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# CULTURE SHOCK!

A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette

## BALI

Paul Winslow

For Review only

# **CULTURE** **SHOCK!**

**A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette**

## **BALI**

**Paul Winslow**



**Marshall Cavendish**  
Editions

# For Review only

## ABOUT THE SERIES

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Culture shock is a state of disorientation that can come over anyone who has been thrust into unknown surroundings, away from one's comfort zone. *CultureShock!* is a series of trusted and reputed guides which has, for decades, been helping expatriates and long-term visitors to cushion the impact of culture shock whenever they move to a new country.

Written by people who have lived in the country and experienced culture shock themselves, the authors share all the information necessary for anyone to cope with these feelings of disorientation more effectively. The guides are written in a style that is easy to read and covers a range of topics that will arm readers with enough advice, hints and tips to make their lives as normal as possible again.

Each book is structured in the same manner. It begins with the first impressions that visitors will have of that city or country. To understand a culture, one must first understand the people—where they came from, who they are, the values and traditions they live by, as well as their customs and etiquette. This is covered in the first half of the book.

Then on with the practical aspects—how to settle in with the greatest of ease. Authors walk readers through how to find accommodation, get the utilities and telecommunications up and running, enrol the children in school and keep in the pink of health. But that's not all. Once the essentials are out of the way, venture out and try the food, enjoy more of the culture and travel to other areas. Then be immersed in the language of the country before discovering more about the business side of things.

To round off, snippets of information are offered before readers are 'tested' on customs and etiquette. Useful words and phrases, a comprehensive resource guide and list of books for further research are also included for easy reference.

# For Review only

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

---

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Bali. A word with magical connotations. While there is a boring dictionary definition, it's impossible to quantify exactly because Bali means different things to different people. It's a highly personal place.

For some it is synonymous with surfing. For others it inspires visions of palm trees and beaches. Some picture rolling ricefields and blue skies stretching to the horizon. And others may link it inextricably with one section of the 2006 novel *Eat, Pray, Love* or its 2010 film adaptation. It has magical connotations that can appeal beyond its borders, even to those who have never been fortunate enough to sample its myriad attractions.

Bali has a negative side too. Its international appeal has been tarnished because of the executions of drug dealers, by stories of wild nightlife and drunken excess and still, over a decade on, the distant hangover of two terrorist bombings can be felt.

As with any place in the world, good mixes with bad. This is a paradise with blemishes. But that's planet earth—nowhere's perfect.

Before coming to live in Bali I had been a one-time visitor with no real desire to return. It wasn't that I disliked it, but I'd studiously avoided the touristy areas and had no real desire to visit them. Now I happily live in one of the island's biggest.

Explaining the charm of Bali for tourists is easy. The sun, sand, sea, surf and culture at a price that's right are hugely attractive wherever you call home. If you happen to be from Australia then there's a very practical element to it as well—it's pretty much the first stepping stone on your way to the

rest of the world and when you combine that with the other attractions it's easy to see why it's such a perennial favourite. But for those who choose to spend longer here there's a subtle difference.

There's a saying amongst those people who have lived in Asia for a long time that nobody really moves to the region intentionally, they just arrive and never leave. But more often than not to live in Asia means living in a big city (Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, Jakarta to name a few) or out in the middle of nowhere. Bali offers the best of both worlds. It has the seductive combination of people, culture, streetfood, climate etc—and it also has the infrastructure—roads, community, Internet, electricity, restaurants, schools etc.

Bali is a place that takes the best of everything and mixes it into a pot pourri of all that's good with Asia, with the comforts decadent westerners desire, without living in a big, horrible, nasty city.

But Bali's true allure is almost indescribable—all the aforementioned things have a place but it's more than that; there's something about it that inspires passion and desire, a certain something you can never put your finger on.

And that explains why it's mighty difficult to leave, and probably explains why I'm still here writing this book.



Stepping up: Bali is the land of a thousand temples — if you're being really conservative with your counting!

For Review only

## MAP OF BALI



For Review only

CHAPTER 1

# FIRST IMPRESSIONS





Bali Ha'i will whisper In the wind of the sea:

☞ Here I am your special island! Come to me,  
come to me ☞

– Bali Ha'i, South Pacific

## WELCOME TO PARADISE

“Maybe you should spend the first six months of your travels in Bali.”

It sounds such an innocuous sentence when I cut and paste it from the email now. But it was the sentence that changed my life, because “the first six months” have become two years, while the “travels” remain on hold and will do for some time to come.

Not that this is entirely surprising. In 2009 I'd left the UK 'for a year' and had yet to make my way back for anything more than a fleeting visit so this is standard behaviour. But I really didn't think Bali would suck me in the way it did.

The words had been typed in an email by my good friend Ned, an old colleague who had coincidentally left the UK around the same time as I did. But while my life diversion had taken me to Australia, his ship had dropped anchor in Bali. Now he was suggesting that our paths realign, not just in terms of where we resided but that of our publisher-editor relationship. He was launching a magazine; I edit magazines for a living (and write books, it seems). I had itchy feet;



Star attraction: Bintang is ubiquitous in Bali—I've consumed one or two in my time here.

he had his feet in flip-flops. I was paying US\$ 8 for a beer and he was paying less than US\$ 2. It didn't take long to come to the conclusion that this was an opportunity worth serious consideration.

But what did I know of Bali? I had spent a small amount of time there on my aforementioned world tour. After eleven months of getting off the beaten track in Africa and Asia, my travel companion and I had assumed an air of backpacker snobbery and harboured no desire to hang around with 'holidaymakers' or 'tourists'. Although Bali was on our route, we got out of Dodge immediately upon landing, avoiding the major tourist areas as if our very ethos of life would be spoiled by our presence there.

And that's because the first impressions of a place like Bali come way before you touch down on the tarmac of the airport. Back in 2010 the word 'Bali' had connotations of a beautiful island tainted with a reputation of insalubrious tourism, of downmarket rowdiness. Like so many places with such a reputation there is a truth to it, but it is only one small part of the bigger truth. But I wasn't really too interested in working all that out on my first short visit so didn't experience the Bali that millions of tourists do each year. And nothing I learned while living in Melbourne for over three years did anything to convince me that I had missed anything. Phrases such as: “it's like Australia's Magaluf or Tenerife” were enough to put me off completely.

You may, then, be forgiven for wondering why on earth I would ever consider throwing in my lot and moving to such a place. But there's a huge difference between going on holiday somewhere and living there and I figured that to live in such a place would mean opening up a whole new side of it. The weather, standard of living, lifestyle, new adventure—added

to the fact our new magazine project would involve reviewing a litany of high-class establishments — all factored in to make it something of a no-brainer experiment. Supported by my partner, the decision was made. Bali here we come.

In the weeks running up to my departure, Australia's Channel 7 began showing a documentary series called *What Really Happens in Bali*. It was truly awful. Drunken idiots falling off scooters and ending up in hospital, footage of the Bali 9 prisoners in Kerobokan prison, inebriated teenagers staggering the streets and laneways, health and safety nightmares and rip-off merchants all combined to paint a hideous picture. Fortunately it was also transparent—it could easily have been called *What Really Happens Anywhere Young People Go On Holiday And Drink Too Much*. At least I hoped so.



I was to be pleasantly surprised. Not only was Bali not like the TV show, it was not like the reputation. Sure, Bali has a less salubrious side, but then so do many places. And the rest more than makes up for it.



*On reflection: Rice paddies make for a perennially pretty picture.*

None of which I knew on my first day tentatively exploring my new surroundings. When I dredge the depths of my memory for what I may have been thinking then, several things stand out that were probably running through my mind. The simple beauty of rice fields, the inability of the Balinese to construct a pavement that (a) doesn't have holes in it and (b) run smoothly for any more than 15 metres. The ubiquitous small baskets placed on the ground and on temples (more of them later). The lack of any apparent rules of the road. The Balinese people going about their business mingling with the many holidaymakers going about theirs. And the weather... the wonderful weather.

To really write this chapter effectively would require a time machine so I can fully appreciate my state of mind upon my arrival. Fortunately, I do have an ersatz time machine in the form of a blog post written just a few days after my arrival. This was originally intended as my first 'postcard from Bali' to let my friends know about my new adventure but it's now

the perfect way to portray my actual first impressions for the purposes of this publication.

After a week of immersing myself in my new life, this was the effect it had on me:



*Rice, rice, baby: It feeds people and creates a beautiful backdrop to life in Bali.*

## WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING HERE? —A BLOG POST

They say a week is a long time in politics. I wouldn't know about that but I do know a week is a long time in Bali when you've just upped sticks and moved here. This time last week I had never seen the studio apartment I am writing this in. I'd never seen the *Essential Bali* office, didn't know my new colleagues and had only intermittently driven mopeds on crazy roads in third world countries. I didn't know my Seminyak from my Legian and I'd certainly never had a daily house cleaner who would take my laundry away and bring it back freshly cleaned a couple of days later.

Now all of those things seem, well, not exactly second nature, but certainly part and parcel of life...

And lo, last Monday Ned did pick me up from Bali airport... We dumped my bags in the studio that had until that day been his home and was now mine. (He had moved somewhere else—I hadn't kicked him out onto the beach). It's a reasonable size room with a decent bed, a shower that boasts both power and hot water, and a lovely outside area with a garden that is shared by another studio. Being down a small laneway it's quite quiet... as long as the dogs aren't barking, the cocks crowing or the kids shouting, but to be fair that's not often. The 'kitchen' facilities leave something to be desired, consisting as they do of a single gas ring linked to a gas bottle, but it's home, temporarily, and I am becoming quite attached to it. My man Noor coming by everyday to make it pristine and run errands for me does nothing to harm that situation.



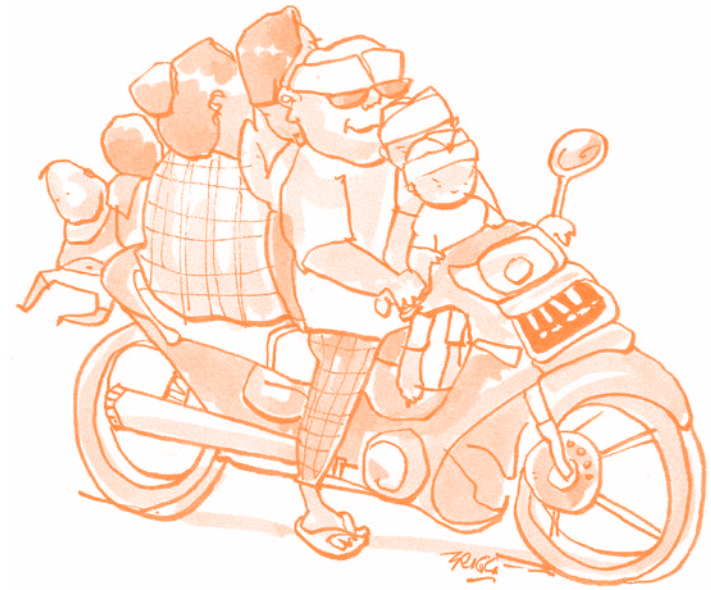
Ned took me to his local... as we ordered the first of lord knows how many Bintangs to come over the next few months in the warm air, I felt a different kind of home. Moving somewhere isn't the same as travelling—but moving to a place like this is somewhere in the middle.

Waking on my first day, the priority was breakfast so I ambled in the direction of Seminyak. I live just on the other side of the tracks from where the famous suburb begins and after dodging the missing paving slabs and therefore avoiding falling into the running water (water—well that's one word for it) below I strolled past a rice paddy and into Seminyak. I headed for the first half decent place I saw and found it to be Bali Deli—famous among Australian visitors for having about the best coffee in the area. It's worth pointing out that this shows the evolution of Bali in itself. Bali Deli is now a shadow of its former self and the coffee is much better in many other places.

Then it was time for Ned to pick me up on his moped and take me to the office (passing Kerobokan Prison en route—I work about 50 metres away) to meet Ana and Ayu, my Indonesian colleagues who have proved to be great fun already. When it came to lunch, Ned suggested Ana show me somewhere to get a bite. This was funny because she decided that I should drive the moped while she was on the back. It makes practical sense as you don't want the heavy bloke on the back with the light lady on the front. It didn't make such practical sense as I'd only driven one about three times in my life and could barely remember what to do. Somehow we made it to a café and back alive.

By this time I had realised that mopeds are the only way to get around, so Ned got on the phone to hire me one. The traffic in Bali is just nuts—not as nuts as Vietnam, so maybe

incessant is a better word. I'm not sure I'll ever get used to it, but what I will get used to is Ned turning round at the end of the working day and suggesting a sunset beer. It was slightly weird heading down to a beach bar where everyone else was on holiday and we'd just finished a day at the office. I think I will get used to that as well.



Emotions were a bit all over the place at this point. I wanted to know my way round, I wanted to know the language, I wanted to not have to drive through all that bloody traffic to get anywhere. No matter how many times you pack it all in and leave home, and I've done it enough now, I think there's always a moment when you think 'what the \*\*\*\* have I done here?' even if in your hearts of hearts you know the answer is 'what I have done here is open the door to a great new adventure and it's going to be bloody amazing.'





*Peddalling your wares: If you won't come to the goods, the goods will usually come to you.*

This uncertainty was probably exacerbated by my attempts that night to find the Bintang Supermarket, which is not a supermarket full of Bintang but one of the best supermarkets in Seminyak. The building I entered looked as though it hadn't sold any food for years. If you can imagine going to a supermarket in Chernobyl today, left exactly as it was when the accident happened, then you'd get the kind of feel. There was no deli, no fruit, nothing fresher than Prince Phillip. I bought some pasta and dodgy-looking bolognaise sauce, having promised myself I would cook at home that night to get out of eating out all the time as if I was on holiday. If this was the best Seminyak had to offer then what the \*\*\*\* have I done here?

### **DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER**

Before you get too concerned that Bali doesn't have any supermarkets, it turned out that if I had bothered to walk 20 metres further I would have discovered the one I was

actually seeking. It had these remarkable products such as fruit, vegetables and meat and looked as though the shelves were replenished at least once every millennium. It became crystal clear why the store I originally visited never sold anything because only a complete idiot (i.e. me) would shop there when there was a perfectly good supermarket within throwing distance of the rotten eggs they were probably selling. It does sum up a strange dichotomy here: you can have stores that appear to have stopped ordering in anything new several years ago next to fully stocked modern enterprises. And even then you will be lucky to find everything you need in one shop—even the big hypermarkets don't cover every base. But other than a few things (good chocolate being my personal bugbear) you'll find most things somewhere.

It's funny looking back now how much first impressions are based on practicalities rather than surroundings. When you first arrive in a new place to live, as opposed to holiday, there are certain things you need to sort out and most of them are much more boring than going out to explore the really good bits. And that part about coming here for a reason other than a holiday. Well that can have a huge effect on your first impressions as well. Whether you're here for business or to emigrate, you're doing so in a tourist capital. And that means you'll get treated like a tourist. You will struggle to walk past a spa without being asked if you want a massage, you'll have the same issue walking past pretty much any eating establishment while you'll also get asked if you want transport even when you've brought your own. You might get offered the opportunity to go on a tourist excursion and equally, you might get offered "Xanax? Valium? Viagra?" It only tends to happen on the major tourist thoroughfares but

you're certain to explore those in your early days and the temptation to say "No, I live here" can be overwhelming. Eventually it just cascades off you like the proverbial water off a duck's back.



*Set your stall out: Street food can be found on nearly every corner.*

The reality is that first impressions of anywhere are going to be based not just on that place, but also on your own experiences in life prior to that. The wall of heat that greets you when you walk out of the airport is something that can scramble the brain if it's something you haven't encountered before. Or it may kick-start multiple memories of times spent in similarly tropical climates. The traffic can inspire you or scare you. The uneven pavements are something you literally take in your stride, or they boggle your brain. The badgering of the touts may be something you've encountered and can brush off or they can be off-putting.

But I find myself nearing the end of this chapter having missed probably the most important bits. This is a tropical island with palm trees everywhere you look, with beach and surf, with friendly locals, with beautiful scenery and epic mountains. It's the little things that make first impressions, but they are quickly superseded by the big things that leave the lasting ones.

Our visit to Bali was meant to be a temporary one; a four-month pit stop before heading to South America. But we loved it here so much we decided to stay.

We spent a week in a resort in Nusa Dua and it was nice but generic; it could have been any beach resort in Asia. We then headed up to Ubud. The traffic was terrible that day but it gave us time to really study the architecture of the houses along the roads. They seemed all so neat and tidy and all signs of the chaos of family life are hidden away behind walled compounds, where several generations of a family share residence.

It took several weeks to get used to carrying around what seemed like a lot of cash (feeling like a millionaire), and even longer to work out the traffic laws when riding a scooter (I'm still not sure if there are any). Navigating crossroads was interesting... although somehow it always goes smoothly and no one gets road rage (must be all the ceremonies). Little brushes with death, such as slipping on loose gravel or being driven off the road by a lorry or tourist bus are shrugged off as 'one of those things'. All sense of urgency is lost here; there seem to be no such thing as timekeeping. Each house in Ubud has its own well, which means every family enjoys free water, but the locals still choose to bathe and wash their clothes in the streams that run through the town.

We found the Balinese to be welcoming and warm, honest and generous. It took a while to get used to not having to haggle (after living in Thailand for two years we've had a lot of practice) as no one was actually trying to rip us off. I guess our first impressions of Bali are probably biased as Ubud is in its own little essential oil-anointed bubble, where positive energy and healthy living are the daily mantras.

– Weiley Walter, arrived in Bali 2015





My first week was spent being driven round from Kuta up to Petitenget in Seminyak. I didn't really venture further than that for a good few weeks until I got a moped, so my initial time was very limited geographically.

It was a lot more sophisticated than I expected. I was expecting dirt tracks like in some of the archive photos I still use on our Facebook page but the roads are actually pretty good. I certainly didn't expect a three-lane highway on my doorstep. It was almost disappointingly modern.

But then those roads are necessary because of the mayhem of the traffic. I'd spent two months prior to my arrival in India, so it shouldn't have been a shock, but it was. I remember being told in India that as a pedestrian if you walk confidently and wave at vehicles they will usually stop. I tried to use the same theory here and was quickly put right. The roads are lawless and they scared the shit out of me initially.

In all honesty I didn't like it at first. I was stuck in Dhyana Pura / Double Six (major tourist areas) with no desire to rent a moped. For someone arriving fresh today and being thrown into middle of Seminyak, I'd recommend a Jimbaran lunch and a trip to Tanah Lot, if not for the temple, then for the rice fields en route. And do it in the first few days so you realise quickly there is escape from the tourists.

But if the tourists did nothing for me, the locals did. Hindus, Muslims and Christians living side-by-side in harmony amazed me, particularly when you have the highly ritualistic Balinese with their multiple daily offerings and closing streets for their ceremonies, and then the Muslim call to prayer at 5:00 am every morning if you live next to a mosque.

My overriding memory and still lasting impression is of the smiles. Thailand is supposed to be the country of a thousand smiles or something but they're miserable by contrast. I still can't work it out. The Balinese are, or at least seem to be, happier than most. They have an inner peace, one you'd more associate with Buddhism.

– Ned Dean, arrived in Bali 2011

## CHAPTER 2

# GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY



# For Review only

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Paul Winslow** is a travel junkie who left the UK to go travelling at the end of 2009 and never made it back. After a year on the road he ‘settled’ in Melbourne for over three years

before washing up on the shores of Bali in 2014. He edits a digital guide to the island called *Essential Bali*—an excuse to stay at the best hotels, eat at the best restaurants and get pampered at the best spas. He also freelances as a journalist and communications specialist and since deciding to write this book also took on a role as a Marketing and Communications Manager.

He has an unhealthy love of cricket and combines that passion with travel to follow the England cricket team around the world, an addiction that led to the publication of his first book, *Going Barmy*. Paul lives alone in Bali; alone if you discount the lizards and mosquitoes that frequent his open living house. And the squirrels who steal his bananas.