

Bali

By JJ Gormley

I had such a wonderful time in Bali I thought I'd share the trip with you.

This trip was so much easier for me this time than two years ago (some of you may recall my writing about that experience). Perhaps because I knew what to expect, perhaps because I anticipated it to be much worse (giving new meaning toward having a pessimistic attitude), but I actually enjoyed the travel and adjusted easily to the 12 hour time difference.

We flew eastward through Amsterdam (flying with the spin of the earth), and then another stop in Singapore before arriving in Denpasar, Bali. At the airport our group was met and quickly whisked away to Ubud an artsy town, low buildings and shops (lots of shops), and a monkey forest on the other side of which lay our hotel, The Alam Indah. The hotel sits on a quiet street in a small village outside of Ubud surrounded by rice fields. To give you a small example of the service at this hotel, the staff knew all of our names before even we began to know each other's (let alone their names).

I co-taught this workshop with Barbara Benagh who flew in from Boston with her daughter, Sarah. I had so much fun teaching with Barbara and feel like I learned a lot more about my own teaching. We split each day with one of us teaching in the morning and the other in the afternoon, approximately 4 hours per day. The usual routine was yoga in the morning before it got too hot from 7-9am, then breakfast followed by our daytime excursion, sometimes a hike exploring the beauty of Bali, sometimes a cultural experience, learning about mask-making, story-telling with puppets, cooking class, dances, or temple ceremonies. Then our afternoon yoga class was usually 4-6pm sometimes with an evening excursion, usually a formal dance or orchestra performance. Excursions were optional and we also had a lot of free time in the schedule for shopping, swimming, reading or simply relaxing.

We spent one week in Ubud getting to know each other, building lasting friendships, and then moved on to the mountain and lake region of Bali to a small town called Munduk to further enhance and enrich our Bali experience. In rural Munduk the excursions were hiking to a waterfall and canoeing across a spiritual lake. This lake feeds water to many of the nearby villages and a small temple lies near the water's edge. At this temple, offerings are made thanking the gods for the supply of water. Pung, one of our Balinese guides lives in one of the villages supplied by this lake and he led our little ceremony of offering. Pung has what I call "clean" energy meaning I'm sure he's got some karma to work out in this life, but it is difficult to imagine that he has ever done harm to anyone, he is just wonderful to be around.

Our friends Jean & William who live in Bali and arranged all the ground transportation and excursions for our group are just a blast to be around. Jean laughs the whole time, I have all these pictures taken on the trip and everyone of Jean is of her laughing, just the way I remember her. William reminds me of John Cleese of (Monty Python fame) he's got the British humor not to mention the accent and is the one who keeps Jean laughing. William's book, "Little Bit One O'Clock" reflects his humor as he tells tales of the Balinese family that shared their lives with us for the two weeks.

The Balinese do not practice yoga like we do, but they do not need to. They squat all the time and sit cross-legged with such ease that their hips are so open. So if the reason one practices yoga is so that they can sit in meditation for long periods, these guys can do that hands down. Their life-style involves spiritual practice all the time, it's not something practiced once a week on Sundays as for most here in the west. They are constantly making offerings and keeping their spiritual practice alive. On the waterfall trip in Munduk, our Balinese guide was Lolet. When we all came upon the waterfall we spontaneously started to do yoga poses in front of the waterfall. Lolet did some pretty fancy yoga poses (Level 4) right along with me—his first time doing yoga.

Our trip ended at the beach at this wonderful resort hotel, The Serai in Candi Dasa. We all allowed ourselves to be spoiled and it was a nice place to prepare for re-entry back to the western world.

Our group photo was taken at this last hotel. In four rows from the front to the back: 1st: Cammie Copps, 2nd: Ellen Lipsey, Araceli Pina, JJ Gormley, 3rd: Jean Howe, Katie Banfield, Paula Stockman, Barbara Benagh, Charissa Rigano, Alie McManus, Sheila Smallwood, Rita Cahill, Kathy Copps, 4th: Betty Figure, William Ingram, Alan Kao, Dennis Gormley, Pat Develeskis. Don't we look relaxed?

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