

Twenty reasons to visit Seminyak

Sydney Morning Herald by Belinda Jackson – Nov 11th 2012



1 . Kopi luwak

"Civet coffee, where cherries are passed through the native cat", is a very nice way to describe the natural process of creating Bali's special kopi luwak (or civet coffee). By passing through the civet's digestive tract, the coffee beans are mellowed out, creating what's arguably the world's most expensive coffee. Cruise homewares and sip kopi luwak at Becik (Jl Dhyana Pura 4, +62 361 737 816) or pull up a chair, poolside, and sip at Anantara Seminyak hotel (Jl Dhyana Pura, +62 361 733 7773, anantara.com). Expect to pay about \$9 a cup. (PS: jalan, abbreviated to Jl, is Balinese for "street".)

2. Bodyworks

In a land of cheap spas, Bodyworks has the edge. It's cheap, efficient and the 80-plus staff will try to squeeze you in for that urgent facial/pedicure/hairstyling fix. Expect to pay about \$20 or less for most services. "And you'll always get a reliably good treatment every time," Bali-based Australian fashion designer Penny Pinkster says. "I opened my second boutique next door so I could pop in when it's quiet." (Jl Kayu Jati 2, Petitenget, +62 361 733 317, bodyworksbali.com) Jari Menari ("dancing fingers") also gets a guernsey for its yoga-influenced stretching massage, from 300,000 rupiah (\$30) (Jl Raya Basangkasa 47, +62 361 736 740, jarimenari.com).

3. Rooftop dining

Seminyak is having a love affair with rooftops. And why not, when the weather is this good? SOS Supper Club, on the roof of Anantara Seminyak hotel, is the leader of the pack, with nightly DJs and unfettered views of the Indian Ocean. Book a table under the stars for a steak dinner or flop on a day bed to snack and watch the stars come out with a Bali Classic in hand (strawberry, lime, cranberry, lychee with pomegranate juice and sparkling wine) or a pitcher of SOS punch. Of course, they do bottle service, too (Jl Dhyana Pura, +62 361 737 773, sosasupperclub.com).

4. Beach sunsets

South Bali is blessed with sunsets over the water and the cheapest entertainment in town is a walk along the long stretch of Seminyak beach at 6pm. On the way, you can buy drinks, hire a surfboard, rent a sun lounger or just park on the sand to watch the golden sun dip down over the Indian Ocean. Sunday is the day off for most workers in Bali, and everyone heads to the beach. Pop down late afternoon to see a slice of local life, from kite flying to beach soccer and plenty of perambulating.



5. Pura Petitenget

In a land of temples, even Seminyak's crazed real estate scene pauses for religion. Pura Petitenget is just beside the beach, and the quiet, well-maintained Hindu temple gives respite from the

traffic below. Don your sarong, wrapped over trousers, and visit just before sunset when the light catches the mossy sculptures for a quintessentially Balinese moment.

6. Boutique fashion

The island's best fashion is found in Seminyak, with beautiful, often handmade clothes at a price you'll never find in Australia. Fondle a soft charcoal jersey at Buddha Wear (JI Oberoi 15X, buddhaweare.com) and see what the Brazilians are up to at chic and sexy Lulu Yasmine (JI Oberoi 100, luluyasmine.com) and Lily Jean (JI Oberoi 102X or JI Mertanadi 73X, Kerobokan for the sale shop, lily-jean.com). For Parisian "Bourgeois Boheme", visit Magali Pascal (JI Oberoi, 177X), and Animale is a good stop for understated menswear (JI Raya Seminyak 31, animale.com). For accessories, check the gorgeous strappy flats at Kumuru (JI Raya Seminyak 67) and TropicSurf's Jack Chisholm suggests you check out Drifter for classic surfboards, imported surf clobber and good Indonesian coffee (JI Oberoi 50, driftersurf.com).

7. Petitenget

Move over, JI Oberoi (aka Laksmana or Kayu Aya) and JI Dhyana Pura (aka Abimanyu), JI Petitenget is the hottest dining strip at the top of Seminyak, with Metis and Sarong firmly on the faves list. The hot new ticket is the Petitenget, next door to Pura

Petitenget, which serves "modern bistro" for breakfast, lunch and dinner. At the latest venture of restaurateur Sean Cosgrove of Corner Store fame, sit on the terrace and order the poached chicken salad with pistachio and celery with a mandarin Bellini, or seek respite from the heat in its cool, chic lounges (Jl Petitenget 40X, +62 361 473 3054, petitenget.net).



8. Surfing

It doesn't have the wild reef breaks of Uluwatu and west Bali, but the long straight beach at Seminyak is a beginner's paradise, says Bali surfer Jack Chisholm of TropicSurf, who teaches families and beginners out the front of Anantara Seminyak. "Anantara's beach also has fun, peaky waves out the back that will keep even advanced surfers happy." Other reliable locations include the stretch

in front of Ku De Ta, popular with intermediate Europeans looking for an easy ride to practise their skills, and at the end of Double Six Road. The surf season runs from April to November, and is best in the mornings before the trade winds kick up. The big beachfront hotels have their own lifeguards, too (tropicsurf.net).

9. Tailors

Forget the \$100-and-six-week turnaround of Aussie sewing shops, Bali's tailors are fast, cheap and obliging. Say hi to tailor Ipong at Tidy Tailors for quality fabric and experience (Jl Kayu Aya 8, +62 361 736 603), while super-fast nips, tucks and copies can be squeezed in at busy Mode Kara: bring your beloved clothes for remakes or repairs (Jl Oberoi 88, +62 361 735 788).

10. Interiors with a Balinese twist

Seminyak's interior shops are a haven of treasures for stylist, creator of the Fashion Assassin label and 37-time Bali visitor Alex Zabotto-Bentley (azbthecreative.com). His top five interior faves comprise Horn Emporium, where owner Anita scours Jakarta for early Dutch antiques, while Namu is worth a stop for its very modern, very chic decorative arts from resin. He also lists Kody & Co for its 2Pac timber effigies, while Carga pulls apart Balinese designs with a Western treatment (Jl Petitenget 886, +62 361 847 8173). "And Geneva is

the craziest warehouse on Earth, with beautiful cut coconut-wood tapas trays to bizarre bronze owls," he says. "Absolutely mental." (Namu, Jl Petitenget 234X, +62 361 279 7524; Carga, Jl Petitenget 886, +62 361 847 8173; Horn Emporium, Jl Petitenget 100X, +62 361 4738 330; Geneva, Jl Raya Kerobokan No.100, +62 361 733 542; Kody Ko, Jl Kayu Cendana C002).

11. Biku

Pull up a pew for coffee and a tarot reading at the fantastical joglo (teak house) that is Biku, a gorgeous destination cafe. Fifteen-minute tarot readings cost 80,000 rupiah. The only downside is that everyone knows it's fantastic. Phone ahead to reserve a table and order the Asia High Tea for two (170,000 rupiah), in which tiers of samosa, Vietnamese spring rolls and ayam sisit (Balinese shredded chicken) are served with green tea, oolong or perhaps masala chai. Yes, they do scones, and the signature cocktail is the Biku coconut martini (Jl Petitenget 888, +62 361 8570 888, bikubali.com).

12. Snakeskin accessories

Vegans, look away, but for the rest of you, dyed snakeskin accessories are a hot buy from Seminyak's fashion stores. Find gorgeous clutches, belts and ballet flats, all handmade in Bali from Indonesian python skin, and a steal from \$50. Try

Naputo or sister shops Prathivi (Jl Raya Seminyak 16, Jl Kayu Aya 15, naputobali.com).

13. One for the kids

Until you travel in Bali with kids, you have no idea how kid-friendly it can be. Seminyak is chock-full of beautiful villas, with separate kitchens, big bathrooms and pools, making travel with kids a no-brainer. Nannies booked through villa complexes or hotels cost about \$8-\$9 an hour, with even better day rates negotiable. Cute kids' boutiques include French designer Clara Mia's divine little costumes (Jl Oberoi 43, +62 361 733 893).

14. Sensational seafood

Pull up at smokin' Mamasan, the cooler little sister to Seminyak dining stalwart Sarong, and order the snapper dumplings for a taste epiphany (Jl Raya Kerobokan 135, +62 361 733 072, mamasanbali.com). Those in the know earmark Sundays for a spectacular seafood buffet at the W Seminyak's beachside Starfish Bloo, which costs 475,000 rupiah a person (Jl Petitenget, +62 361 473 8106, starwoodhotels.com). Ubudphiles stranded in the craziness of Seminyak should head to Sardine for seafood and organic produce while overlooking the rice paddies (Jl Petitenget 21, +62 361 843 6111, sardinebali.com).

15. Beach bars

A long-time Bali fave, the pouty Ku De Ta, has a rival: the hottest place in town to watch it all go down is Potato Head, a beach club-cum-restaurant on the sands of Seminyak beach. Big and busy, the potential madness is tamed by groovin' Marvin Gaye or perhaps some Curtis Mayfly. Order from the casual menu, from its pan-Asian restaurant Lilin or Tapping Shoes' French fine dining after 6pm. There's a minimum spend on the beachfront sun loungers (about \$50), but get in before the 6pm pre-sunset rush. Kids are welcome, and there's even a kids' pool. No Bintang singlets, 11am-2am daily. If you're into keepin' it real, grab a beanbag and a jug of sangria at the ultimate beach bar La Plancha for sunset (Potato Head, Jl Petitenget, +62 361 473 7979, ptthead.com; Ku De Ta, Jl Oberoi, +62 36 173 6969, kudeta.net; La Plancha Double Six Beach, +62 361 890 0000, laplanchabali.com).

16. Made's Warung

Don't be expecting the usual dingy tiles and rickety tables at the island's most famous warung (restaurant). Made's is all-singing, all-dancing, with a cute little Balinese dance show each night. Noisy and fun for first-time visitors, order the Balinese plate for a taste of the warungs (or go the Japanese menu, the Italian, the Western - you get the picture). The shops within the Made's complex make for surprisingly good, upmarket browsing (Jl

Raya Seminyak, madeswarung.com).

17. Ethical shopping

Stylish indi vie is one of a handful of sleek retail outlets selling environmentally sound homewares, locally designed ceramics and jewellery and ethically produced Balinese handcrafts, with profits going to charities such as those helping the island's street children in Made's Warung shops (Jl Raya Seminyak, +62 361 730 927). Find similar products in retro-cool Press Ban cafe (Jl Oberoi 50, +62 361 730 486). For a totally Balinese souvenir, grab a beautifully made, locally designed Bali Towel, complete with handmade tassels. The towels are found in top resorts, Lily Jean and uber-emporium Word of Mouth (Kunti Arcade, Jl Kunti, wordofmouthbali.com). The "Nyoman" is modelled on the classic black-and-white saput poleng temple material, from \$40 (balitowel.com).

18. Kangkung

If you're iffy about eating meat abroad, Bali doesn't disappoint. The king of vegetables, kangkung, is water spinach tossed with garlic, chilli, tomato, galangal and shallot and served with rice: a powerhouse on a plate. Hit the lunch buffet at Warung Kolega (Jl Petitenget 98A), Warung Ocha (corner Jl Raya Seminyak and Jl Dhyana Pura) or the highly rated Warung Sulawesi (Jl Petitenget).

19. Cocktail hour

Indonesia's crippling taxes don't encourage wine binges. If Bintang beer isn't your bag, you'll just have to drink cocktails stuffed with tropical fruit. Hot spots include upstairs at Mama San for Lychee Banshees (Jl Raya Kerobokan 135), the low tables at the front of Chandi for a spiced, herbed Mojito (Jl Oberoi 72), buzzy Cubana (Jl Petitenget 12B, cubanabali.com) and old fave La Lucciola (Jl Petitenget, +62 361 730 838) or any of the beach bars mentioned above. Finish with a glass of pop at the Champagne Bar (Jl Oberoi 42C, +62 361 737 889).

20 Luxe-tastic villas

You may be in the crush of Seminyak, but those tiny gangs (Balinese for "lanes") hide lush, sprawling villas. Those on a budget should check out Maca Villas, from \$138 a person, (creativeholidays.com), **Serene Villas'** one-bed villas from \$212 a night with early-bird and last-minute specials (serenevilla.com), or the fully staffed three-bedroom Villa Natura, which is \$US295 (\$284) a night, (privatevillasandhouses.com). For a villa with the buzz of a hotel, try the Elysian, from \$US385 (theelysian.com), or Royal Seminyak MGallery Hotel's one-bedroom villas start at \$620 (mgallery.com). The four-bedroom Jaja-Liluna, comprising three self-contained pavilions around the pool, costs from \$925 a night

(marketingvillas.com), while the oceanfront Ombak Luwung starts at \$1500 a night (privatevillasandhouses.com).

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