

# THREE OUT OF THREE

MOVE OVER BALI, THE NEARBY  
NUSA ISLANDS ARE THE NEW GO-TO  
FOR TRAVELLERS IN THE KNOW »

WORDS PAUL EWART



**T**here's no denying the Australian love affair with Bali is still going strong. For decades the Island of the Gods has been earmarked by travellers dreaming of a tropical getaway. But years of rampant tourism have come with a few cons: constant development and congested traffic, to name a couple. And while visitor numbers are soaring, savvy travellers are taking a breather from the mainland for a more relaxed sun, sand and surf fix.

If you want a glimpse of old-school Bali, you don't have to go far. About 20 kilometres (and 30 minutes by fast boat) from the mainland's south-east coast lie Nusa Lembongan, Nusa Ceningan and Nusa Penida. With unspoiled beaches, epic waves, vibrant local culture, and great eats, this trio has an island to suit all tastes.

Want five-star hotels, spectacular surf and lip-smacking cuisine? Lembongan is your place. Looking for dives in dazzling turquoise waters with more marine life than you can shake a stick at? Head to Penida. Searching for adrenaline-pumping, cliff-jumping adventure? Try Ceningan. Not that you need to confine your stay to just one island, given their super-close proximity – you can hop around all three in one visit with ease.

### Nusa Lembongan

The most well-known of the trio, Lembongan is a collection of beautiful bays and beaches, dramatic limestone cliffs and plush resorts. Added to this is a lack of cars and mainland hustle and bustle, which makes it a destination that affords travellers some serious R&R.



First discovered by swell-hungry surfers, it's still luring the likes of Kelly Slater to its shores two decades on. For pros, Lacerations and Shipwrecks breaks on the west coast are as dangerous as their names suggest. The friendlier Playgrounds caters to beginners and experts alike. But perhaps Lembongan's most famous attraction is Devil's Tear. A natural rock plateau surrounded by crashing waves, it has a reputation as the best spot for sunset viewing on the island, thanks to its tidal pools that reflect candy-floss-pink clouds. Take your camera and you're guaranteed snaps that'll induce Instagram-envy, but bear in mind that Devil's Tear, like many spots on the islands, is frequently unpatrolled – caution is always recommended around the water.

Back on dry land, surfers and non-surfers alike will appreciate a massage at Lulus Spa. Treatments are designed to complement the island's environment, so expect traditional Balinese massage and fresh-ingredient facials, all utilising locally produced essential oils and organic seaweed.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
A swell time off Nusa Lembongan,  
lunch with a view at Thai Pantry,  
a colourful Thai feast, Bondi meets  
Bali at The Deck Cafe & Bar.

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dazzling water views and relaxed house tunes intermingle with the sounds of the sea



When it comes to food and drink in the Nusa Islands, Lembongan is the epicentre. The Deck Cafe & Bar channels a Bondi Beach vibe with its dazzling water views, relaxed house tunes intermingling with the sounds of the sea, and a healthy menu of fresh juices, smoothies, gourmet pizzas and salads that cater to hipster diet requirements. It's also the only place on the island to serve ice-cold beer on tap.

For no-frills seafood on the beach, head to Nyoman's Warung. The best *warung* (small local eatery) on the islands, this charm-soaked venue serves up unpretentious dishes with a smile. Another great option is the alfresco Thai Pantry. Also located on the waterfront, it pairs delicious Thai food with expertly mixed cocktails from its Kombi van bar.

For pre- or post-dinner drinks with big-city smarts, a visit to Lembongan's newest nightlife spot, the Howff, is a must. This Scottish-style speakeasy – yes, you read that right – is the first of its kind in Bali, let alone on the islands. Positioned on the rocks over the sea, the bar boasts a lengthy menu that includes a plethora of single malts, gins and artisan cocktails concocted with housemade infusions.

### Nusa Penida

Though the largest island in the Nusa archipelago, Penida is also the least developed. Here, amazing natural features abound: secluded white beaches, picturesque lagoons, spectacular cliffs, quaint villages, and – best of all – no crowds, making it the perfect destination for those looking to slow things down another notch.

Following a 10-minute boat ride from Lembongan, visitors can »





## ● ● ● ● ● ● Getting there

### FROM BALI

Nusa Lembongan is easy to reach from the wharf at Sanur on Bali's southeast. There are multiple options, but for a journey of only 30 minutes try Rocky Fast Cruises. [rockyfastcruise.com](http://rockyfastcruise.com)

hire scooters to get around. But beware that roads aren't in the best condition; if you're at all unsure, hire a driver.

Must-visits include Angel's Billabong – a natural infinity pool amid dramatic rocky cliffs – and the temple of Goa Giri Putri. One of several holy sites on the island, this limestone cave temple sees a steady stream of pilgrims visiting from the mainland in search of blessings. You can get an overview of the rich and unique spiritual history of this 'black magic' island by joining a Lembongan Holiday cultural tour.

Whether you're an absolute beginner or an experienced diver, the warm seas surrounding Penida are an aquatic playground that host an encyclopedia of marine life, from green turtles to reef sharks. It's also one of the best places to see the spectacular sunfish – aka the heaviest recorded bony fish in the world – which can grow to more than two metres long. Off the aptly named Manta Bay, manta rays feed on bountiful plankton. Critters aside, another reason for diving in is to see the submerged conservation-cum-art project that's known as 'Temple Point' or 'Buddha Temple': 30 metres down you'll encounter a stone statue



## “ the warm seas surrounding Penida are an aquatic playground

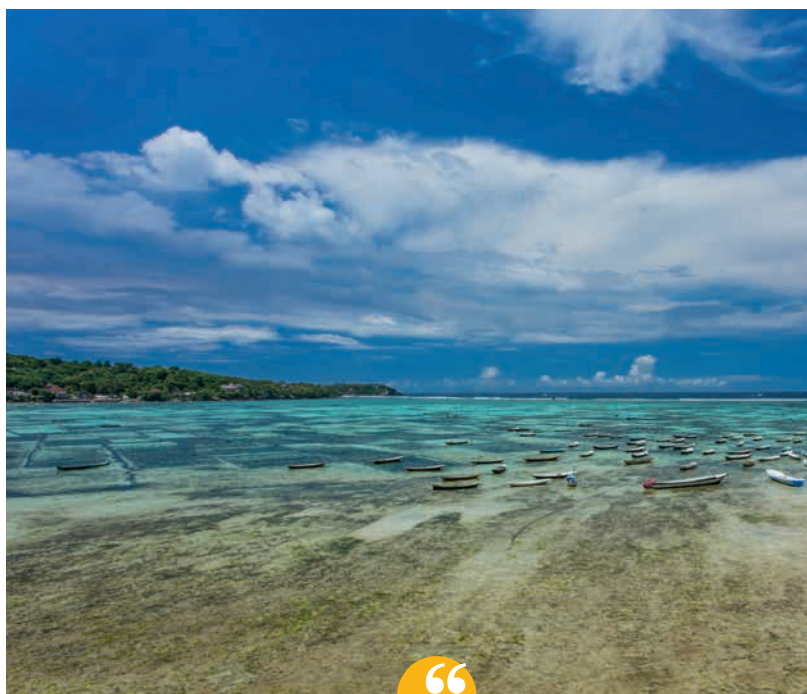
garden of large, serene-looking Buddhas surrounded by stupas.

Though its main dive shop is located on Lembongan, Blue Corner Dive organises group and bespoke diving and snorkelling excursions in Penida's Marine Park. Take the plunge and prepare to be dazzled.

### Nusa Ceningan

Nestled between Penida and Lembongan, Ceningan is the smallest of the three by far. A happy medium between (relatively) busy Lembongan and undeveloped and sprawling Penida, Ceningan is so compact you can easily power through its main sights in less than a day.

Connected to Lembongan by a precarious-looking yellow 'Love Bridge', which can be crossed either on foot or by scooter, getting to Ceningan is an adventure. In fact, getting to the island sets the tone »



Seaweed farms still surround the islands. BELOW LEFT: Crossing the abyss to Ceningan Island Resort.



## Where to stay

Regardless of whether you're a surfer, backpacker or luxury lover, it makes sense to stay on Lembongan and use it as your base for exploring all three islands. And the best check-in? Batu Karang Lembongan Resort and Day Spa.

Occupying a most enviable stretch of real estate, this luxury boutique resort is carved into the hillside overlooking the ocean, and boasts panoramic views of mainland Bali's east coast with the outline of Mount Agung in the distance.

A frontrunner in transforming the isle from a surfer hang-out to a bona fide holiday destination, the property fuses a traditional Balinese aesthetic with five-star service and some serious attention to detail. A variety of villa and room options are available, many of which come with private plunge pools.

[batukaranglempong.com](http://batukaranglempong.com)

## Travel Info

Jetstar has great low fares to Bali from across the network.

To book, visit  
[JETSTAR.COM](http://JETSTAR.COM)

for the adrenaline-rush activities to come. If poolside cocktails and day spas don't cut it and you'd rather get your kicks jumping off cliffs, then Ceningan is for you. Daredevils can head to Mahana Point, which has supervised five- and 10-metre jumps available for a small fee.

A bar and cliff-top zip-line may seem like a dangerous combo at first glance, but rest assured the booze comes after the leap. At Ceningan Island Resort, for about \$8, thrill-seekers can hurtle



## thrill-seekers can hurtle across an abyss

across an abyss 18 metres above the crashing waves, recovering afterwards at the adjacent Driftwood Bar, where use of sun beds and a pretty infinity pool are included in the price.

For a culture hit, take in some of the seaweed farms that surround the island. The industry is huge and, until recently, the majority of locals on Lembongan and Ceningan were involved. Many sprawling farms lie between the two islands.

Post-jumping, there are ample chill-out spots for a sun-downer. Head to the west side of the island where you can grab an ice-cold Bintang while taking in the view of neighbouring Lembongan. At the picturesque Secret Beach, you will involuntarily "ooh" and "ahh" as the sun dips below the horizon. ✈

