

The Bali Packing Checklist

Everything that fits in a carry-on backpack, with room to spare.

Pack less than you think you need. Three or four days of clothes is plenty — laundry service is everywhere and costs almost nothing, and you will be buying mix-and-match outfits there for next to nothing. Go lightly.

CLOTHING

- ☐ 2 flowing sundresses or lightweight linen sets *loose, natural fibre only*
- ☐ 2 lightweight tops
- ☐ 1 pair loose-fitting light pants *dresses up or down*
- ☐ 1 long-sleeve white button-down *temples, evenings, cold restaurants*
- ☐ 1 light sweater *for cool Ubud evenings*
- ☐ 2 bathing suits
- ☐ 1 compact umbrella *rain comes without warning — keep moving, keep your plans*
- ☐ 1 pair sandals — cushioned, get-wet-friendly *buy on arrival, \$8-15*

I bought buckle sandals at the Ubud market for \$7.82 and still wear them every day at home.

FOR THE JOURNEY

- ☐ Puffy jacket with hood *long-haul cabins are freezing — do not arrive sick*
- ☐ Comfortable travel outfit and shoes *it is a long haul*
- ☐ A paperback you can leave behind *swap shelves are everywhere; don't carry it home*
- ☐ Small journal and pen
- ☐ Laptop *only if you genuinely need to work*

One rule about screens: the plane hands you earphones for the seatback movies, so there is nothing to pack. Entertain yourself getting there, then put it away. Be present — that is the entire point of the trip.

DOCUMENTS, MONEY, TECH

- ☐ Passport — 6 months valid past your arrival date *check restrictions before booking*
- ☐ Type C / F power adapter *Bali uses two-pin European outlets*
- ☐ Portable charger
- ☐ Cross-body or anti-theft pack *cash and phone secure on scooters*
- ☐ Carry-on backpack, 40L or under *soft-sided compresses better in a sizer*
- ☐ Checked-bag allowance on your return ticket * *buy it online before you go — saves money*
- ☐ Debit and credit cards *notify your bank of travel dates*
- ☐ RFID card and passport protectors
- ☐ Proof of onward or return flight *checked at check-in and at immigration*
- ☐ Indonesia arrival card *complete it within 72 hours of landing*
- ☐ eSIM purchased before departure
- ☐ Travel insurance policy in place *buy it before you fly*

** The luggage strategy: fly out with the backpack only. Buy a cheap suitcase in Bali for everything you are bringing home, and add a checked bag to your return ticket online before you leave. It is cheaper than airport rates, and far cheaper and more reliable than shipping a box, which can take months to arrive if it arrives at all.*

On the backpack itself: the good ones are expensive, and the quality is the point — you do not want a zipper failing on the far side of the world. Watch for an Amazon Days sale, buy used on eBay, or put it on your birthday list.

BRING FROM HOME — DO NOT ASSUME YOU CAN BUY IT THERE

- ☐ Prescription medications *full trip supply*
- ☐ Backup glasses or contacts
- ☐ Shower filter *the water is hard on hair and skin over weeks*
- ☐ Reef-safe sunscreen *2 oz starter supply; more available locally*
- ☐ Toiletry essentials only *everything else is at the pharmacy or 7-Eleven*

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Page two — what to buy there, and what to leave home.

STAYING WELL — WHAT ACTUALLY WORKED

I took nothing preventative and I was fine for two months of warungs, markets and street food. What I did was simple, and it is the whole system:

- ☐ Bottled water only including for brushing your teeth
- ☐ Hot food served hot from places with a queue of locals
- ☐ Fruit you peel yourself
- ☐ Tolak Angin the one thing I used — and it is amazing

If you do get caught out, Imodium, zinc and activated charcoal are sold in any Bali pharmacy, cheaper than at home, and the pharmacist will know exactly what you mean. I never needed them. If you want a preventative regimen, that is a conversation with a travel clinic before you go.

BUY IT THERE — CHEAPER, LOCAL, AND BETTER

The Indonesian brands I found on the ground and went back for. Do not waste suitcase space on the home-country equivalents.

- ☐ Tolak Angin herbal tonic — every warung and convenience store
- ☐ Mosquito repellent cents locally — spray clothing, not skin, at dawn and dusk
- ☐ Minyak kayu putih (cajuput oil) for absolutely everything
- ☐ Ellips hair treatment
- ☐ Skintific moisturizer
- ☐ Wardah moisturizer
- ☐ Hanasui moisturizer
- ☐ Collagen for skin and hair
- ☐ Conditioner
- ☐ Toenail clippers and small scissors
- ☐ Clothing very inexpensive — leave room, you will want it
- ☐ A small suitcase for the trip home cheaper than shipping a box

If you check a bag home, remove any lithium batteries (drone, power bank) or they will be confiscated. Check your airline's carry-on weight limit — overage fees still beat international shipping, which can take months.

LEAVE IT HOME

- ☐ Hair dryer
- ☐ Full-size bottles of anything
- ☐ The 'just in case' outfit
- ☐ A third pair of shoes
- ☐ Anything whose purpose is to make you feel prepared rather than actually prepare you

BEFORE YOU FLY — SET THESE UP

- ☐ WhatsApp this is the phone system in Bali
- ☐ Grab cars and motorbikes — link your card before you land
- ☐ Google Maps download the offline Bali map
- ☐ Google Translate enable the camera function
- ☐ A currency converter
- ☐ Booking.com app
- ☐ Travel insurance

One rule before you go

Buy the travel insurance. It is the item most budget travellers skip and the one I am most insistent about.