

Basking in Bali

BY TERRI FRIEDMAN

Ever since I spent five months studying and traveling in India in 1989, friends had been telling me I had to go to Bali. They were right. India is a hard, emotionally exhausting place to visit. Bali is the opposite—a very nurturing, easy place to be.

A small Indonesian island just east of Java, Bali is a nineteen-hour plane ride from L.A. When my friend Margaret and I arrived there last summer—via Garuda Indonesian Airways—we were exhausted. Luckily, Bali is small enough that you can get anywhere you want in one day. We decided against staying in Kuta beach, a well-known resort area not far from the airport. Instead, we headed straight for Ubud, in central Bali, which is known as the cultural capital.

We spent the first week in Ubud rushing around, trying to catch every temple ritual, dance ceremony, and shadow-puppet performance that was listed on the chalkboard at the tourist office. Finally, we realized there were countless ceremonies and performances every day. You don't even have to look for them. You'd be sitting in a café, and you'd hear this gamelan music. Next thing you knew, there'd be this procession outside: a long line of people dressed in brightly colored sarongs and scarves, carrying offerings to the gods at a local temple.

Each of the villages around Ubud specializes in a particular art form, such as stone carving, goldsmithing, or classical dance. Art is integrated into daily life in Bali, and as a tourist, you can participate in it easily. On Tuesday nights, for instance, you can take gamelan lessons; on the weekends, some of the villages hold dance workshops. For a mixed-media artist like me, Bali is an inspiration. Everywhere I looked there was visual stimulation: flagpoles hung with red and gold tassels, a little Balinese boy running through a ritual dance ceremony in a Batman cape.

In Ubud, we stayed at the **Ananda Cottages**. For about



thirty dollars a night, we got a beautiful double room with vaulted ceilings and a porch overlooking terraced green rice paddies. The hotel serves a great breakfast of sweet black rice pudding and tropical fruits. You could take walks along little pathways in the rice paddies or go hiking nearby on the Monkey Forest Road.

We spent a lot of time at the **Nur Salon** in Ubud. It offers inexpensive facials and Javanese hair treatments, but the best thing there was a two-hour massage and flower-petal bath for \$12.50, in a private, open-roofed hut. After the massage and a grainy clay body scrub, they rinse you off with herbal water. Then they draw a flower-petal bath for you in a large stone tub, bring you tea, and leave you there to luxuriate, gazing up at trees and listening to gamelan music.

We did manage to tear ourselves away from Ubud to go to the beach for four days. We chose Candi Dasa, a sleepy place in the east, rather than Kuta, which is very developed and full of Australian surfer dudes. From Candi Dasa, we arranged a day trip to Amed on the north coast, where we snorkeled in the Java Sea. For a car and driver, equipment rental, and lunch, we paid thirty dollars.

On our way back from Candi Dasa, we stopped in Denpasar, where I bought some Irish linens and beautiful printed rayons, which I took to the **Alus Tailor and Boutique**, in Kuta. For under a hundred dollars, they made me eight pairs of pants as well as a shirt, a jacket, and a suit. It had been sort of a lifelong dream of mine to design my own wardrobe. In Bali, I made it happen. ☺

Terri Friedman is a mixed-media and installation artist whose work will be featured in a solo exhibition next month at the Sue Spaid Fine Art Gallery in Los Angeles. For more information on Bali, see F.Y.I., page 115.

For artist Terri Friedman (seen in top photo), the island of Bali was a visual feast of colorful religious processions and terraced green rice paddies