



Airbnb and UNESCO:

Empowering Hosts as Cultural Ambassadors

Bali's cultural heritage is one of the island's greatest treasures—living traditions passed down through generations, woven into daily life, sacred landscapes, and communal values. As tourism grows, so too does the responsibility to ensure that this heritage is protected and celebrated—not consumed.

That's why UNESCO and Airbnb have come together to launch the Bali Cultural Ambassador programme. This initiative empowers local guesthouse owners—who serve as trusted hosts and cultural connectors—with deeper knowledge of Bali's traditions, crafts, rituals, and heritage sites. With their guidance, travellers can move beyond sightseeing to meaningful cultural exchange.

As part of the programme, UNESCO mapped community-based cultural assets across five regencies—Buleleng, Badung, Tabanan, Gianyar, and Bangli—home to Bali's Subak System, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Through workshops and fieldwork, we equipped local hosts with tools to promote culturally sensitive tourism—helping local communities and travellers to engage meaningfully.

Airbnb's research shows that 90% of travellers in Asia Pacific seek more than just a place to stay—they're looking for cultural connection. Three out of four say their host's recommendations helped them find it. This booklet offers a glimpse into our joint effort to document over 150 elements of Bali's festivals, crafts, foodways, and sacred traditions across the five regencies. It serves as a resource for homestay owners to become Cultural Ambassadors—bridging local heritage with global travellers.

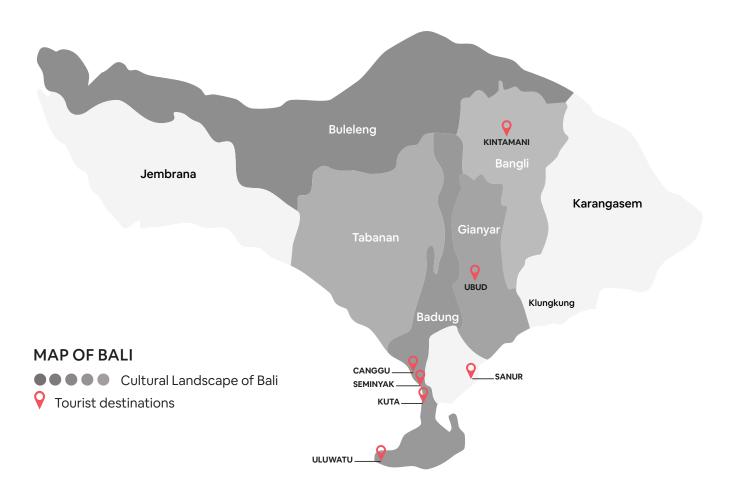
Harmony in Practice: A Balinese World Heritage Site

Bali's Cultural Landscape, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012, showcases the island's unique harmony between nature, spirituality, and community through the ancient subak system. Dating back to the 9th century, this cooperative irrigation network of canals and water temples reflects the Balinese philosophy of Tri Hita Karana—promoting balance among the spiritual (parahyangan), human (pawongan), and natural (palemahan) realms.

The subak system embodies the harmonious way of life of the Balinese people, rooted in sacred rituals, strong communal bonds, and sustainable land and water management. This intricate system is comprised of several key elements: Pura Ulun Danu Batur, the revered abode of Dewi Danu, goddess of the lake; Lake Batur, believed to be the source of water for all life; the Catur Angga Batukaru Subak Landscape, where five main temples demarcate the sacred boundaries and water sources for the Tabanan subaks; the Pakerisan Watershed Subak Landscape, which marks the birthplace of Balinese civilization at the end of the first millennium AD; and Pura Taman Ayun, representing the final phase of the system, where the king played an active role in ritually connecting the upstream lakes to the broader subak landscape.

Traveling across Bali Landscape

Though listed as a single UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Cultural Landscape of Bali spans five Regencies—Badung, Bangli, Buleleng, Gianyar, and Tabanan— with four iconic clusters.



Pura Ulun Danu Batur & Lake Batur

Nestled in a vast volcanic caldera, Lake Batur is a natural wonder and sacred reservoir. On its shore stands Pura Ulun Danu Batur, dedicated to Dewi Danu, goddess of the lake. One of Bali's most sacred temples, it is believed to safeguard water flow from mountain to field, blessing the entire subak network.

Subak Landscape of the Pakerisan Watershed

♀ Gianyar Regency

Rice fields blanket the land, fed by irrigation systems over a thousand years old. The area is rich in temples and royal bathing sites, where water is revered for both its gifts and its meaning—a rare fusion of engineering, ecology, and faith.

Pura Taman Ayun

♀ Badung Regency

Surrounded by moats, gardens, and tiered shrines, this 17th-century temple symbolizes royal stewardship—reflecting the ruler's role in maintaining political, spiritual, and environmental balance.

Subak Landscape of Catur Angga Batukaru

▼ Tabanan & Buleleng Regencies

The Catur Angga Batukaru cultural landscape exemplifies the sophisticated Balinese Subak system and its historical expansion in western Bali. Flowing from Mount Batukaru's forested slopes, it integrates jungle, temples, and rice terraces into a sacred whole. Farmers continue to observe traditional calendars and rituals, reflecting a life shaped by nature and faith.



Spanning Tabanan and Buleleng Regencies, it includes 20 Subaks across 9 villages in Tabanan—featuring water temples, protected forests, springs, and rivers—and two mountain lakes in Buleleng, Lake Buyan and Lake Tamblingan, which provide essential water for rice terraces. This cluster reflects the deep connection between water management, agriculture, and spirituality in Balinese culture. Some of the vital temples are:



- **Pura Luhur Batukaru** A misty forest temple in the central part of Bali.
- **Pura Luhur Muncak Sari** A highland site for harvest blessings.
- **Pura Luhur Pucak Petali** A remote pilgrimage shrine uniting mountain springs and rice fields.
- **Pura Luhur Besikalung** Nestled by rice paddies and protected customary forests.
- Pura Luhur Tambawaras A village temple tied to water, crops, and healing lore.

Visiting Bali's Heritage Mindfully

When visiting Bali's temples, rice fields, and sacred spaces, respect isn't just appreciated – it's essential. Here's how to be a thoughtful guest:

- ✓ Dress modestly in temples and rice fields – cover your shoulders and knees
- ✓ Observe cultural restrictions on entering temples if you're mourning a recent passing or menstruating
- ✓ Feel free to ask a question or strike up a conversation with a local, just do so with curiosity and respect
- ✓ Support the community by purchasing locally made products

- Don't swear or raise your voice keep the serenity
- Don't step on offeringslook down and step mindfully
- X Careful not to smoke in sacred areas, like temples or forests
- X Don't pick rice from the fields
- X Don't litter or pollute water channels.

If in doubt, ask your Airbnb Host. They'll guide you.

Support cultural preservation through the Bali Tourism Levy

Pay Bali's Tourist Levy (IDR 150,000) at lovebali.baliprov.go.id – your contribution helps protect Bali's culture and environment for future generations.



Ritual and Celebration: Festivals of Bali

Bali's ceremonial calendar is shaped by cycles of devotion, renewal, and community. Many festivals are rooted in the island's distinct religious and agricultural traditions, following the 210-day Pawukon cycle or solar calendar.

Galungan and Kuningan

Galungan marks the return of ancestral spirits and the victory of dharma (order) over adharma (disorder). It ends ten days later with Kuningan, when offerings are made and spirits return to the ancestral realm. Both are observed twice a year.

Bali Arts Festival JUNE-JULY

This month-long festival in Denpasar features classical and contemporary performances, crafts, and exhibitions—highlighting the island's diverse artistic heritage.

Nyepi END OF MARCH

Balinese New Year begins with a day of silence, fasting, and stillness. The island shuts down for 24 hours. Prior to Nyepi, communities hold ogoh-ogoh parades—burning effigies to banish negative forces.

Lovina Festival AUGUST

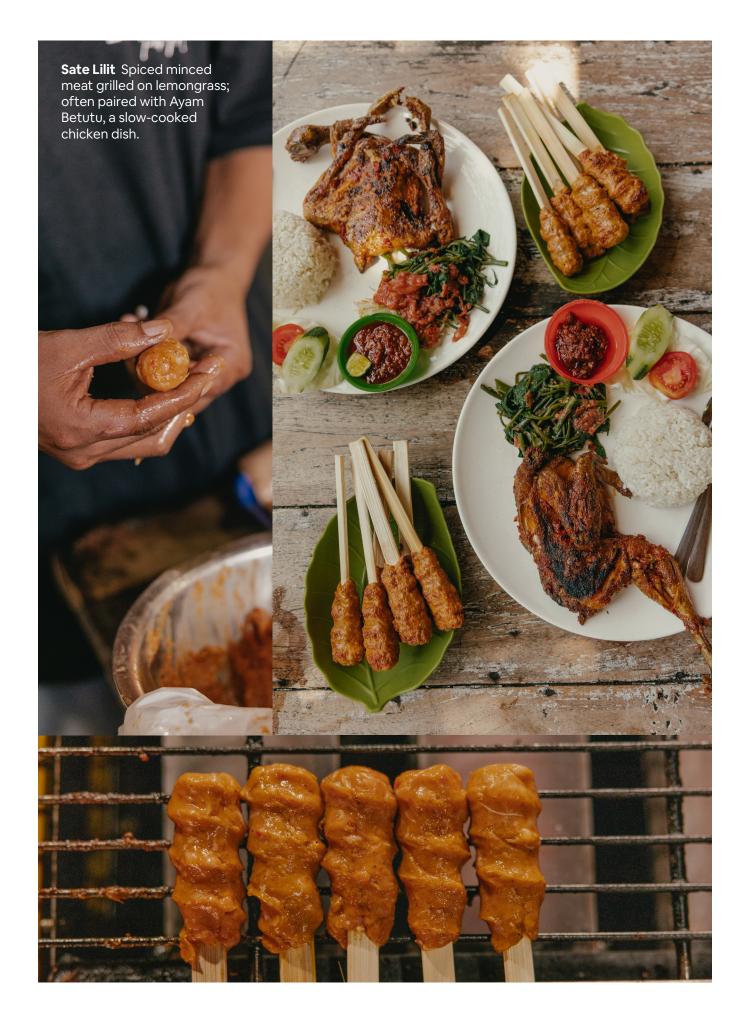
Held on the north coast, the festival features coastal traditions through performances, food, and crafts rooted in local culture.

Balinese Foodways: from Rituals to Dishes

Balinese cuisine is rooted in ritual, seasonality, and community. Many dishes originate from temple offerings or village feasts—each reflecting local landscapes and traditions.

Bubuh Mengguh A savoury porridge from Buleleng with shredded chicken, coconut broth, and sambal. **Mujair Nyatnyat** Tilapia simmered in spices, served with rice and beans around Lake Batur. **Dodol Penglatan** A ceremonial sweet of coconut milk and palm sugar, wrapped in corn husk. **Loloh Cemcem** Traditional drinks made from spondias pinnata leave, knows as daun kecemcem, renowned for its health benefits













Food traditions you can support, preserve, and share

Across Bali, everyday ingredients carry stories of ritual, resilience, and identity. These locally made products reflect longstanding knowledge systems, ecological balance, and community pride.

Jatiluwih Red Rice ♥ Tabanan Regency

Once nearly replaced by hybrid varieties, this heirloom rice is still grown organically using subak methods. Cultivated within the UNESCO World Heritage area, it remains central to local rituals and farming identity.

Jatiluwih Red Rice Crackers

Made without additives, these crackers preserve the taste and integrity of heritage rice. Shaped and dried by hand, they are best enjoyed freshly fried.

Loloh Kunyit ♥ Bangli Regency

A traditional herbal tonic blending turmeric, local roots, and lime from Penglipuran Village. Passed down through generations, it reflects local knowledge of wellness and seasonal balance.

Shade-grown in volcanic soil and intercropped with citrus, this coffee from holds geographic indication status and ceremonial value. Its bright, citrusy profile sets it apart.

Pejeng Tofu ♥ Gianyar Regency

Prepared over wood-fired stoves with local soybeans and natural brine in Pejeng Village, this tofu reflects generational craft—free from chemicals, full of local character.

Pedawa Palm Sugar ♥ Buleleng Regency

Tapped and processed in Pedawa Village using ritual timing and firewood methods, this smoky, rich sweetener connects food with cosmology and land stewardship.

Tejakula Sea Salt ♥ Buleleng Regency

Produced through a centuries-old process of filtering seawater through black sand and wooden troughs. Supporting it helps sustain a fading coastal livelihood.

Crafted in Bali: Stories Woven, Carved, and Cast

Balinese crafts embody generations of artistry, spiritual belief, and harmony with nature. Each object carries knowledge—connecting maker and material, ritual and daily life. More than souvenirs, these are tangible expressions of Bali's living heritage.

Master silversmiths craft intricate jewellery and ceremonial objects, often featuring sacred motifs. This living tradition sustains both artistic identity and livelihoods.

Wood Carving ♀ Peliatan, Ubud, Gianyar In Banjar Teges hub, artisans shape local wood into masks, statues, and ritual objects inspired by mythology, daily life, and spiritual teachings.

Bamboo Weaving ♥ Sidetapa & Tigawasa, Buleleng Villagers harvest and weave bamboo with ritual care. Men build structural pieces; women craft refined patterns—each honoring the balance between human and nature.

Pottery ♥ Kapal, Badung Regency
Hand-formed and wood-fired, Kapal's ceramics blend
function and artistry. Studios like Parosari preserve

function and artistry. Studios like Parosari preserve the craft with a focus on traditional techniques.

TRADITIONAL TEXTILES

Endek Gurita ♥ Badung Regency

Songket woven with gold threads and natural motifs, worn in ceremonies to signal prosperity.

Songket Jinengdalem ♥ Buleleng Regency

Woven with cag-cag technique, each piece expresses symbolic protection and devotion.

Endek Mastuli ♥ Buleleng Regency

Naturally dyed ikat from Kalianget Village, rooted in local flora, balance, and intergenerational teaching.

