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## The little island of the gods

23 May 2016 4:24 PM .

By PHIL JARRATT

AS I write this I'm looking out over a sun-washed bay full of small boats with a craggy coastline punctuated by a massive volcano off in the distance. As views from writing desks go, it doesn't get much better.

We haven't been to the island of Nusa Lembongan, just a 40-minute fast boat across the strait from Bali, for several years, and people warned us to expect to find paradise lost, as people on Bali do, as they sip their lattes while looking out on a trash-filled strip of black sand. And, on first impressions I'd say they are a little bit right.

When our mate Chris De Aboitz had Playgrounds Resort we used to enjoy sitting on the deck with a drink watching the industry of the seaweed collectors as they took advantage of the dropping tide at dusk, working away under a ribbon of fairy lights. The smell of drying seaweed was part of Lembongan's rustic charm, even though I don't remember seeing the farms along the beach when I first went there on Claude's yacht in 1975.

Now, the weed farmers have had to relocate, partly because the increase in boat traffic was not conducive to aquaculture, but also because development along the beachfront has taken up all the room for weed drying. Five years ago I wrote on Trip Advisor: "Heading across the channel to Lembongan is like time travelling back to

Like 25 people like this. Be the first of your friends.



Although the Oi Rio Pro has to take the cake as the most boring event on the WSL tour so far this year, it was great to see the solid performances of John Florence in winning and Queensland's Jack Freestone in finishing runner-up. But for me, the most interesting development was to see Gabriel Medina re-ignite his title hopes. Until rookie Jack shut him down in the semis, Medina was the man to beat. Photo: WSL.

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beautiful Bali of the past, when you needed a torch to navigate Jalan Legian at night! The difference is that while Lembongan offers the friendliness and serenity of old Bali, it also offers the comforts and delights of new Bali. Nowhere is this more evident than at Playgrounds Resort.”

From a pretty basic standard room with a dribble of cold water for a shower, and a rotting balcony rail, I’d probably have to revise my opinion of Playgrounds, which is in need of a makeover, but yes, there is far more happening along the strip and up on “Aussie Hill” than there was the last time we were here, but so far no traffic jams (still hardly any cars) and wherever you look, it is still very beautiful. And at least the development is mostly stylish and unobtrusive, following the lead of people like Noosa’s Troy and Alan Sinclair, whose Batu Karang hotel and villas is the jewel in the crown.

Our French mate Clement Foquerre is still going gangbusters at Indiana Kananga, down in front of

Shipwrecks surf break – for my money the best restaurant on the island – but he has now been joined by a few other contenders, including Lemongrass in the village and the expanded Deck Cafe at Batu Karang on the hill. We had a delightful dinner at Lemongrass on arrival last night and as soon as I’ve finished this column I’ll be phoning Clement to reserve a table for tonight. Michelin-trained in France, Clement came to Bali to cook with interesting fresh produce and to surf. He soon realised that in order to surf every day, he had to train a team of locals in his kitchen skills, which he has done remarkably well.

But before I finish the column or make the call, the tide is just about right and the waves are beckoning. I’m calling flexi-time.

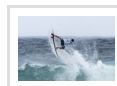
Ah, that’s better. Three generations of the Jarratt family just terrorised the pack at Playgrounds break, managing to sneak in a few under the guard of backpackers on soft boards, lids on testosterone and the usual handful of fortysomething overweight shortboarders who want to kill someone because they can’t catch a wave on their Channel Islands five-eight. I wouldn’t say we dominated, but we got our share.

On Nusa Lembongan, Lacerations and Shipwrecks both offer better waves under most conditions, but for surfing with the grandkids, it’s hard to beat Playgrounds, where the groms can watch Chinese tour groups take the big slide on the daytripper pontoons to either side of the break (the younger almost got slammed into the reef by a rogue set because he was so fixated by the slide action just a few metres away, and possibly where he would rather have been).

We’ve probably got another window of tide right after lunch, so, dear readers, you might be a bit short-changed this week, but a man has to get his priorities right.

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### Don't bag the environment

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### Koala talk is over

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PUBLIC consultation has closed for the new Koala Conservation Plan which is set to be adopted by Noosa Council next week. In a report put before the P...

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A LOCAL charity is branching out to support local women to get a leg-up in the business world, while also helping children abroad. Cathy Harrison runs...

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## Latest Sport



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### Junior players keep in touch

(<http://noosatoday.com.au/stories/2016-07-12/junior-players-keep-in-touch/>)

MORE than 90 Noosa touch players competed in the Junior State Cup in Hervey Bay last week, joining 213 teams and more than 3500 participants. The annu...

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### Olympic best wishes for hometown hero

(<http://noosatoday.com.au/stories/2016-07-12/olympic-best-wishes-for-hometown-hero/>)

NOOSA locals got a chance to get behind local Olympian Jake Packard at an Optus-run community celebration last week. As the official support network o...

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### Midnight rescue; Noosa ranked eighth

(<http://noosatoday.com.au/stories/2016-07-12/midnight-rescue-noosa-ranked-eighth/>)

HALF past midnight on Sunday, members of the Noosa Wave Runner Rescue Team, (Emergency Response Group) Scott Summers (Sunshine Beach) Chris and Keaton...

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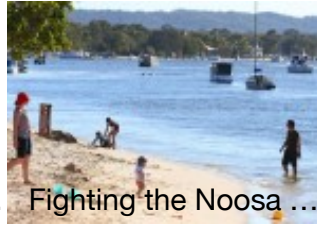




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## Foam, facts and the perfect brew

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CALLING all coffee lovers. Anyone who has ever wanted to know how to brew the perfect coffee or create stunning foam art now has the chance to learn t...

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## Great food in good company

(<http://noosatoday.com.au/stories/2016-07-11/great-food-in-good-company/>)

FOR many years, Cooroy Chamber of Commerce has hosted the annual Dinner with the Mayor event. The tradition continues this year with Mayor Tony Wellin...

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11 July 2016 5:00 PM

## Secret eats a surprise treat

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THE secret is out! Culinary event extraordinaire Secret Foodies launched their surprise dining experience this week with guests from across the Sunshi...

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