

BALI

IMPRESSIONS OF PARADISE

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES AROUND THE ISLAND

The Crafts Villages of Bali



By Jim Omi Cramer© www.baliadvisor.com



The Crafts Villages of Bali

One Full Day

This trip is a combination of Balinese theater, ancient temples, beautiful rice fields, a delightful lunch, culture and **shopping**.

Art in Bali originally had a religio-decorative function. Every religious improvised from local material. Stone carvings, wood carvings, and jewelry, all were created for temples or palaces and all had the basic motifs from the Ramayana Story in the traditional Wayang Style. Now artists are creating non-functional objects purely for tourist consumption.

Undoubtedly the quality has decreased, but it also means that the artists of Bali are creating a whole new range of crafts and caused a renaissance. The increase of influence from the western world has dramatically changed the art scene in Bali. Westerners without the skills, but with ideas for the crafts these people create. This suggested outing visits the more notable craft villages on the island. I think this will attract those of you interested in shopping, and help orient you to what is available and from where they originate. Before you leave for home, that favorite item you see on this outing can then be purchased, unless you've found a better bargain in the meantime.

This day outing can be taken from the beach or from Ubud. If coming from the beach, visit **Batubulan** and then the craft villages of **Celuk**, **Sukawati**, **Batuan**, and **Mas** on the trip to **Ubud**. If starting this trip from **Ubud**, you can take the back road to **Batubulan** via **Kedewatan** and through the villages of **Singapadu**, **Negari**, and **Kutri**, see the Barong dance in the morning. Then you can return to Ubud via **Celuk**, **Sukawati**, **Batuan**, and **Mas** on the trip back to **Ubud**.

I will describe this trip as if leaving from the beach, as most will do. You should start early, around (8:00 am) from your

hotel in Sanur, Kuta or Nusa Dua. You'll take the Denpasar bypass towards Ubud. Seven miles from Denpasar you will come to the village of Batubulan, you'll pass stone carving and antique shops.

Batubulan

Meaning "moon stone", this village is famous for stone carvings of demons, gods, and animals carved out of soft "paras" rock. Local art from this village can be seen throughout Bali—in temples and shrines, homes and hotels. This village also has **the Barong and Kris Dance**. The dance starts at 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. depending upon which location it



is being performed. This dance once purely sacral is now performed in a condensed version and stars the Barong, a gentle creature and embodiment of good. The Barong with leonine face, clacking jaws and flowing mane, is nearly six feet long and

covered with gilt mirrors and gold painted leather.

This creature is brought to life by two men, one in the head and one in the hind parts. The other star is Rangda the evil witch, and embodiment of evil. The witch has long straggly hair, fangs, and drooping breasts, long fingernails and a long tongue. The performance is based on a tale from the Mahabharata epic, mixed with classical Legong and Topeng dances.

The Barong, protector of the village, battles with Rangda. The Barong enlists men of the village to his aid but Randa casts a spell, which turns the long krises (knives) back upon the men.

The Barong in turn casts a spell which prevents the blades of the krises from harming the men of the village. Typically no one wins the battle, but the balance between the forces of good and evil is restored. While the performance is obviously for tourists it can be a good representation of the variety of characters in the Balinese theater. After the dance you will head towards Ubud

Celuk

Celuk is the first village you will come upon. Along the road you will find 30 shops. The silversmiths and goldsmiths of this village are famous worldwide.



Their style range from the traditional highly decorative filigree style to contemporary pieces of streamlined geometrical shapes. Here you can see children learning the craft from their

elders in the numerous studios on the main road and side streets. My favorite jewelers are Ketut Sunaka, and his wife Sri. They have a shop on the main road in Celuk for their sign "**Sun Sri**". They have a nice showcase of traditional and modern work. Tell them I sent you and feel free to watch the artisans at work. Wayan **Kardana** and the artist at the **Semadi gallery** also are also excellent craftsmen. My groups visit **UC Silver**, expensive but very good quality.

Sukawati

Five minutes from Celuk on the road to Ubud is Sukawati. This village is famous for its "dalangs" the masters of the wayang kulit shadow puppet theater. The most famous puppet masters are **Wayan Wija** and **I Wayan Nartha**.

You can visit both of there home studios near the produce market. Visit the Pura Penataran Agung in the center of Sukawati or the Pura Kawitan Dalem with its strange statues in the outer courtyard. You'll also find **Pasar Seni** with many

kinds of handicrafts and souvenirs of Bali. The shops along the main road sell ceremonial umbrellas and baskets and dance costumes.

Singapadu

This village while not on the main Ubud road is but a back road from Sukawati. Your first stop is the **Pura Puseh**



dedicated to the founding Deities of this village. This temple has various courtyards connected by eloquently carved gates. The large Beringin tree shades the forecourt area. This small village has a long tradition of famous dancers from Ketut Rujag and Made Kerdek to the more contemporary Ketut Kodi and Ni Nyoman Candri. The director of the Academy of Music in Denpasar, I made Bandem is from Singapadu.

The real reason to come to Singapadu is to visit the homes of mask makers. My mask **maker I Wayan Tangguh** live here and also **Nyoman Juala**. It is in this village where most of the Balinese mask performers buy their mask. The masks here are still made in the traditional fashion.

Batuan

This village is just up the main road to Ubud from Sukawati. Batuan is famous for its history, dancers and Batuan style paintings. The **Pura Desa Batuan** is the spiritual center and the sitedates back to A.D. 1002. It is here where the villagers worshiped their ancestral spirits. The **Pura Dede Mecaling** is the site of the former palace of the famous demon king Jero Gede Mecaling.

Later Batuan became a center for Buddhist who held mighty tantric rituals. The Gumbuh dance style, which is the most elegant of all Balinese court dances, is centered in Batuan. This village is the home of the late famous Topeng master I Nyoman Kakul and now the current master I Made Jimat, who

lives and performs here. **Batuan style painting** with its stunning black and white portrayal of daily Balinese life can be found in the studios of Made Buti Wayan Rajin amongst others. Later Batuan works of art filled a busy canvas with traditional daily activities to tourist carrying cameras.

Mas

This village has a long tradition of Brahman clans. The great priest Nirartha migrated to Mas in the 16th century from Java. Many temples were built in Mas and the **Pura Taman Pule** was built in honor of this priest. Mas is now the home of some of Bali's most famous woodcarvers. Wood carving skill in Mas have passed from father to son for years. Originally all the carvers were Brahmans whom worked on religious projects. In the thirties a new style developed influenced by Walter Spies. This new style depicted scenes from daily life. These include the studios of **Ida Bagus Tilem**, with a showroom of and modern carvings, and very expensive.



Across the road is **Adil's** which also has beautiful carvings and the prices are more reasonable. Ida Bagus Anom, the most innovative mask carver on the island, has his studio just up the road from Adil's. Another mask carver in Mas is **Ida Bagus Gelondog**. There are many home studios in this village where one can watch artisans at work. For those interested, there are wood carving lessons available at the studio of **Ida Bagus Anom**.

Mas is also famous for its **Wayan Wong Ramayana troupe**. A performance is traditionally held on the holiday Hari Raya Kuningan, which is a major holy day on the 210-day Balinese

calendar. The next stop along this tour is Ubud. There are a great many things to see and do in Ubud. **The Puri Lukisan Art Museum** in a nice garden setting was founded in 1953 and **Neka Museum** House some of Bali's finer paintings. They also contain a wide variety of different styles of Balinese paintings. The streets are lined with galleries. I recommend **Antonio Blanco's House and Gallery**, and **Lempad's** down past the market on Jalan Raya Ubud. You will also find **the Hans Snel** gallery behind Pura Sarasawati. The **Arma museum** in Pengosekan is well worth the walk to the nearby village.



A number of classical dance troupes give regular performances



in the evenings. Among them are Semara Ratih in Ubud, and Gunung Sari Dance Troupe in Pelitan.

Depending upon your pace of the day you can have lunch in Ubud or if you are going at a slower pace you can have

dinner in Ubud (see Ubud restaurants) and catch a dance performance afterwards. If your home base is in Ubud this will be the end of your day. If your home base is the beach after seeing Ubud you will want to head back to your hotel. You can return using two routes. Return the way you came to Ubud or you can continue towards Campuan through the village of Sanggingan and make a left at the Kedewatan intersection.

If it is still light when your return to the beach you'll come to a sign saying "Rumah SayanTerrace" on your right. Park and

walk down the path on the far right. At the end of this path is a view of one of the most beautiful river gorges in Bali, if not the world. Here you'll see a magnificent view of the Ayung River below and terraced rice fields on the upper rim. If you own a camera — have it ready!

Continuing on drive slowly as you travel along this road for you will see many colorful sights. You'll also see beautiful rice paddies, colorful scenes of women harvesting rice, the sunlight reflected in the newly planted wet rice paddies, or women walking from market, heads laden with fruits and vegetables. It will be dark or the sun will be setting as you head back to the beach. Just follow the road back to Batubulan and retrace your steps to your hotel.

By Jim Omi Cramer© www.baliadvisor.com