

# hello bali

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## THE WATER ISSUE

SURFING - DIVING - RAFTING - LIVING THE AQUATIC LIFE IN BALI

### underwaterlove

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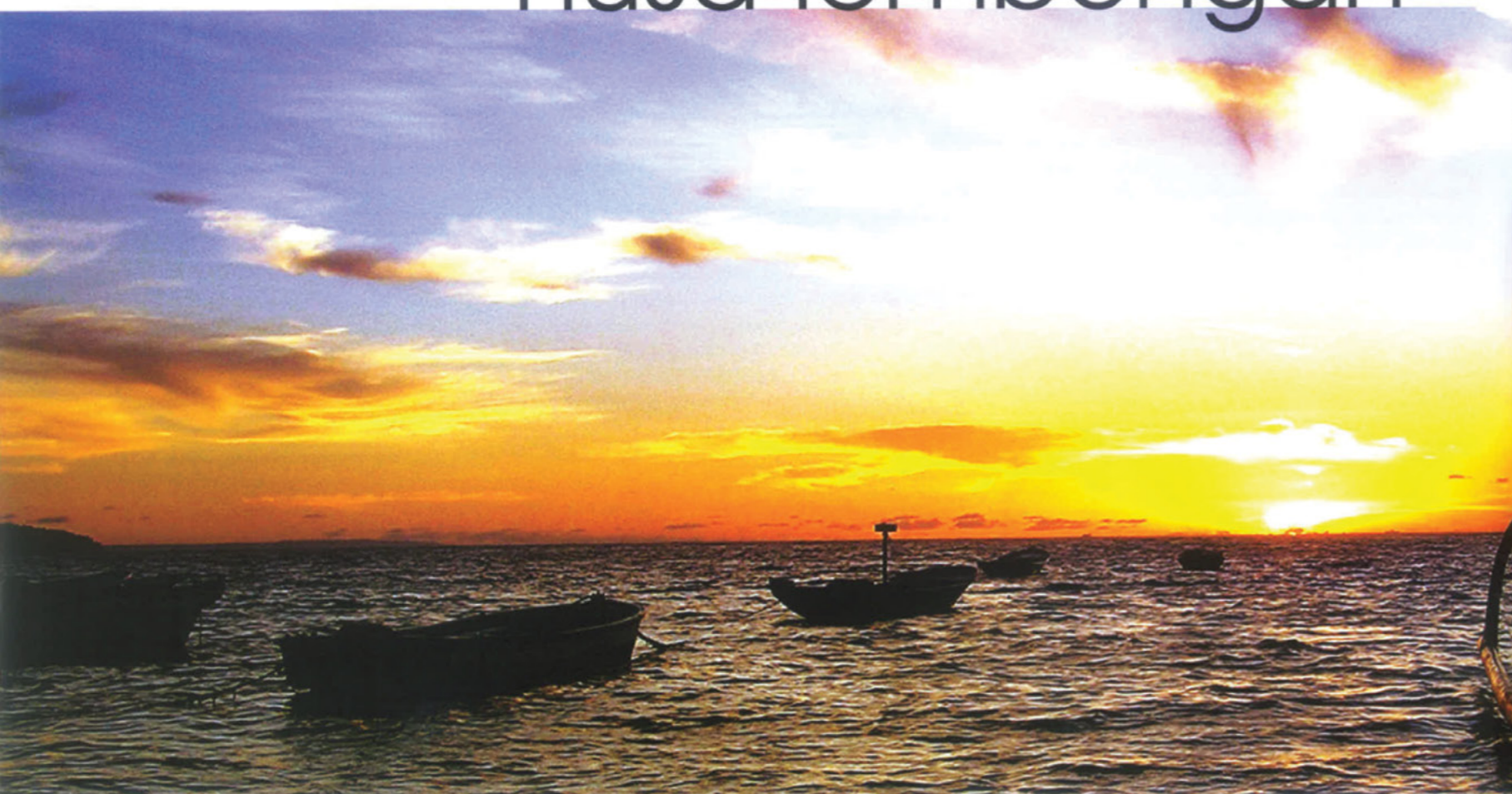


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text by Sara Prewitt

images by Sara Prewitt and courtesy of Resort Living Batu Karang

# nusa lembongan



Lying just off the east coast of Bali is a trio of islands, harnessed not by reins but by suspension bridges and history. Nusa Lembongan is the most developed; Ceningan slips into the middle and Penida looms the largest to the rear. Nusa Lembongan is the most well known: populated and powered as it has been playing host to visitors from the mainland for many years now and has grown into a well serviced playground for day trippers, surfers and longer term visitors.

Saturday dawns clear and cool and we arrive at Bena Harbour just past eight as the sky starts to brighten. Unloading the weekend travel bags we are guided onto the WAKA catamaran, the first of about twenty guests to take the journey across the straits to the off shore, easterly lying island of Nusa Lembongan.

The cheery WAKA staff offer us an early breakfast of croissants, Danish pastries and hot coffees, teas or soft drinks. The sea air is refreshing and the appetite for adventure is strong so we take the tea and the croissants upstairs and recline on the expansive foredeck on the mats. Shortly thereafter other families have joined us as well as a fun group of young Korean girls who are photographing anything and everything, and we haven't even left yet!

It is not long before we are heading out into the ocean blue past the pretty village of Tanjung Bena and the less attractive bulkheads of industrial fishing boats and cargo ships that line Bali's industrial harbour hub. The staff wander amongst us finding out what we would like to do and our adopted guide, discovering that we are not on a day trip, engages us in an interesting conversation about life on the offshore islands.

As the sun rises so does the temperature and we seek shade inside the boat just as it breaches the trench and the waves climb higher. Sea travel poses no problem for

our family but others were less stable. The Lombok Strait is the marking point for the Wallace Line that separates the lush jungle greenery, fauna and flora of Bali and the rest of western Indonesia to the west from the arid and distinctly less developed outer limits of East Nusa Tenggara. The trench has a reputation for magnifying any swell present around Bali and channelling it up the south west coastline of Lembongan resulting in somewhat 'challenging' crossings, especially when the new and full moons are in cycle. Mercifully today's excursion is more 'Lake Placid' than 'The Perfect Storm' but almost every skipper in Bali has a tale to tell of the ferocity of the Lombok Straits.

Exiting the trench the fishing rods come out and one by one a catch of silvery striped bonito are delivered on deck in time for our arrival on Lembongan island. Into the WAKA passenger boat we hop to arrive elegantly by beaching on the soft golden sands. The crew have a great day planned for their guests so we leave them to it and hop into another taxi boat to motor around the corner to the Jungut Batu beach and our destination of the Batu Karang Resort.

The Sinclair family from Noosa, Australia and the original Johnny from Johnny's (a great place for surfers 'back in the day') have created between them a mix of laid-back Lembongan and Australian



Check In

Resort Living Batu Karang (T: 0366 248 80, E: info@batukeranglembongan.com) Newly created, the lovely resort of Batu Karang has bought a distinct sophisticated style into the Lembongan mix. Subtle in its luxury guests can enjoy a terrace of pools, generous verandas and great dining.

The WAKA (T: 0361 484 085, www.wakaexperience.com) The great people at the WAKA Nusa know how to take care of their guests, willing to make any arrangement and offer interesting and unusual options including a boat trip to the Bat Cave temple.

The original Villa Wayan (T: 0361 271 212, E: villawayan@dps.centrin.net.id) Clean and pretty beachside accommodation that keeps things sweet and simple and includes a lovely old style menu of Lembongan favourites including a great curry.

Check Out

Day tripping:

Day trips to the island can be taken by a number of different styled transportations from leisurely catamaran, under the sail of an old phinisi or by mega-cats that skim across the waters between Bali and Lembongan in fort-five minutes.

The Island Explorer Cruises (T: 0361 728 088, E: sales@bali-activities.com) have three boats and packages for diving, fishing and cycling. They also offer overnight deals with Coconuts Beach Resort.

Bali Hai (T: 0361 720 331, E: sales@balihaicruises.com) this company has been operating trips to Lembongan for many years and are expert in tailoring adventure to the needs of families.

Dive:  
World Diving Lembongan (T: 0812 3900 686, E: info@world-diving.com, W: www.world-diving.com) Easy trips for beginners, amazing drift dives for the experienced and PADI training courses for learners.

Dine:  
ScoobyDoo Find it on the beach front at Jungutbatu. Classy menu with reasonable prices includes BBQ'd seafood, Indonesian food, pasta and pizza in the 30-45,000 range.

Depart:  
Scoot II (T: 0361 285 522) Sanur (T: 0361 780 2255) Lembongan Fast Cruising to Lembongan Island and back with a variety of charter options including fishing trips.

IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP  
sunset over bali  
waka crew  
main pool and bar by night



coastal living style. Family villas with self-catering options, romantic honeymoon suites and family friendly rooms are all beautifully decorated and furnished. The Spa has a small but complete menu of services that are carried out by local girls who are natural therapists and full of knowledge. Troy, the manager, says people don't believe that such a paradise exists until they get here.

A paradise indeed, the resort is built in soft sandstone tones set against a green hillside; complimented by swimming pools and the expansive view it makes a perfect retreat for the weekend. Retreat, for me anyway. My partner, while impressed by the resort, has his eyes firmly set on the surf that breaks and rolls in beautiful sets just off the shore. After a substantial lunch of tasty freshly made burgers and salads served with wedge fried potatoes, our family follow their separate pursuits with Rufus opting to join Troy out at Lacerations for a long afternoon of surfing.

So named for the slicing coral just beneath the surface, Lacerations offers the most perfect reef break outside of Bali. Catch it and you're flying; bail and you're bleeding. It's a rare session that doesn't end up with someone dripping blood into the ocean from the pontoon. The

machine-like quality of the tubes delivered at this spot is the reason many surfers make the trip out to Nusa Lembongan at all.

Further outside to the east of Lembongan lies 'Shipwrecks', a right-hander that can hold up to six foot waves and has a super fun back door section which can spin barrels off down the reef and just as easily deposit the careless surfer in and amongst the seaweed farm fences, not a place for the faint of heart or ill of condition. Clean up sets at Shipwrecks will terrify and the colourful reef lurks only two to three feet below the surface, but at least it isn't too sharp.

Planet, a Nusa Lembongan surfer from way back is working at the lovely Batu Karang Resort and can be relied upon to know all there is to know regarding conditions and predictions. He introduces us to the new shipwreck, a fishing boat from Benoa that has become marooned on the surf break of Shipwrecks. The older shipwreck is now submerged fully and pretty much destroyed, while this new boat looks destined to be consigned a position in local history as 'Shipwrecks 2'.

Across the channel Playgrounds is a friendlier break, a peak that breaks left and right, but don't be fooled, it can pack a mean



IMAGES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT  
local lembongan break  
the ceningan seaweed industry  
view from batu karang villa



punch, whilst the left at Ceningan is a mysterious wall that rises and delivers seemingly when nowhere else is working.

For thrill seekers who aren't accustomed to the art of board riding the choices for heart stopping speed range from the ubiquitous banana boat, the inflatable flying fish and paragliding, as well as jet-ski rides. Major tour companies run day trips to the island and provide entire packages of exhilaration perfectly suited to the first time and family adventurer.

These packages include a lunch and entertainment for all ages at the tour companies' beach side resort and can be a great way to cater to all the family. If all of this activity sounds like way too much effort then rest assured, Lembongan has a plethora of relaxing options in which to indulge the senses.

Bidding a fond farewell to the surfing fraternity my daughter and I enter the Lulur Spa of the resort and submit ourselves to a nurturing afternoon of aromatherapy Balinese massages, culminating in beautiful foot baths that end with a relaxing tea in one of the rooms overlooking the bay as we let the massage oils work their magic. The products here are top quality and come from a range of organic skin care that is brought in especially from Australia.

Rufus returns with great news, not least that he wasn't shredded on Lacerations. He has arranged a boat trip for the next day with the delightfully named Captain Bintang. We are to go drift snorkelling in Crystal Bay and he promises before his next surf we can all ride mountain

bikes over the suspension bridge to Nusa Ceningan. Apparently the surf is best in the afternoon so it gives plenty of family-activity time during the early, and better part of the day.

In the late afternoon light we walk to the shore and bump into Captain Bintang who offers us a lift to the pontoon for sunset. As the sun begins to set the sky lights up in a streaked silken scarf of tangerines, blues and greens while behind us on the shore the pegged out squares of the seaweed farms glimmer under the torch light of the seaweed farmers. The silence and the serenity are complete.

Back at Batu Karang Troy, ever the gracious host, gives us great menu advice for our dinner, with fresh marlin, the catch of the day, and a glass of chilled Australian white in hand we toast the close of a wonderful day on this charming island.

Unbelievably only about four hundred people actually live on Lembongan, living mostly in Desa Lembongan, where, on our bicycle ride the following morning we see kids leaving for their morning school and adults greeting the day from their homes. The bike track goes past seaweed farms and alongside the mangroves, where if you wish, you can kayak on the waters and see the amazing structure of the buttress roots that keep the island safe and stable.

We have to get back for Captain Bintang and grab our snorkelling gear on the way. Zipping past the pontoons of Mushroom Bay and a whole new batch of day trippers having a great time parasailing, banana

boating and flying around on an inflatable mattress, we turn to the left and enter the deserted channel between Ceningan and Lembongan. Here the coral is brilliant and healthy and home to many fish, and, if you can see them, the pygmy seahorses, but at only half a centimetre long they are pretty easy to miss!

The waters of Crystal Bay are, well, crystal clear, and drift snorkelling, where you let the current propel you along, can be great fun. We only saw one other boat in the bay, this boat had scuba divers on board and they were checking out the abundant life further beneath us.

There's quietude in the channel between the islands that is both timeless and mystical. Nusa Lembongan is thought of as powerful, spiritually, and it is here to the lee of the island that you can really feel this 'energy'.

With Rufus back in the surf and having declined the invitation to photograph him surfing from the pontoon I get poolside while our dedicated bookworm makes herself comfortable in the shaded lounge area of Batu Karang, ordering freshly toasted jaffles for her lunch.

At two thirty we leave the resort and take a boat out to the Bali Hai catamaran that will speed us back to Bali with the added accompaniment of a live band and a large group of happy, sun kissed tourists.

If you're looking to escape Bali for some peace and quiet you can't do much better than a stopover at Nusa Lembongan: just be sure to arm yourself with plenty of reading material, music and sunscreen - it's a true to life break from the norm out there. **419**