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Beyond bogans: how to do Bali in style



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Kuta is overrun with tourists, but there are ways to visit Bali in style. Photo: Reuters

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SHARE Bali can get a bad rap, but it's not all bogan-filled tourist traps, writes Caroline Berdon.

When Aussies think of Bali, many will conjure up images of drug smugglers awaiting the death penalty, inhumane prison cells or perhaps the tragic bombings of 2002.

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Recent stories hitting our national press of a Central Coast teenager [charged over marijuana possession](#), a [Central Coast schoolie electrocuted](#) after touching a nightclub sign in Kuta, and a Perth rugby player killed from methanol poisoning after drinking a concoction called Jungle Juice, have done nothing to improve the Indonesian island's allure Down Under.

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Rock Bar at the Ayana Resort and Spa. The minimalist design of this bar makes perfect use of the rocks on which it sits, just metres above the ocean at the base of towering cliffs.

Australian holidaymakers make up a mammoth segment of Bali's tourism industry, and the beachy hotspot is well aware of its tough task to convert and entice Aussies gone cold.

Even if you don't think incarceration and danger, you'd be forgiven for being turned off by the images of Kuta as an over-developed tourist trap overrun with teenagers and - we may as well just say it - bogans.

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But there is another side of Bali's tourism that the industry is desperate for you to hear about - and we're not talking the island's mountainous interior or the desolate volcanic black-sand beaches in the north (although both sound quite wonderful).

Down in Bali's southern tip known as the tourist mecca, there is a luxury emerging for those who want to experience Bali with indulgence.

Just moments from the loud, motorbike-ridden and steamy chaos of Bali's streets, there are some truly remarkable and lavish venues hidden away that offer some of the paradise of this Indonesian island - without the dangers.

Since the 2002 Bali bombings near Kuta nightclubs, which killed 202 people including 88 Australians, security on the island has stepped up a few gears.

You can't enter a western hotel, restaurant, beach club or bar in Bali today without having your car thoroughly checked for explosives and weapons - and while this can feel a little oppressive at times, the extra safety measures are undoubtedly a good thing.

So if you find yourself needing to escape the mayhem into a world of guaranteed safety and exotic decadence, here are some tips on how to spend your trip in style.

ACCOMMODATION

The Oasis Boutique Beach Resort, Benoa

Set in Nusa Dua on the eastern side of the Bukit Peninsula - far away from the hustle and bustle of Kuta, which is a good 45



store



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minutes away - The Oasis is just that. Built in wood and stone, the quiet and airy U-shaped hotel is set among tranquil tropical gardens and surrounds a 70-metre freshwater pool. The poolside Terrace Restaurant serves up delightful Balinese cuisine.

Nusa Dusa is known for its deep, long and safe beaches, and one of them backs onto the hotel's grounds. There are a variety of watersports on offer, including banana boating, parasailing and jet-skiing, but if you're more into land-based pursuits, the most popular golf course in Bali is not far away.

One downside of all this tranquillity is that Nusa Dua can feel slightly artificial and sanitised and very un-Balinese. Still, it's the perfect retreat for honeymooners.

Rooms start from \$A180 per night. Visit www.theoasisbenoa.com

BEACH CLUB

Potato Head Beach Club, Seminyak

Since the club opened its doors in 2010, Potato Head has become one of the island's most prestigious venues and is also listed on the World's Best Bars website. It is an arty space (the exterior wall is a beautiful hotchpotch of battered wooden shutters) set right on the beach, but this appears little used by the punters, who instead sit languidly on underwater bar stools in the stunning tranquillity pool, loll on communal sun loungers or sip cocktails in the poolside bar. The food is delightful, too.

Entry to the beach club pool is free, but food and drinks are not cheap.

Visit www.ptthead.com.

SUNSET COCKTAILS

KuDeTa, Seminyak

This is another superb spot for dinner and cocktails - and was the sunset spot to be seen at before Potato Head popped up. It's still as popular as ever, though, and it's easy to see why. KuDeTa is another stunning expanse of sun loungers overlooking the ocean. Later on the vibe heats up and the venue is known for attracting some big-name international DJs.

Visit <http://kudeta.net>.

DINNER

Made's Warung, Seminyak

Established in 1969, Made's has become a Seminyak institution for locals, tourists and ex-pats alike. With its dark Balinese floor tiles, slender pillars supporting a high, woven ceiling and soft glow of lanterns, this restaurant is large but cosy. You can sample simple yet delicious Balinese fare here - try the "gado gado" (vegetable salad with peanut sauce) or the "nasi campur" (chicken, tofu, peanut and soya beans with rice). But, unfortunately, like most restaurants in Bali, there are no designated smoke-free zones.

Visit www.mades-warung.com

LATE NIGHT BAR

Rock Bar at the Ayana Resort and Spa, Jimbaran Bay

The minimalist design of this bar makes perfect use of the rocks on which it sits, just metres above the ocean at the base of towering cliffs. From the hotel you have to take a lift down to the bar, for

which there is often a sizeable queue. But the wait is worth it; the location is stunning, and the bar has lots of cosy, private enclaves to share sunset cocktails with a loved one or enjoy a private late night party. Like many other exclusive bars in Bali though, you could be forgiven for forgetting you are in Indonesia.

Visit www.ayanaresort.com/rockbarbali/

The writer was a guest of Air Asia and Bali Plus.

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AAP

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