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15 Secret Spots in Bali You Need to Know About, According to a Local

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By Penny Watson

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With record tourist numbers last year and a steady flow of returnee visitors, it's easy to imagine no stone has been left uncovered on Bali. Think again. With **lesser-known regions** opening up and tourists willing to travel a little further from the airport, the island's best-kept secrets are still to be revealed. After moving to Bali five years ago, Australian travel writer and guidebook author Penny Watson shares what she wishes more travellers knew before visiting the Island of the Gods – read on for the lowdown on a north-coast boutique hideaway, farm-to-table restaurants, hidden bars and sacred waterfalls. Just don't tell anyone!



Begawan Biji

1/16

Near the Ayung River in Ubud, [Begawan Biji](#) is a zero-waste restaurant surrounded by five hectares of tropical trees, edible gardens and an impressive regenerative rice farm, where the owners of this unique property have implemented an irrigation system that naturally filters any chemicals so diners can enjoy healthy, pesticide-free produce. The restaurant is in a traditional two-storey *wantilan* (Balinese pavilion) made from recycled iron wood. Pull up a chair for wholesome, locally sourced Bali-Indo cuisine and don't go past the decadent nasi goreng made with wagyu short ribs, slipper lobster and the farm's own Mansur heritage rice – a highly nutritious, nutty-flavoured grain.

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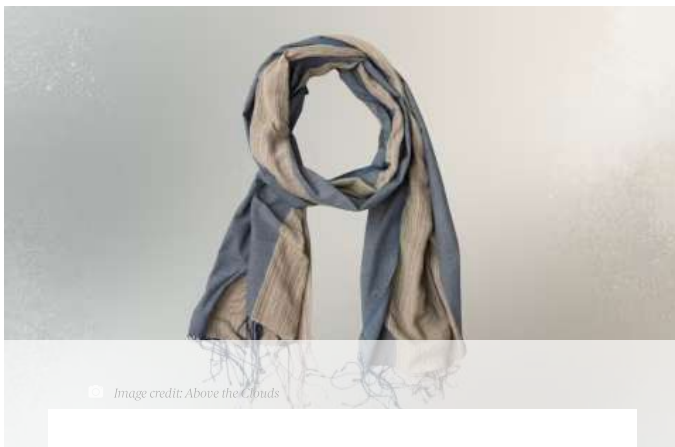
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Pinstripe Bar

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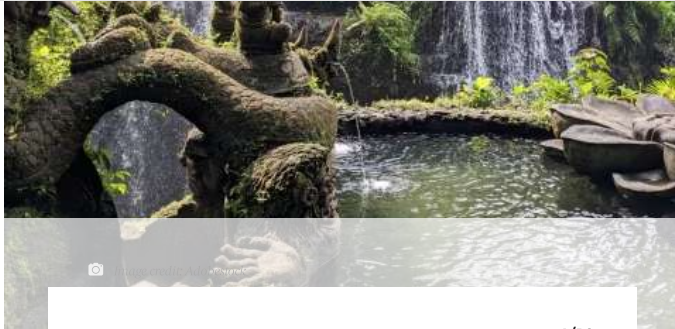
Prohibition era-style bars might be dime a dozen across the globe but [Pinstripe](#) at Ubud's understatedly flashy [Viceroy Bali Resort](#) mingles Manhattan cool with Bali nostalgia circa 1930. Big name artists of the day – including Miguel Covarrubias and dancer Rosa Rolanda – are the inspiration behind cocktails shaken and stirred with aged whiskies, limited-edition gins and premium mescals. Mingle at the sunken bar, socialise around the billiard table and settle into leather lounges for an upscale snack menu starring oysters from East Java, Japanese beef carpaccio and duck leg confit tacos with sambal matah, a spicy salsa typically made with shallots, lemongrass, chili peppers and lime leaves.



Above the Clouds

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For a lightweight but stylish outfit for the tropics, [Above the Clouds](#) has you sorted. This menswear brand, with stores in Ubud, Canggu and Pererenan, specialises in locally made, linen and premium cotton wardrobe pieces for men. The brand's effortless line-up includes shorts, long pants and shirts in a spectrum of styles – long and short-sleeved, collared, uncollared, fitted and loose – and a range of wardrobe staple colours from black and dusty grey to pale blue and green. To fit seamlessly into the Bali fashion set – finish the look with sandals, a hand-dyed knitted scarf and a chunky bracelet.



Taman Beji Griya

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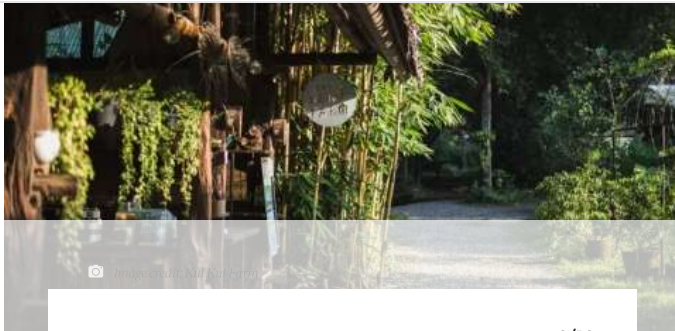
Many Bali resorts offer *melukat* water blessing ceremonies, but there's no beating getting into the jungle for the real deal. Taman Beji Griya, west of Ubud, is a natural landmark of sacred waterfalls, snake-carved creek banks and caves. With the help of a guide, visitors go on a spiritual journey through these natural wonders, stopping at temples and shrines along the way to give blessings and thanks. The dramatic finale involves screaming into a waterfall to rid the mind and body of anxieties and negative energy.



The Damai

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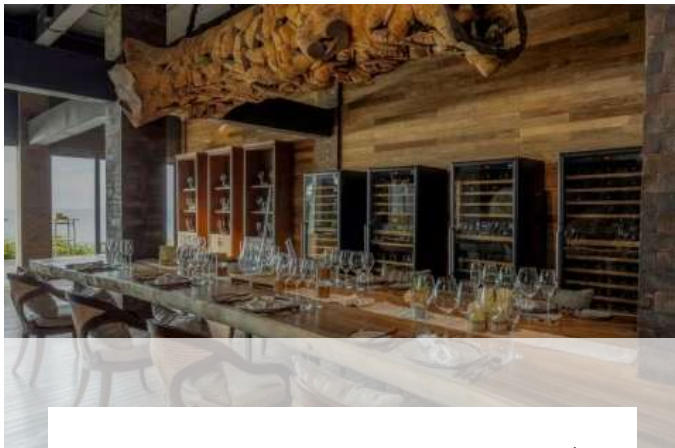
Overlooking the north coast village of Lovina, [The Damai](#) is a serene [resort getaway](#), far from the hustle and bustle. Its 14 well-built, antique-adorned villas – some with private pools and lofty ocean views – are hidden among the property's sprawling tropical garden. Chef Per Thøstesen's gourmet cuisine is a highlight with a fancy menu featuring French takes on rabbit, duck confit and lamb. It's served at enchanting fairy light-lit tables set up around the pool. A Balinese massage at the *alang-alang* grass-roofed spa is a must – just don't miss a day's outing to the area's incredible waterfalls.



Kul Kul Farm

6/16

To uncover Bali's real gems, it's generally a good idea to head inland; [Kul Kul Farm](#), located between Canggu and Ubud, is a case in point. This small paradisiacal property – where the buildings are almost entirely made of bamboo – combines a permaculture farm and learning centre with Taani, a spectacular farm-to-table restaurant that uses sustainably sourced meats. The farm also has [five beautifully crafted bamboo cottages](#), a base for honing nature-based skills. Try your hand at activities including workshops, farm harvests, local walks and cooking classes.



Mantra Wine Bar & Restaurant

7/16

Head below [Jumeirah resort's](#) buzzy ocean-view Akasa restaurant for [Mantra](#), a new private dining room and wine cellar carved into the natural rock of Uluwatu's famous sandy cliffs. Accessed via a private glass elevator, the place has a sophisticated atmosphere with European wine bottles on display, and a festive central wooden table set for 20 guests. In the tradition of French cuisine, the menu features delicacies such as foie gras and beef tenderloin, with a sommelier at hand to suggest wine pairings.



Nyuh Kuning

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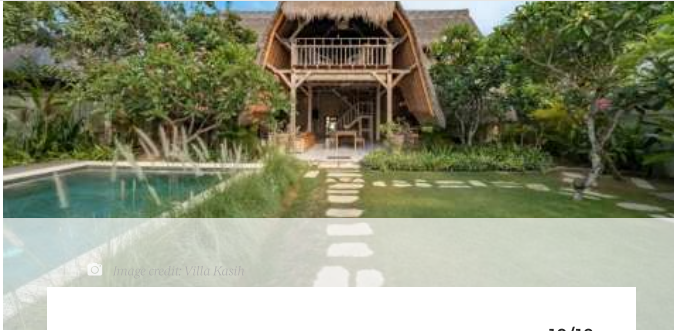
Recent road changes mean that cars can no longer shortcut through the Monkey Forest to the Ubud neighbourhood of Nyuh Kuning. The upshot? This tranquil village has a main street of frangipani-shaded indie shops, cafes and restaurants that can be easily explored on foot. Must-visits while you are there include lifestyle store [Mina](#) selling small-batch artisan gifts, and [Tradisi](#) showcasing Indonesian textiles. [Old Friends Coffee](#) has barista brews and [Blend](#) has photo-worthy smoothie bowls. For global eats, try [Simond Boulangerie](#), [Bánh Mi Bistro](#) and [Galle Club](#) (pictured).



Stelar

9/16

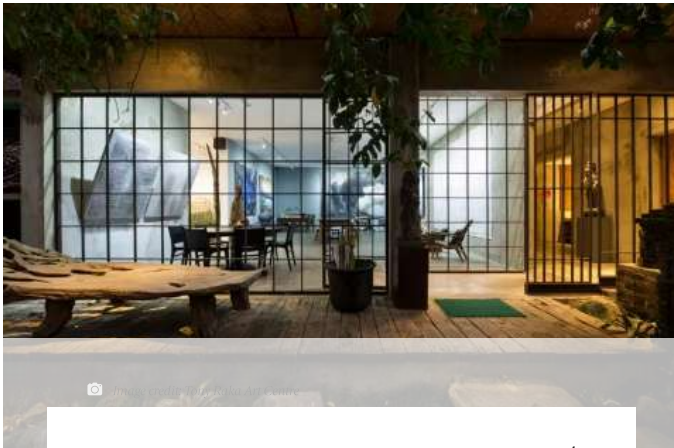
Behind the good looks of name-drop Bali bag brand [Stelar](#) is a business that combines craftsmanship, community and regeneration. Owner Lorna Watson's beautifully handcrafted bag designs skilfully incorporate locally sourced raw materials and unique heritage weaving techniques. From her grassroots workshop in Kerobokan, Lorna collaborates with artisans in village communities across Bali and Indonesia to help support creative industries and continue cultural legacies. What's more, each bag becomes a work of art with a unique five-digit code that is traceable to the artist and their village.



Villa Kasih

10/16

Nusa Lembongan, accessed via a 30-minute ferry from mainland Bali, is known for its crystal-clear water and laidback surf lifestyle. The island has accommodation aplenty, but privately owned Villa Kasih is hard to beat. In a tropical garden setting, the property features a two-storey traditional Javanese *lumbung* house with two bedrooms and an open-air living and kitchen area, plus a single-storey *joglo* (a wooden structure featuring a steep-sloped roof) with a third bedroom. Take a dip in the swimming pool or it's just a short two-minute walk to popular Jungut Batu beach.



Tony Raka Art Centre

11/16

Architect and gallerist Tony Raka's [Art Centre](#) in Ubud is an art oasis, and a living space where traditional and contemporary pieces coexist alongside everyday life. Visitors can sit amongst the art in the café before moving through the gardens, pavilions and gathering spaces to enjoy works from different perspectives. Tony's latest venture, the Peter Dittmar Exhibition Space, is an evocative new brutalist building that pays tribute to the German artist's creative contributions in Bali.

Image credit: Goldust

Goldust

12/16

[Goldust](#) in Canggu is known for elevating the casual street-side Bali spa experience to something a bit more special. Its designer 24k gold and silver facials garner attention on social media but this place also deserves credit for its top-notch stress-buster massages, luxe mani-pedis and Body Glow treatments. Couples retreats, kids spas and poolside massages also get a thumbs up.

Image credit: Shelter Bali

Shelter

13/16

In a crowded dining scene, chef Stephen Moore's [Shelter](#) stands out. His Middle Eastern-Mediterranean restaurant in hip Pererenan serves flatbread with whipped feta, octopus charred over a firepit, and slow-cooked pulled lamb shoulder. The traditional Javanese joglo setting with candles, teak columns and a tangle of jungle vines add to the upscale Bali vibe, as does the antipodean-friendly wine list that doesn't break the bank.

Image credit: Adobestock

Quantum Temple

14/16

heart of Balinese culture and heritage. Sidestep the tourist traps and instead go on an expert-led journey, be it a water ritual with a high priestess at Tanah Lot (pictured), a jamu (a wellness tonic made with turmeric and ginger) session with a herbalist or a sacred dagger workshop with a master craftsman. Chauffeured pick-ups and personalised itineraries are also part of the service.

Image credit: Adobestock

Virgin Beach

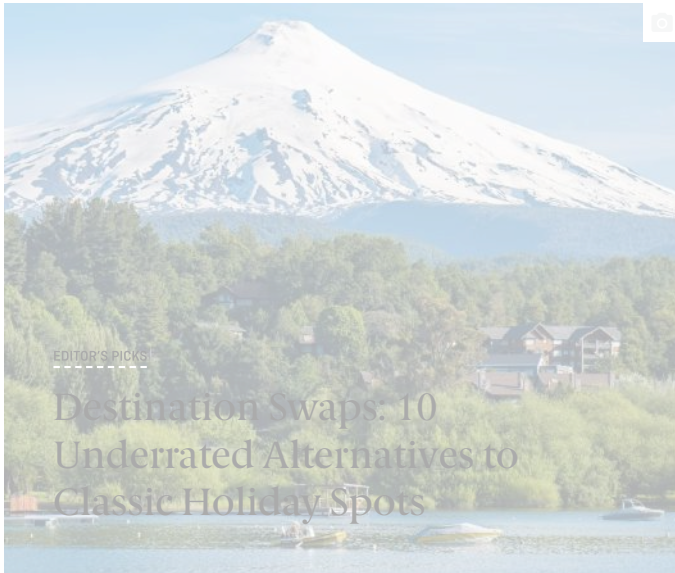
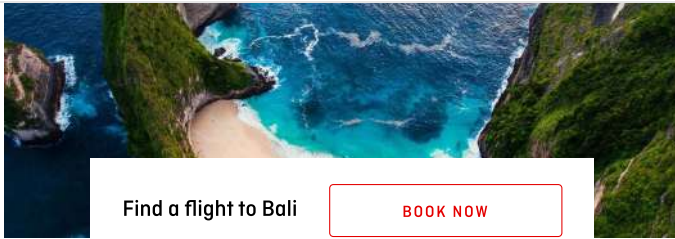
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The east coast is not usually known for its beaches, but at least one still retains the idyllic retro charm of old Bali. Virgin Beach, in Karangasem, about a two-hour drive from Kuta, is a southeast-facing swathe of soft white sand with clear gentle waves dampened by peninsulas at each end. Traditional reef boats still jostle for a spot on the shoreline, as do warung eateries where fresh fish of the day is cooked on open grills. Hire a recliner along the beach, cool down with a fresh coconut and book in a massage from one of the local masseurs right where you're soaking up the sunshine.

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