

INDIA

Bali: The Yogi's Guide

*Agama Hindu Dharma, temples, the Balinese calendars, Ubud and the practical facts,
checked and dated*



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YOGIDE

Free sample

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Before you begin

Bali is the only Hindu-majority province of Indonesia: about 4.3 million people at the 2020 census, 86.4% of whom follow Balinese Hinduism (Wikipedia, "Bali"), in a country where, as France Diplomatie notes, the great majority practise Islam. Every morning, small palm-leaf trays of flowers appear on doorsteps, shrines and pavements. In schools and on temple loudspeakers you may hear a prayer whose first verse is the Gāyatrī mantra of the Ṛg Veda. Temples face the great volcano, Gunung Agung, and water is blessed before it is poured. For a yogi who bows to India as the birthplace of yoga, Bali is a surprise: a living Hindu civilisation that grew up far from the Ganga, through Java, over more than a thousand years, and kept the Sanskrit words while giving them its own meaning.

Bali is also one of the most searched destinations in the world for yoga retreats and teacher trainings, many of them run in English for international visitors, in and around Ubud. The two worlds sit side by side. This guide is for the person who wants to practise in Bali without mistaking one for the other: who will roll out a mat in a shala above the rice fields in the morning, and in the afternoon enter a temple courtyard knowing what it is, who it belongs to and how to behave there.

It is not a list of retreats. You will find no ranking, no review and no recommendation of any school, retreat centre or teacher, and that is deliberate. This book gives you the context, the practical facts and the questions that let you choose for yourself. It is built on three promises.

First, practical facts are checked and dated. Visa rules, fees, the tourist levy, festival dates, temple rules and health advice change. Every practical fact here was checked online on **16 October 2026** against the most official source we could find, listed at the end. Where we found only unofficial or contradictory information, we say so and tell you where to confirm. Where we could not verify something, we left it out.

Second, no invented experiences. No testimonials, no "when I was in Ubud" anecdotes, no reviews. A legend is called a legend; a historical date comes with its source.

Third, the sacred is treated as sacred. Balinese temples, offerings and ceremonies belong to a living religion, Agama Hindu Dharma. They are not a backdrop for a yoga holiday. This guide explains the customs so that you can be present without causing offence, and writes Sanskrit correctly, in Devanagari with IAST, next to the Balinese and Indonesian forms you will see on signs.

This guide informs; it does not replace official advice.

Read your own government's travel advice for Indonesia, check the official Indonesian immigration website yourself, and see a travel health professional. In Indonesia, the UK FCDO lists **118** for an ambulance, **110** for the police and **112** for fire (accessed 16 October 2026).

How to read the words in this book

Three languages meet in Bali. **Indonesian**, in the Latin alphabet, is the national language of signs, shops and officials. **Balinese** is the language of homes and villages; it has its own script, aksara Bali, which you will see on signs above the Latin letters. **Sanskrit** survives in mantras, priestly ritual and hundreds of words that changed shape on the way: tīrtha became tirta, holy water; vrata, a vow, became brata. Sanskrit words appear in Devanagari with IAST:

IAST	Sounds roughly like	Example
ā, ī, ū	long a, ee, oo	Gāyatrī
ṛ	a short "ri"	Ṛg Veda
ś, ṣ	"sh" (two kinds)	Śiva, Viṣṇu
c	"ch" as in church	catur
ṭ, ḍ, ṇ	tongue curled back	maṇḍala
ṁ	nasal hum	oṁ

In Indonesian, c is "ch" (canang is "chanang") and u is "oo".

How to use this book

Still choosing dates? Start with Chapters 3 and 5: the Balinese calendars matter more than the weather, and arriving the day before Nyepi changes everything. Ticket booked? Chapters 8 to 10 cover arrival, paperwork and safety. Already there? Chapters 2, 4 and 11 explain the temples you walk past every day; Chapters 14 and 15 give checklists and phrases.

Chapter 1. Bali in history and legend

Not "Indian Hinduism abroad"

It is tempting to see Bali as a piece of India that drifted east. Historians do not. The encyclopedic entry on Balinese Hinduism describes a religion shaped by "a long process of religious syncretism", combining indigenous beliefs with Hindu traditions that reached the archipelago from the early centuries CE, mainly through Java, and calls it "a locally evolved religious system" (Wikipedia, "Balinese Hinduism", accessed 16 October 2026). Ancestor veneration, sacred mountains and sacred springs, older than any Indian influence, stayed at its heart. For a yogi, this is the first lesson of Bali: the words are familiar, the meaning is local.

The legend of Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya

Balinese tradition, recorded in palm-leaf manuscripts (lontar), credits the founding of Hinduism on the island to a sage from the east of India, Ṛṣi Mārkaṇḍeya (मार्कण्डेय), in the eighth century. His first expedition failed when his followers fell ill; he withdrew to Java, meditated, and returned with a ritual method of purifying water. He is said to have buried five sacred metals on the slopes of Gunung Agung and founded temples, including the mother temple, Besakih (Wikipedia, "Balinese Hinduism").

Another strand concerns Ubud. Tradition says that Mārkaṇḍeya meditated at Campuhan, where two rivers meet, a place Hindus consider auspicious, and founded there the temple of Gunung Lebah, still a place of pilgrimage (Wikipedia, "Ubud"). These are legends, kept by temples and manuscripts. They tell you how the Balinese understand their island: as land and water consecrated by a sage's meditation.

Majapahit and the priest Nirartha

In 1343 the Javanese empire of Majapahit conquered Bali. When Islamic states rose in Java in the late fifteenth century, Hindu-Javanese nobles, priests and artists moved to Bali with court culture, Old Javanese literature and Brahmanical ritual. The priest **Dang Hyang Nirartha**, said to have come from Java in 1492, is credited with founding the Śaiva priesthood now found across the island and with introducing into temples the padmāsana (पद्मासन), the empty lotus throne of the supreme god (Wikipedia, "Balinese Hinduism"). Yogis know the word as the lotus posture, the seat of meditation; in a Balinese temple it is a tall stone throne, left empty because the supreme has no form. Tradition holds that Nirartha attained liberation at Uluwatu (Wikipedia, "Uluwatu Temple").

Agama Hindu Dharma in modern Indonesia

After independence, Balinese religion had to fit a national framework that recognised religions with one God and a holy book. Through exchanges with India, Balinese leaders reformulated their religion around the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas and epics, named the supreme principle **Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa**, and

in a joint petition of 1958 asked the state to recognise Hindu Dharma (Wikipedia, "Balinese Hinduism"). Its official name is **Agama Hindu Dharma**. The national Hindu council, **Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia** (PHDI), was started in 1959 and took its national name in 1964 (Wikipedia, "Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia"); temples themselves are run by villages and temple councils.

One figure of this revival, **Ibu Gedong Bagoes Oka** (born in Karangasem in 1921), was inspired by Gandhi's autobiography to found the Bali Cinti Sena and the Cinti Dasa Ashram, and received the Jamnalal Bajaj Award in 1994 for "Promoting Gandhian Values Outside India" (Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation). The link between Bali and India is not only ancient; it was renewed in the twentieth century by Balinese who went looking for India's teachers.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 36 pages.

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