using the 'double ikat' technique, in which both the warp and weft threads are 'resist dyed' before being woven. MBAs would thrill to studying the integrated production of the cloth: everything, from growing the cotton to producing the dyes from local plants to the actual production, is accomplished here. It's very time-consuming, and the exquisite pieces of double ikat available

for sale are quite expensive (from about 600,000Rp). You'll see cheaper cloth for sale but it usually comes from elsewhere on Bali.

Many baskets from across the region, made from *ata* palm, are on sale. Another local craft is traditional Balinese calligraphy, with the script inscribed onto *lontar* palm strips, in the same way that the ancient *lontar* books were created. Most of these books are Balinese calendars or depictions of the *Ramayana* (one of the great Hindu holy books). They cost 150,000Rp to 300,000Rp, depending on quality.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tenganan is 4km up a side road just west of Candidasa. At the turn-off where bemo stop, motorcycle riders offer *ojek* (motorcycle that carries pillion passengers) rides to the village for about 5000Rp. A nice option is to take an *ojek* up to Tenganan, and enjoy a shady downhill walk back to the main road.

### CANDIDASA

☎ 0363

Candidasa is a relaxed pause on the route east. It has several noted hotels and some excellent restaurants. However, it also has problems stemming from decisions made three decades ago that should serve as cautionary notes to any undiscovered place that suddenly finds itself on the map.

Until the 1970s, Candidasa was just a quiet little fishing village, then beachside losmen and restaurants sprang up and suddenly it was *the* new beach place on Bali. As the facilities developed, the beach eroded – unthinkingly, offshore barrier-reef corals were harvested to produce lime for cement for the orgy of construction that took place – and by the late 1980s Candidasa was a beach resort with no beach.

Mining stopped in 1991, and concrete sea walls and groynes have limited the erosion and now provide some sandy swimming spots, but it's not your typical, tropical stretch of golden-sand beach.

Still, the relaxed seaside ambience and sweeping views from the hotels built right on the water appeal to a more mature crowd of visitors. Candidasa is a good base from which to explore the interior of East Bali and the east coast's famous diving and snorkelling sites.

### Information

**Foto Asri** (☎ 41098; Jl Raya Candidasa) sells groceries and sundries and has a postal agency. A **moneychanger** and a bank are nearby but, in something of a blow locally, the ATM has gone (the closest ones are in Padangbai and Amlapura). The **police station** is at the west end of town; the **post office** the east.

There are a few not-very-fast internet options including the suitably amiable **Happy's Internet** (☎ 41019; Jl Raya Candidasa; per min 500Rp). **Nilwati** (☎ 41272; Jl Raya Candidasa 45) has used books.

### Sights

Candidasa's temple, **Pura Candidasa** (admission by donation), is on the hillside across from the lagoon at the eastern end of the village strip. It has twin temples devoted to the male-female gods Shiva and Hariti. The fishing village, just east of the lagoon, has colourful *prahu* drawn up on what's left of the beach. In the early morning you can watch the boats coasting in after a night's fishing. The owners canvass visitors for snorkelling trips to the reef and the nearby islets.

Apart from the Bali Aga village of Tenganan (see p225), there are several traditional villages inland from Candidasa and attractive countryside for walking.

**Ashram Gandhi Chandi** (☎ 41108; Jl Raya Candidasa), a community by the lagoon, follows the pacifist teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Guests may stay for short or extended periods, but are expected to participate in community life, including waking early for daily yoga practice. There are simple guest cottages by the ocean and payment is by donation.

### Activities

Diving and snorkelling are popular activities in Candidasa. Gili Tepekong, which has a series of coral heads at the top of a sheer drop-off, is perhaps the best dive site. It offers the chance

to see lots of fish, including some larger marine life. Other features include an underwater canyon, which can be dived in good conditions, but is always potentially hazardous. The currents here are strong and unpredictable, the water is cold and visibility is variable – it's recommended for experienced divers only.

Other dive sites are beside Gili Mimpang, further east at Gili Biaha, and Nusa Penida. A recommended and popular dive operator is **Dive Lite** (☎ 41660; www.divelite.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; 2 dives US\$60-95), which dives Tulamben, Amed, Nusa Penida/Lembongan and Menjangan. A four-day PADI open water course is US\$400. Snorkelling tours are US\$25.

Hotels and shops along the main road rent snorkel sets for about 20,000Rp per day. For the best snorkelling, take a boat to off-shore sites or to Gili Mimpang (a one-hour boat trip should cost about 100,000Rp for up to three people).

On shore, you can catch up on your beauty treatments at **Dewi Spa** (☎ 41042; Jl Raya Candidasa; massage from US\$7; ☎ 9am-7pm). Waxing, steaming, rubbing, manicuring and more are on offer.

### Sleeping

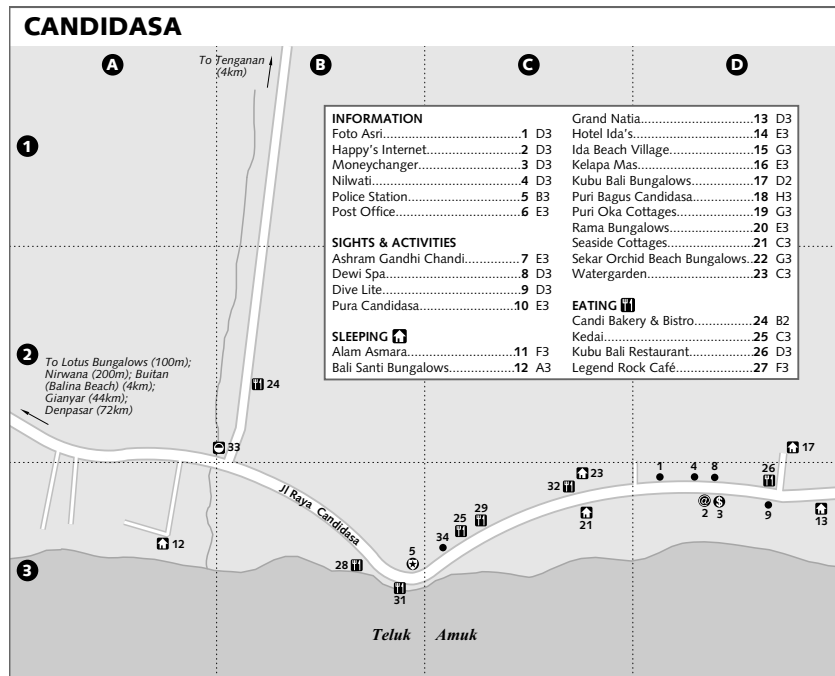
Candidasa's main drag is well supplied with seaside accommodation, as well as restaurants and other tourist facilities. On the small roads branching off Forest Rd east of the lagoon several places are hidden among the palm trees near the original fishing village. These are nicely relaxed and often have a sliver of beach. You might also consider some of the places west of town; many are close.

### BUDGET

**Rama Bungalows** (☎ 41778; r 50,000-60,000Rp) On a little road near the lagoon and ocean, the eight rooms are in a two-storey stone structure with temple design and bungalows. Upstairs rooms have views of the lagoon.

**Seaside Cottages** (☎ 41629; www.bali-seafront-bungalows.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; cottages 30,000-230,000Rp; ☎) The choice of rooms here is like *nasi campur* – quite variable. Basic rooms have cold water and fan. As you move up the rate card you add hot water, air-con, open-air garden bathrooms, kitchens and delightful views. The Temple Café is a fun place.

**Bali Santi Bungalows** (☎ 41611; www.balisanti.com; r 75,000-200,000Rp; ☎) Among a few places scattered in the palm trees west of the centre, Bali Santi is right on the water and is the sort of



place where you'll want to finish a book. The 10 rooms (one with air-con) are comfortable bungalow-style units.

**Hotel Ida's** (☎ 41096; jsidas1@aol.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; bungalows 80,000-120,000Rp) Set in a rambling seaside garden shaded by coconut trees, Ida's has six thatched bungalows with open-air bathrooms. Rustic balcony furniture, including a day bed, ensures you'll chill right out.

**Puri Oka Cottages** (☎ 41092; puri\_oka@hotmail.com; Jl Pantai Indah; r 100,000-250,000Rp; 🏠 🚿) Hidden by a banana grove east of town, the cheapest of the 24 rooms here are small, while the better ones have water views. The pool is medium-sized and at low tide there's a small beach out front.

**Sekar Orchid Beach Bungalows** (☎ 41086; www.sekar-orchid.com; Jl Pantai Indah 26; bungalows 120,000-150,000Rp) The grounds here live up to the name with orchids growing in profusion. There's a small beach and the seven large rooms are very good value with nice views from the 2nd floor. The site is nicely isolated.

**Kelapa Mas** (☎ 41369; www.kelapamas.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; r 150,000-250,000Rp; 🏠 🚿) This relaxing rustic compound deserves its name – the

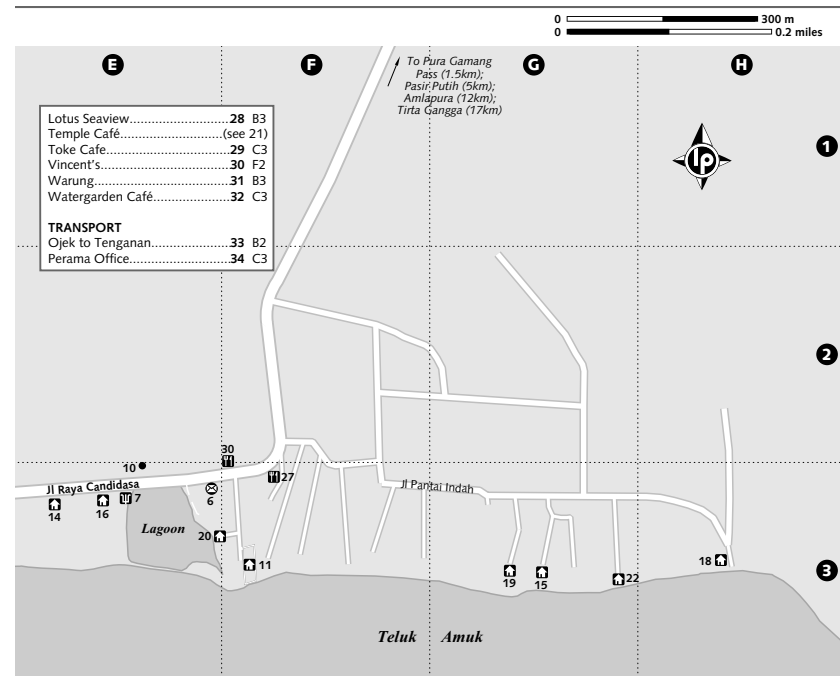
grounds are filled with tall coconut palms. Bamboo-clad rooms with lounging verandas are set in lush gardens; there's even a little sand at low tide. Some rooms have views; others have hot water and air-con.

#### MIDRANGE

**Ida Beach Village** (☎ 41118; fax 41041; Jl Pantai Indah; bungalow US\$45-60; 🏠 🚿) The 17 units range from Balinese rice-barn-style bungalows with private gardens to more modest cottages. The seaside swimming pool is a highlight; the location is very quiet.

**Kubu Bali Bungalows** (☎ 41532; www.kububali.com; s/d US\$50/55, ste US\$60-65; 🏠 🚿) Behind Kubu Bali restaurant (p230) and up a lane, this garden spot has streams, ponds and a swimming pool landscaped into the steep hillside. The 20 units have views over palm trees, the coast and the sea; you'll have to climb a bit to get to your room.

**Grand Natia** (☎ 42007; hotelnatia@yahoo.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; r US\$50-85; 🏠 🚿) This hotel resembles a modern water palace – narrow pathways are lined with carp-filled waterways. Each of the 12 rooms has an open-air bathroom. The



small pool drops away to the ocean, although the two 'ocean-view' rooms aren't worth the premium.

**Alam Asmara** (☎ 41929; www.asamarabali.com; r US\$55-95; 🏠 🚿) Walk through little waterways to the 12 units at this private new place. The pool is on the ocean; rooms have a traditional yet stylish design with lots of room and details such as stone tubs and satellite TV.

**Puri Bagus Candidasa** (☎ 41131; www.bagus-discovery.com; Jl Pantai Indah; r US\$50-160; 🏠 🚿) At the eastern end of the beach near an outcropping of outriggers, this well-run beachfront resort is hidden away in the palm trees. A sandy beach area with cabanas is by the pool and restaurant. The 46 rooms have open-air bathrooms; they're a great deal when prices are low.

#### TOP END

**Watergarden** (☎ 41540; www.watergardenhotel.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; r from US\$85, 2-bedroom ste US\$180; 🏠 🚿) The Watergarden lives up to its name with a swimming pool and fish-filled ponds that wind around the buildings and through the lovely garden. The design has a Japanese influence and

each of the 14 rooms has a veranda projecting over the lily ponds. The décor is minimalist. The café is a treat (p230).

#### Eating

There's a good range of eating options in Candidasa. Many of the hotels have seafood restaurants and cafés that are lovely at lunch time and great for sea breezes and moonlight at night.

At restaurants along Jl Raya Candidasa, beware of traffic noise, although it improves after dark. Among the cheapest and tastiest eateries are the warung and *kaki lima* (food carts) that spring up every evening (and to a lesser extent during the day) at the western end of town where the main road broadsides the sea.

Where noted, many of these places are also good for a drink. If you're out of town, the better places will provide transport; call.

**Legend Rock Café** (Jl Raya Candidasa; dishes 9000-25,000Rp) A bar that also serves Western and Indonesian meals, it has live music many nights each week. It's a well-mannered bar, about as wild as things get in Candidasa.

**Candi Bakery & Bistro** (☎ 41883; Jl Tenganan; dishes 10,000-35,000Rp) About 100m up from the



Tenganan turn-off west of town, this smart café is worth the detour. The tiny bakery specialises in delicious pastries, cakes and croissants. You can enjoy meals out on the veranda.

**Temple Café** (☎ 41629; Jl Raya Candidasa; dishes 15,000-30,000Rp) Global citizens can get a taste of home at this café attached to the Seaside Cottages. The menu has wraps, Vegemite, cabbage rolls, meat pies and other mundane treats. The popular bar has a long drink list.

**Toe Café** (☎ 41991; Jl Raya Candidasa; dishes 20,000-50,000Rp) The open kitchen at this mellow place turns out some good seafood. It's got a nice old bar and is a good place for a drink or something for the munchies.

**Lotus Seaview** (☎ 41257; Jl Raya Candidasa; dishes 20,000-60,000Rp) This Lotus branch is smack dab on the ocean, just west of town. The menu has all the classics from Italian to Indonesian.

**Watergarden Café** (☎ 41540; Jl Raya Candidasa; dishes 15,000-50,000Rp) Overlooking a carp pond, this stylish café somehow manages to maintain a peaceful atmosphere amid the zooming trucks. The food is excellent, including Asian specialities. Its breakfasts hang low with ripe fruit.

**Kubu Bali Restaurant** (☎ 41532; Jl Raya Candidasa; dishes 20,000-60,000Rp) This big place has an open kitchen out the front (the woks down out the trucks), where Indonesian and Chinese dishes – including excellent seafood – are turned out with great energy and panache. The bar exudes: 'gin & tonic.'

**Vincent's** (☎ 41368; Jl Raya Candidasa; dishes 25,000-80,000Rp) A deep and open place with several distinct rooms and a lovely rear garden with rattan lounge furniture. There's a plethora of artfully prepared Thai and veggie options but the real stars are the local dishes. It has a refined bar.

**Kedai** (☎ 42020; Jl Raya Candidasa; mains 25,000-90,000Rp; ☎ noon-2pm, 5-9pm) Set in a stately open-air pavilion under a high conical thatched roof, Kedai offers a refined dining experience. The menu of Balinese specialties changes with the seasons and includes many organic and vegetarian options.

### Getting There & Away

Candidasa is on the main road between Amlapura and South Bali, but there's no terminal, so hail bemo (buses probably won't stop). You'll need to change in either Padangbai or Semarapura.

**Perama** (☎ 41114; Jl Raya Candidasa; ☎ 7am-7pm) is at the western end of the strip.

Destination	Fare
Kuta	40,000Rp
Lovina	100,000Rp
Padangbai	15,000Rp
Sanur	40,000Rp
Ubud	40,000Rp

Two or more people can charter a ride to Amed in the far east for about 60,000Rp each. Ask at your accommodation about vehicle rental.

### CANDIDASA TO AMLAPURA

The main road east of Candidasa curves up to **Pura Gamang Pass** (*gamang* means 'to get dizzy' – something of an overstatement), from where you'll find fine views down to the coast and lots of greedy-faced monkeys. If you walk along the coastline from Candidasa towards Amlapura, a trail climbs up over the headland, with fine views over the rocky islets off the coast. Beyond this headland there's a long sweep of wide, exposed black-sand beach.

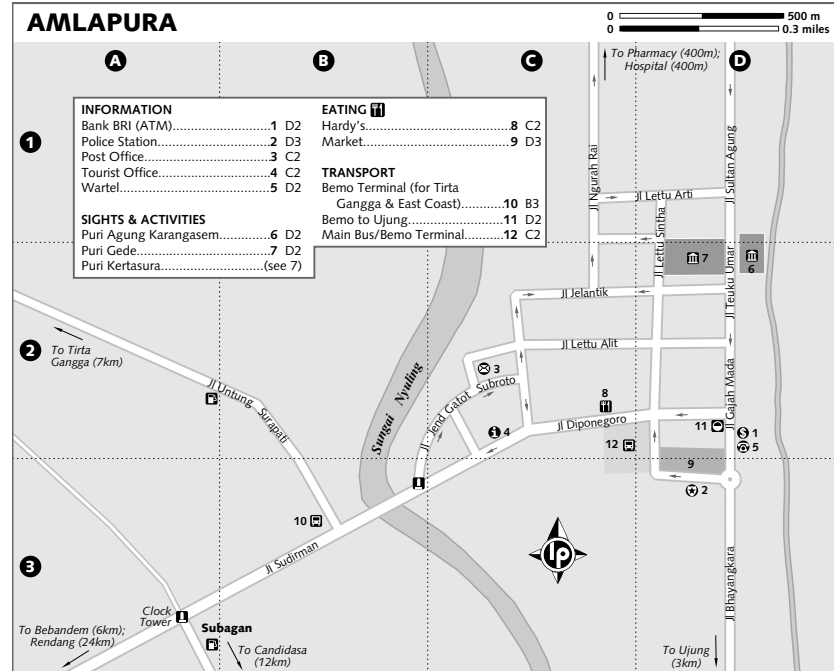
Although Candidasa lacks good beaches, about 5km east is **Pasir Putih**, an idyllic white-sand beach. When you see crude signs with either 'Virgin Beach Club' or 'Jl Pasir Putih', turn off the main road and follow a paved track for about 1km to a bridge where locals will collect a fee (5000Rp). Another 1km brings you to a small temple that has good parking. You can drive a further 600m directly to the beach but the road is a fiasco and the walk instead is quite pretty.

The beach is almost a cliché: a long crescent of white sand backed by coconut trees. At one end cliffs provide shade; at the other is a little line of fishing boats. At times stands sell drinks and snacks. The surf is often mellow; bring your own snorkelling gear to explore the waters.

### AMLAPURA

☎ 0363

Amlapura is the capital of Karangasem district, and the main town and transport junction in eastern Bali. The smallest of Bali's district capitals, it's a multicultural place with Chinese shophouses, several mosques and confusing one-way streets (which are the



tiest on Bali). It's worth a stop to see the royal palaces but a lack of choice means you'll want to spend the night elsewhere, such as near-by Tirta Gangga.

### Information

The friendly staff at the **tourist office** (☎ 21196; Jl Diponegoro; ☎ 7am-3pm Mon-Thu, 7am-noon Fri) will snap to attention if any traveller walks in requesting information, but it's not worth a special stop. **Bank BRI** (Jl Gajah Mada) will change money. It has an international ATM as does **Hardy's**. There is a **pharmacy** (Apotik; Jl Ngurah Rai 47) and a small hospital across the street.

### Sights

Amlapura's three palaces, on Jl Teuku Umar, are decaying reminders of Karangasem's period as a kingdom at its most important when supported by Dutch colonial power in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Outside the **Puri Agung Karangasem** (Jl Teuku Umar; admission 5000Rp; ☎ 8am-6pm), there is an impressive three-tiered entry gate and beautifully sculpted panels. After you pass through the entry courtyard, a left turn takes you to

the main building, known as the Maskerdam (Amsterdam), because it was the Karangasem kingdom's acquiescence to Dutch rule that allowed it to hang on long after the demise of the other Balinese kingdoms. Inside you'll be able to see several rooms, including the royal bedroom and a living room with furniture that was a gift from the Dutch royal family. The Maskerdam faces the ornately decorated Bale Pemandesan, which was used for the royal tooth-filing ceremonies. Beyond this, surrounded by a pond, is the Bale Kambang, still used for family meetings and for dance practice.

Across the street, **Puri Gede** (Jl Teuku Umar; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm) has ongoing renovations. The rambling palace grounds feature many brick buildings dating from the Dutch colonial period. Look for stone and wood carvings from the 19th century. The Rangki has been returned to its glory and is surrounded by fish ponds. Look for the stern portrait of the late king AA Gede Putu; his wife still lives in one of the buildings.

The other royal palace building, **Puri Kertasura**, is not open to visitors.

### DETOUR

Typically travellers bound for the coast of **Amed** (see p234) travel the inland route through Tirta Gangga. However, there is a longer, twistier and more adventurous alternative that runs from **Ujung** right around the coast to the Amed area. The road climbs up the side of Gunung Seraya, and the views out to sea are breathtaking. Along the way it passes through numerous small villages where people are carving fishing boats.

Near **Seraya** look for weavers and cotton-fabric-makers. Lots of the time, you'll just be in the middle of fruit-filled orchards and jungle. About 4km south of **Aas** there's a lighthouse.

The road is narrow but paved, and covering the 35km to Aas will take about one hour without stops. Combine this with the inland road for a good circular visit to Amed from the west.

### Eating & Shopping

Options are few in Amlapura; there are various warung around the **market** and the main bus/bemo terminal. A vast new **Hardy's** (☎ 22363; Jl Diponegoro) supermarket has groceries and lots of sundries. It has the best range of supplies like sunscreen east of Semarapura and south of Singaraja. In the parking lot there are numerous stalls serving up all manner of cheap and fresh Asian foods (5000-10,000Rp).

### Getting There & Away

Amlapura is a major transport hub. Buses and bemo regularly ply the main road to Denpasar's Batubulan terminal (20,000Rp; roughly three hours), via Candidasa, Padangbai and Ginayar (16,000Rp). Plenty of buses also go around the north coast to Singaraja (about 15,000Rp), via Tirta Gangga, Amed and Tulamben.

If you are driving to Amed and beyond, fill up at the petrol station on the road to Tirta Gangga. It's the last one until Yeh Sanih in the north.

### AROUND AMLAPURA

Five kilometres south of Amlapura, **Taman Ujung** is a major complex that may leave you slack-jawed – and not necessarily with wonder. The last king of Karangasem completed the construction of a grand water palace here in 1921, which was extensively damaged by an earthquake in 1979. A tiny vestige of the old palace is surrounded by vast modern ponds and terraces built for untold billions of rupiah. Today, the wind-swept grounds are seldom trod by visitors. It's a bit sad really and you can see all that you'd want to from the road. Just a bit further on is the interesting fishing village of **Ujung** and the alternative road to Amed.

### TIRTA GANGGA

☎ 0363

Tirta Gangga (Water of the Ganges) is the site of a holy temple, some great water features and some of the best views of rice fields and the sea beyond in East Bali. High on a ridge, it is a relaxing place to stop for an hour or a longer period, which will allow for some treks in the surrounding countryside. There are many interesting plant nurseries along the road from Amlapura.

### Sights

Amlapura's water-loving rajah, after completing his lost masterpiece at Ujung, had another go at building the water palace of his dreams. He succeeded at **Taman Tirta Gangga** (adult/child 5100/3100Rp, parking 1000Rp; ☎ site 24hr, ticket office 6am-6pm), which has a stunning crescent of rice terrace-lined hills for a backdrop.

Originally built in 1948, the water palace was damaged in the 1963 eruption of Gunung Agung and again during the political events that rocked Indonesia two years later. The palace has several swimming pools and ornamental ponds, which serve as a fascinating reminder of the old days of the Balinese rajahs. 'Pool A' (adult/child 6000/4000Rp) is the cleanest and is in the top part of the complex. 'Pool B' (adult/child 4000Rp/free) is pond-like. Look for the 11-tiered fountain and plop down under the huge old banyans.

**Hiking** in the surrounding hills is recommended. The rice terraces around Tirta Gangga are some of the most beautiful on Bali. Back roads and walking paths take you to many picturesque traditional villages. Or you can ascend the side of Gunung Agung. Guides are a good idea. Ask at any of the accommodation we've listed. One local guide who comes with good marks is **Komang Gede Sutarna** (☎ 0813-38770893).

### Sleeping & Eating

Most places to stay have cafés and there's another cluster by the sedate shops at the parking area.

**Genta Bali** (☎ 22436; dishes 10,000-12,000Rp) Across the road from the parking area, you can find a fine yoghurt drink here, as well as pasta and Indonesian food. It has an impressive list of puddings, including ones with banana, jackfruit and taro. All are served with coconut milk, brown sugar and coconut.

**Dhingin Taman** (☎ 22059; r 40,000-80,000Rp) Adjacent to the water palace, this fascinating place features elaborate tiled artworks in a garden. It has a range of 14 simple rooms – the cheapest ones facing the rice paddies are the best – and a restaurant with tables overlooking the palace. Dishes range from 5000Rp to 8000Rp. You leave your breakfast order hanging on the door, just like at the Hilton.

**Pondok Lembah Dukah** (r 50,000-100,000Rp) Down the path to the right of Good Karma, follow the signs for 300m along the rice field and then up a steep set of steps. Three very simple bungalows are clean and have fans, cold water and incredible views over bougainvillea from their porches.

**Puri Prima** (☎ /fax 21316; r 50,000-100,000Rp) About 1km north of Tirta Gangga along the main road, this slightly modern place offers outstanding views and nine pleasant rooms. It has a small restaurant, with dishes ranging from 10,000Rp to 16,000Rp. Staff can also organise trekking to Gunung Agung (from 600,000Rp for two people).

**Homestay Rijasa** (☎ 21873; r 65,000-125,000Rp) With elaborately planted grounds, this family-run place is a good choice opposite the water palace entrance. Two of the seven rooms have hot water, good for the large soaking tubs. The owner, I Ketut Sarjana, is an experienced trekking guide.

**Good Karma** (☎ 22445; r 70,000-100,000Rp) Good Karma has four very clean and simple bungalows and a good vibe derived from the surrounding pastoral rice field. The restaurant serves up excellent food in a comfortable setting right off the main parking lot. Expect to pay around 10,000Rp to 16,000Rp for dishes.

**Puri Sawah Bungalows** (☎ 21847; fax 21939; bungalows 100,000-200,000Rp) Just up the road from the palace, Puri Sawah has four comfortable and spacious rooms with great views of the airy compound. Family bungalows

sleep six (with hot water). The restaurant has rice paddy views and serves sandwiches and local classics; dishes range from 16,000Rp to 22,000Rp.

**Tirta Ayu Homestay** (☎ 22697; fax 21383; r 150,000-250,000Rp, villas US\$50-150; ☎) Right in the palace compound, this has four pleasant bungalows (cold water only) and three spacious villas with nice outdoor bathrooms. Free use of the palace swimming pool is included. A café overlooks the palace grounds; dishes range from 10,000Rp to 25,000Rp. One of the villas is huge and has its own plunge pool.

### Getting There & Away

Bemo and minibuses making the east coast haul between Amlapura and Singaraja stop at Tirta Gangga, right outside the water palace or any hotel further north. The fare to Amlapura should be 3000Rp.

### AROUND TIRTA GANGGA

The main road running from Amlapura through Tirta Gangga and on to Amed and the coast doesn't do the local attractions justice – although it is an attractive road. To appreciate things, you need to get off the main road or go hiking.

Throughout the area the *rontal* palms all look like new arrivals at army boot camp, as they are shorn of their leaves as fast as they grow them in order to meet the demand for inscribed *lontar* books.

### Pura Lempuyang

One of Bali's nine directional temples, it is perched on a hilltop at 768m. To get here, turn south off the Amlapura-Tulamben road to Ngis (2km), a palm sugar and coffee-growing area, and follow the signs another 2km to Kemuda (ask for directions if the signs confuse you). From Kemuda, climb 1700 steps to Pura Lempuyang (allow at least two hours, one way). If you want to continue to the peaks of Lempuyang (1058m) or Seraya (1175m), you should take a guide.

### Bukit Kusambi

This small hill has a big view – at sunrise Lombok's Gunung Rinjani throws a shadow on Gunung Agung. It is easy to reach from Abian Soan – look for the obvious large hill to the northwest, and follow the tiny canals through the rice fields. On the western side of the hill, a set of steps leads to the top.

## Budakeling & Krotok

Budakeling, home to several Buddhist communities, is on the back road to Bebandem, a few kilometres southeast of Tirta Gangga. It's a short drive, or a pleasant three-hour walk through rice fields, via Krotok, home of traditional blacksmiths and silversmiths.

## Tanah Aron

This imposing monument to the post-WWII Dutch resistance is gloriously situated on the southeastern slopes of Gunung Agung. The road is quite good, or you can walk up and back in about six hours from Tirta Gangga.

## AMED & THE FAR EAST COAST

☎ 0363

This popular region has grown immeasurably since the 1990s. Stretching from Amed to Bali's far eastern tip, this once-remote stretch of coast draws visitors to a succession of small scalloped black-sand beaches, relaxed atmosphere and excellent diving and snorkelling.

Often called simply 'Amed', this is a misnomer as the coast here is a series of seaside *dusun* (small villages) that start with the actual Amed in the north and then run southeast to Aas. If you're looking to get away from crowds, this is the place to come. Everything is very spread out, so you never feel like you're in the middle anything much except maybe one of the small fishing villages.

Traditionally, this area has been quite poor, with thin soils, low rainfall and very limited infrastructure. Salt production is still carried out on the beach at Amed; see Working in the Salt Brine. Villages further east rely on fishing, and colourful *jukung* line up on every available piece of beach. Inland, the steep hillsides are generally too dry for rice – corn, peanuts and vegetables are the main crops.

### LONTAR BOOKS

*Lontar* is made from the fan-shaped leaves of the *rontal* palm. The leaf is dried, soaked in water, cleaned, steamed, dried again, then flattened, dyed and eventually cut into strips. The strips are inscribed with words and pictures using a very sharp blade or point, then coated with a black stain which is wiped off – the black colour stays in the inscription. A hole in the middle of each *lontar* strip is threaded onto a string, with a carved bamboo 'cover' at each end to protect the 'pages', and the string is secured with a couple of pierced Chinese coins, or *kepeng*.

The Gedong Kirtya Library in Singaraja has the world's largest collection of works inscribed on *lontar* (specially prepared palm leaves). Some 4000 historic Balinese manuscripts cover everything from literary to mythological and historical to religious themes. They are written in fine Sanskrit calligraphy, and some are elaborately decorated.

## Orientation

As noted, this entire 10km stretch of coast is often called 'Amed' by both tourists and marketing-minded locals. Most development at first was around two bays, Jemeluk, which has cafés and a few shops, and Lipah, which has warung, shops and a few services. 'Progress' has marched onwards through Lehan, Selang and Aas. To really appreciate the coast, stop at the viewpoint at Jemeluk; besides the sweep of land, you can see fishing boats lined up like polychromatic sardines on the beach.

## Information

There's no tourist office or post office, but you may be charged a tourist tax. Enforcement of a 5000Rp per person fee at a tollbooth on the outskirts of Amed is sporadic. When collected, the funds go in part to develop the infrastructure at the beaches.

Telephone services have not kept pace with development and land lines have been strung only a little past Lipah. **Aurora Internet & Wartel** (☎ 23519; Lipah; ☎ 8am-9pm) has dial-up internet service as does Apa Kabar in Jemeluk. Both charge 500Rp per minute.

**Pondok Kebun Wayan** (☎ 23473; east of Amed) changes US dollar travellers cheques and has a small market with groceries and sundries. There are moneychangers in Lipah but there are no ATMs or banks.

## Activities

### DIVING & SNORKELLING

**Snorkelling** is excellent at several places along the coast. Jemeluk is a protected area where you can admire live coral and plentiful fish within 100m of the beach. There's a **wreck** of a Japanese fishing boat near Aas – just offshore from Eka Purnama bungalows – and coral gardens and colourful marine life at Selang.

INFORMATION		EATING	
Aurora Internet & Wartel.....1	C2	Hotel Uyah Amed.....13	B1
Pondok Kebun Wayan.....(see 16)		Life in Amed.....14	D2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Meditasi.....15	D3
Eco-Dive.....2	B1	Pondok Kebun Wayan.....16	B1
Euro Dive.....3	B1	Santai.....17	C1
SLEEPING		Three Brothers Bungalows.....18	B1
Aiona Garden of Health.....4	C1	Waeni's Sunset View	
Anda Amed.....5	C2	Bungalows & Restaurant.....19	C2
Apa Kabar.....6	C1	Wawa-Wewe I Bungalows.....20	C2
Bayu Cottages.....7	C2	Wawa-Wewe II.....21	C2
Blue Moon Villas.....8	D2	EATING	
Deddy's Bungalows & Warung.....9	B1	Amed Cafe.....22	B1
Galang Kangin Bungalows.....10	B1	Cafe Garam.....(see 13)	
Hidden Paradise Cottages.....11	C2	Cafe Ketut.....23	C2
Hotel Prema Liong.....12	C2	Cafe Senang.....(see 3)	
		Restaurant Gede.....24	C2
		Sama Sama Cafe.....25	B1

Almost every hotel rents snorkelling equipment for about 20,000Rp per day.

**Scuba diving** is also excellent, with dive sites off Jemeluk, Lipah and Selang featuring coral slopes and drop-offs with soft and hard corals, and abundant fish. Some are accessible from the beach, while others require a short boat ride. The *Liberty* wreck at Tulamben is only a 20-minute drive away.

Two good dive operators have shown a real commitment to the communities by organising regular beach clean-ups and educating locals on the need for conservation. Both have similar prices for a long list of offerings (eg local dives from about US\$50, open-water dive course about US\$350).

**Eco-dive** (☎ 081 658 1935; www.ecodivebali.com; Jemeluk; dives from US\$45) Full service shop with simple accommodation for clients.

**Euro Dive** (☎ 23469; www.eurodivebali.com; east of Amed; dives from US\$45) Has a long list of services.

### TREKKING

Quite a few trails go inland from the coast, up the slopes of Gunung Seraya (1175m) and to some little-visited villages. The countryside

is sparsely vegetated and most trails are well defined, so you won't need a guide for shorter walks – if you get lost, just follow a ridge top back down to the coast road. Allow a good three hours to get to the top of Seraya, starting from the rocky ridge just east of Jemeluk Bay, near Prem Liong Art Bungalows. To reach the top for sunrise you'll need to start in the dark, so a guide is probably a good idea – ask at your hotel.

### Sleeping

The entire area is very spread out, so take this into consideration when choosing accommodation. If you want to venture to restaurants beyond your hotel's own, for example, you'll have to either walk or find transport.

You will also get to choose between places to stay in the little beachside villages or places on the sunny and dry headlands connecting the inlets. The former puts you right on the sand and offers a small amount of life while the latter gives you broad, sweeping vistas and isolation.

Accommodation can be found in every price category; almost every place has a



restaurant or café. Places with noteworthy dining are indicated in the listings.

#### EAST OF AMED VILLAGE

**Three Brothers Bungalows** (☎ 23472; r 80,000-120,000Rp) The boys have popular and basic beachfront accommodation, plus an adjoining café with a few tables right on the sand. Dishes cost between 10,000Rp and 25,000Rp. You can't get closer to the water.

**Hotel Uyah Amed** (☎ 23462; hoteluyah@natrebali.com; r 270,000-330,000Rp; 📶) This cute place features four-poster beds set in stylish interiors bathed in light. Some units have views of the water; from all you can see the saltworks on the beach. The hotel makes the most of this by offering fascinating and free salt-making demonstrations (see Working in the Salt Brine, opposite). The tasty Café Garam is appropriately named for salt.

**Pondok Kebun Wayan** (☎ 23473; www.amedcafe.com; r 100,000-300,000Rp; 📶) This Amed empire features a range of 25 rooms mostly on a hillside across from the beach. The most expensive have views and amenities like air-con while the cheapest are two small beachside huts. The good Amed Café is separate from the lodging area.

#### JEMELUK

**Deddy's Bungalows & Warung** (☎ 23510; warung\_deddys@hotmail.com; s/d 35,000/50,000Rp) On the hillside above the bay, Deddy's has three clean, pleasant rooms.

**Galang Kangin Bungalows** (s/d from 50,000/80,000Rp) One of several budget places in this area, this hillside place has clean, basic cold-water rooms.

**Hotel Prema Liong** (☎ 23486; www.bali-amed.com; r 150,000-400,000Rp) Javanese-style two-storey bungalows are terraced up the hillside and have a new age ethos. The cold-water, open-air bathrooms are lush and almost double as a garden, while the balconies have comfy cushions and day beds.

**Apa Kabar** (☎ 23492; www.apakabarvillas.com; bungalows US\$60-95, villas US\$90-150; 📶) Right in front of fishing boats on the beach, Apa Kabar has six stylish and spacious units overlooking a swimming pool that gurgles with a small waterfall. Some units have ocean views.

**Santai** (☎ 23487; www.santaibali.com; r US\$40-80; 📶) This lovely option is on a slight hill down to the beach. The 10 rooms have four-poster beds, timber floors, open-air bath-

rooms and big comfy balcony sofas. A snaking swimming pool, fringed by purple bougainvillea, adds to the atmosphere. The restaurant faces the beach and dishes cost from 20,000Rp to 52,000Rp.

**Aiona Garden of Health** (☎ 0813-3816 1730; aiona\_bali@hotmail.com; €18-25) This slightly eccentric place takes pains to let you know that no animals were killed during the collecting for its cute little seashell museum. Like a bivalve allowed to live out its natural life, you too will take joy in life thanks to the many interesting herbal remedies and other potions available here. Needless to say, the food in the café is good for you as well; the Swiss and German owners will ply you with organic muesli, fibery breads, yoghurt and other goodies all made in house. Expect to pay 20,000Rp to 40,000Rp for dishes. Of course all this wholesomeness might drive you to drink. That's why they serve aloe vera cocktails. The two bungalows here are shaded by mango trees.

#### BUNUTAN

These places are on a sun-drenched, arid stretch of highland.

**Waeni's Sunset View Bungalows & Restaurant** (☎ 23515; madesani@hotmail.com; r 80,000-100,000Rp) Waeni's is a hillside place with unusual rustic stone cottages that have gorgeous views of the mountains behind and the bay below. The café is a good place for a sunset drink. Prices for dishes range from 15,000Rp to 30,000Rp.

**Wawa-Wewe II** (☎ 23521; wawawewevillas@yahoo.com; r 200,000-250,000Rp; 📶) On the headlands, this nice and peaceful place has eight bungalows on shady grounds that go down to the water. The infinity pool is shaped like a Buddha and is set far from the road. The café is mellow as is the price range of 18,000Rp to 23,000Rp.

**Anda Amed** (☎ 23498; www.andaaamedresort.com; villa US\$55-85; 📶) This hillside place feels Grecian. The infinity pool has sweeping views of the sea well above the road. The four villas are a good deal; they have one or two bedrooms and lots of posh details like deep, soaking tubs.

#### LIPAH

This village is just large enough for you to go wandering.

**Wawa-Wewe I Bungalows** (☎ 23506; wawawewevillas@yahoo.com; r 50,000Rp) The first Wawa-Wewe

#### WORKING IN THE SALT BRINE

For a real day at the beach, try making some salt. You start by carrying, say, 500L of ocean water across the sand to bamboo and wood funnels, which filter the water after it is poured in. Next the water goes into *palungan* (shallow trough), made of palm tree trunks split in half and hollowed out, or cement canisters where it evaporates leaving salt behind. And that's just the start and just what you might see on the beach in Amed.

In the volcanic areas around the east coast between Sanur and Yeh Sanih in the north a range of salt-making methods is used. What is universal is that the work is hard, very hard, but is also an essential source of income for many families.

In some places the first step is drying sand that has been saturated with sea water. It's then taken inside a hut, where more sea water is strained through it to wash out the salt. This very salty water is then poured into a *palungan*. Hundreds of these troughs are lined up in rows along the beaches during the salt-making season (the dry season), and as the hot sun evaporates the water, the almost-dry salt is scraped out and put in baskets. There are good exhibits on this method at the Museum Semarang in Semarang (p214).

Most salt produced on the coast of Bali is used for processing dried fish. And that's where Amed has an advantage: although its method of making salt results in a lower yield than that using sand, its salt is prized for its flavour. In fact there is a fast-growing market for this 'artisan salt' worldwide. The grey and cloudy crystals are finding their way into many top-end kitchens.

Visitors to the Amed area can learn all about this fascinating process at the adjoining Hotel Uyah Amed (see opposite) and Café Garam (see p238). Many of the staff here also work in salt production. Tours are offered, and you can buy big bags of the precious stuff (per kilo 10,000Rp) for a tiny fraction of the cost once it's gone through many hands and made its way to your local gourmet market.

has two simple rooms equipped with outdoor bathrooms set back from the bay. On Saturday nights the café hosts local reggae and blues bands. Dishes range from 15,000Rp to 30,000Rp.

**Bayu Cottages** (☎ 23495; www.bayucottages.com; r US\$22-28; 📶) The good-value Bayu has rooms with balconies overlooking the coast from the hillside. There's a small pool and many amenities including open-air marble bathrooms.

**Hidden Paradise Cottages** (☎ 23514; www.hiddenparadise-bali.com; r US\$30-50; 📶) The 16 simply decorated rooms at this older beachside place have patios and open-air bathrooms. The pool is the classic kidney shape; the bar shows movies at night.

#### LEHAN

**Life in Amed** (☎ 0813-3850 1555; www.lifebali.com; r US\$65-75, villa US\$90-150; 📶) If you can get past the pretentious name, life at Life in Amed is pretty posh although a bit urban. The six bungalow-style units are in a slightly cramped compound along with two villas on the beach. The café has a fairly complex menu of Asian fusion dishes, ranging from 30,000Rp to 70,000Rp.

#### SELANG

**Blue Moon Villas** (☎ 0817 4738 100; www.bluemoonvilla.com; r from US\$70, villa US\$120-185; 📶) On the hillside across the road from the cliffs, Blue Moon is a small and upmarket place, complete with a little pool. The five rooms set in three villas have open-air stone bathrooms. The café takes usual fare and gives it a dash of panache, with dishes costing from 20,000Rp to 50,000Rp.

#### AAS

The Aas end of the Amed coast is sparsely developed.

**Meditasi** (fax 22166; r 150,000-200,000Rp) Rooms are close to good swimming and snorkelling at this chilled-out yet tidy place where the bamboo bungalows have balconies overlooking the beach.

#### Eating & Drinking

As already noted, many places to stay have good cafés. Ones that are especially notable are listed here.

**Amed Café** (☎ 23473; Pondok Kebun Wayan, east of Amed; dishes 15,000-40,000Rp) Set right on the beach, this refined café with very comfy chairs has an extensive seafood menu, as well as the usual Chinese and Indonesian dishes.

**Café Garam** (☎ 23462; Hotel Uyah Amed, east of Amed; dishes 14,000-40,000Rp) There's a polished ambience here with pool tables and Balinese food plus live Genjek music at 8pm on Wednesday and Saturday. *Garam* means salt and the café honours the local salt-making industry.

**Café Senang** (East of Amed; dishes 9000-20,000Rp) At Euro Dive, this small, sleek café is popular with travellers.

**Sama Sama Cafe** (Jemeluk; dishes 15,000-35,000Rp) Prawns, barracuda, mackerel and other fish almost jump from the boats onto the grill at this five-table beachside joint with a lovely view of the minute bay.

**Restaurant Gede** (☎ 23517; Bunutan; dishes 16,000-35,000Rp) The huge menu focuses on Chinese dishes. Artwork by the owner decorates the walls.

**Cafe Ketut** (Lipah; dishes 7000-15,000Rp) A dash of style here goes well with the burgers and Indo classics. There's a couple other cafés nearby.

## Getting There & Around

Most people drive here via the main highway from Amlapura and Culik. The spectacular road going all the way around the headlands from Aas to Ujung is in good shape; it's possible to do the journey as a circle. See p232 for details.

All the places east of Culik are difficult to reach by public transport. Minibuses and bemo from Singaraja and Amlapura pass through Culik, the turn-off for Amed. Infrequent public bemo go from Culik to Amed (3.5km), and some continue to Seraya until 1pm. A public bemo should cost around 7000Rp from Culik to Lipah.

You can also charter transport from Culik for a negotiable 40,000Rp (by *ojek* is less than half). Be careful to specify which hotel you wish to go to – if you agree on a price to 'Amed', you may be taken only to Amed village, far short of your destination.

Perama offers charter tourist-bus services from Candidasa (see p226); the cost is 75,000Rp each for a minimum of two people. This is competitive with the cost of hiring a car and driver.

Many hotels rent bicycles for about 35,000Rp per day.

## KUBU REGION

Driving along the main road you will pass through vast old lava flows from Gunung Agung down to the sea. The landscape is

strewn with lava and boulders, and is nothing like the lush rice paddies elsewhere.

## TULAMBEN

☎ 0363

The big attraction here sunk over 60 years ago. The wreck of the US cargo ship *Liberty* is among the best and most popular dive sites on Bali and this has given rise to an entire town based on scuba diving. Other great dive sites are nearby, and even snorkellers can easily swim out and enjoy the wreck and the coral.

But if you don't plan to explore the briny waves, don't expect to hang out on the beach either. The shore is made up of rather beautiful, large washed stones, the kind you pay a small fortune for at a DIY store and which are good for your garden and bad for your back.

## Orientation & Information

The town is a quiet place, and is essentially built around the wreck – the hotels, all with cafés, and many with dive shops, are spread along a 3km stretch either side of the main road.

You can change cash at a few signposted places at the eastern end of the main road; otherwise services are sparse.

For dial-up-only internet access, try **Tulamben Wreck Divers Resort** (per min 500Rp).

## Activities

### DIVING & SNORKELLING

The wreck of the *Liberty* is about 50m directly offshore from Puri Madha Bungalows (there's also a shady car park here; 1000Rp). Swim straight out and you'll see the stern rearing up from the depths, heavily encrusted with coral, and swarming with dozens of species of colourful fish – and with scuba divers most of the day. The ship is more than 100m

### THE WRECK OF THE LIBERTY

In January 1942 the US Navy cargo ship USAT *Liberty* was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine near Lombok. Taken in tow, it was beached at Tulamben so that its cargo of rubber and railway parts could be saved. The Japanese invasion prevented this and the ship sat on the beach until the 1963 eruption of Gunung Agung broke it in two and left it just off the shoreline, much to the delight of scores of divers.

### THE 1963 ERUPTION

The most disastrous volcanic eruption on Bali in 100 years took place in 1963, when Gunung Agung blew its top in no uncertain manner at a time of considerable prophetic and political importance.

Eka Dasa Rudra, the greatest of all Balinese sacrifices and an event that takes place only every 100 years on the Balinese calendar, was to culminate on 8 March 1963. It had been well over 100 Balinese years since the last Eka Dasa Rudra, but there was dispute among the priests as to the correct and most favourable date.

Naturally, Pura Besakih was a focal point for the festival, but Gunung Agung was acting strangely as final preparations were made in late February. The date of the ceremony was looking decidedly unpropitious, but President Soekarno had already scheduled an international conference of travel agents to witness the great occasion as a highlight of their visit to the country, and he would not allow it to be postponed. By the time the sacrifices began, the mountain was glowing, belching smoke and ash, and rumbling ominously, but Gunung Agung contained itself until the travel agents had flown home.

On 17 March, Gunung Agung exploded. The catastrophic eruption killed more than 1000 people (some estimate 2000) and destroyed entire villages – 100,000 people lost their homes. Streams of lava and hot volcanic mud poured right down to the sea at several places, completely covering roads and isolating the eastern end of Bali for some time. The entire island was covered in ash, and crops were wiped out everywhere.

Although Pura Besakih is high on the slopes of Gunung Agung, only about 6km from the crater, the temple suffered little damage from the eruption. In contrast, the inhabitants of the village of Lebih, also high up on Gunung Agung's slopes, were all but wiped out. Agung erupted again on 16 May, with serious loss of life, although not on the same scale as the March eruption.

long, but the hull is broken into sections and it's easy for divers to get inside. The bow is in quite good shape, the midships region is badly mangled and the stern is almost intact – the best parts are between 15m and 30m deep. You will want at least two dives to really explore the wreck.

Many divers commute to Tulamben from Candidasa or Lovina, and in busy times it can get quite crowded between 11am and 4pm, with up to 50 divers around the wreck at a time. Stay the night in Tulamben or – better – in nearby Amed and get an early start.

Most hotels have their own diving centre, and some will give a discount on accommodation if you dive with their centre. If you are an inexperienced diver, see Sink or Swim: Diving Safely, p75 for tips on choosing a dive operation.

Among the many dive operators, **Tauch Terminal** is one of longest-established. A four-day PADI open-water certificate course costs about US\$400.

Expect to pay as little as US\$25/40 for one/two dives at Tulamben, and a little more for a night dive or dives around Amed.

Most hotels and dive centres rent out snorkelling gear for a negotiable 20,000Rp.

## Sleeping & Eating

At high tide even the rocky shore vanishes but places situated on the water still have great views of the surf. All places to stay are on the main road or right off it.

**Puri Aries** (☎ 23402; r 50,000-70,000Rp) On the inland side of the road, there are eight small, clean cold-water bungalows in a really lush, green garden setting.

**Puri Madha Bungalows** (☎ 22921; r 70,000Rp) This is the first hotel you approach from the northwest; it faces the wreck and the day-use parking area. There are nine small, clean cold-water rooms on the water.

**Bali Coral Bungalows** (☎/fax 22909; r 100,000Rp, with air-con 200,000Rp; ♿ ♿) Ten pleasant, clean bungalows with modern bathrooms huddle here, some with sea views.

**Matahari Tulamben Resort** (☎ 22916; www.dive.tulamben.com; r 100,000-200,000Rp; ♿ ♿) On a long, narrow site, this simple, cheery place has 14 decent rooms ranging from those with cold-water to pricier ones with hot water and air-con. There's a restaurant, dishes range from 8000Rp to 15,000Rp, and the pool's on the water.

**Tulamben Wreck Divers Resort** (☎ 23400; r 200,000-400,000Rp; ♿ ♿) There's seven rooms at this homey place on the inland side of the road.

The top ones are just that: on top of the building and with good views.

**Tauch Terminal Resort** (☎ 0361-730200, 22911; [www.tauch-terminal.com](http://www.tauch-terminal.com); r US\$40-80; 🏠 🚶) Down a side road, this is the pick of Tulamben accommodation. Rooms have large terraces; the cheaper ones in bungalows are actually more atmospheric and better value. The restaurant is right at the waves with a menu that spans Europe and Asia. Service is efficient if a tad curt.

### Getting There & Away

Plenty of buses and bemo travel between Amlapura and Singaraja and will stop anywhere along the Tulamben road, but they're infrequent after 2pm. Expect to pay 8000Rp to either town.

Perama offers charter tourist-bus services from Candidasa; the cost is 75,000Rp each for a minimum of two people. This is competitive with the cost of hiring a car and driver.

If you are driving to Lovina for the night, be sure to leave by about 3pm so you will still have a little light when you get there.

### TULAMBEN TO YEH SANIH

North of Tulamben, the road continues to skirt the slopes of Gunung Agung, with frequent evidence of lava flows from the 1963 eruption. Further around, the outer crater of Gunung Batur slopes steeply down to the sea. The rainfall is low and you can generally count on sunny weather. The scenery is very stark in the dry season and it's thinly populated. The route has public transport, but it's easier to make stops and detours with your own vehicle.

At **Les**, a road goes inland to lovely **Air Terjun Yeh Mampeh** (Yeh Mampeh Waterfall), at 40m

one of Bali's highest. Look for a large sign on the main road and then turn inland for about 1km. Walk the last 2km or so on an obvious path by the stream, shaded by rambutan trees. A 2000Rp donation is requested; there's no need for a guide.

The next main town is **Tejakula**, famous for its stream-fed public bathing area, said to have been built for washing horses, and often called the 'horse bath'. The renovated bathing areas (separate for men and women) are behind walls topped by rows of elaborately decorated arches, and are regarded as a sacred area. The baths are 100m inland on a narrow road with lots of small shops – it's a quaint village, with some finely carved *kulkul* towers. Take a stroll above the baths, past irrigation channels flowing in all directions.

At Pacung, about 10km before Yeh Sanih, you can turn inland 4km to **Sembiran**, which is a Bali Aga village, although it doesn't promote itself as such. The most striking thing about the place is its hillside location and brilliant coastal views.

### Sleeping

**Alam Anda** (☎ 0361-750444; [www.alamanda.de](http://www.alamanda.de); bungalow from €65; 🏠 🚶) Near Sambirenteng, this is a delightful resort on the beach, with a fine coral reef just offshore. It boasts its own diving centre. The 10 ocean-facing bungalows are set in a spacious garden and are built from stone, bamboo and thatch. Designed by the German architect owner, Alam Anda has a lush tropical feel. The waterfront restaurant, with dishes ranging from €3 to €8 (has daily buffets and fresh seafood). There's also some simple economy rooms (from €35).

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