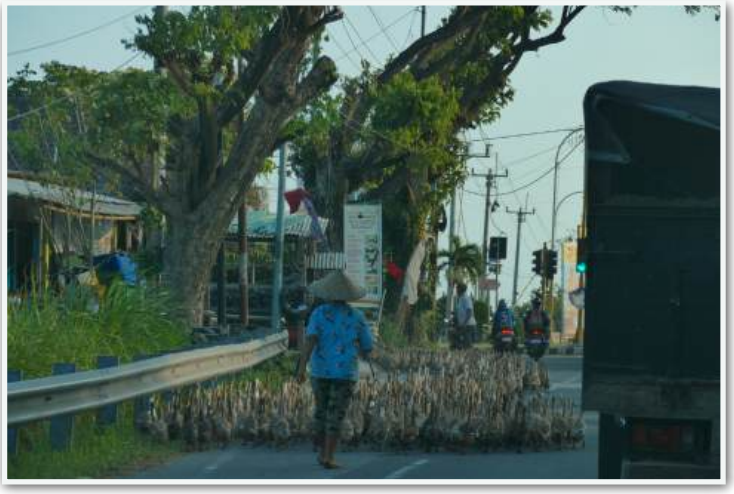
A DOSE OF PARADISE

A TRAVELOGUE IN BALI







Our adventure began with a long and eventful layover flight to Vietnam. Eventful—because of a bunch of incidents, some outrageously hilarious and a few the exact opposite of that. If I had to list a few of the vexatious but still hysterical ones, it would include, first, the takeoff scheduled exactly 5 minutes past midnight, meaning I was running low on energy. Out of nowhere, a group of boys, probably in their twenties, erupted into a loud rendition of "Happy Birthday" for their friend. The passengers were jolted awake, but their off-key singing was so hilariously bad that we couldn't help but laugh and join in. Secondly, I feel awful mentioning this, but it is what it is—babies. Yes, the sweet, cute, innocent-looking humans who possess a special talent for turning seasoned globe-trotters into sleep-deprived zombies. With cries as their secret weapon and an uncanny ability to time them perfectly with your nap attempt, they ruled the cabin. Lastly, what could be worse than an eight-hour-long flight with hardly any air-

conditioning, passengers fanning themselves with the safety instruction manuals, and flight attendants whose expressions resembled storm clouds?

But as the saying goes, “Sometimes it’s the journey that teaches you a lot about your destination,” and true to the quote, Bali did not disappoint. We landed at the airport around noon IST. The airport was a harmonious blend of modern facilities and traditional Balinese architecture, instantly setting the tone for our trip. The humid yet refreshing scent of the sea embraced us like an old friend.



For the first time in my life, I had the luxury of staying at a five-star resort in Ungasan, a small but lively town at Bali’s southernmost tip. The driver who escorted us to our residence was a warm-hearted man named Purnama Bawa. "Purnama," as in ‘Purnima,’ a full moon day in Sanskrit. Conversing comfortably in English, he chatted with us about Balinese cuisine, the places we simply must visit, and his love for Bollywood movies, especially those featuring Shah Rukh Khan. He spoke with pride about his family, his faith, and the traditions of island life. The 45-minute ride to our resort, Karma Kantara, was filled with laughter, heartwarming stories, and a bubbling excitement that only a dream vacation could bring.

We checked into our villa, a sanctuary of grandeur and comfort. With three lavish bedrooms, a spacious living-dining area, and a private pool overlooking a pristine beach framed by lush tropical trees, the view was nothing short of breathtaking. That first evening, we dined at the resort’s restaurant, Di Mare, feasting on exquisite pastas, meats, and aromatic curries. As the sun dipped below the horizon, the symphony of waves crashing against the shore serenaded us, and the salty breeze carried whispers of tranquility. It felt as though time had paused, letting us bask in a dream.

The next day, we ventured to the northern heart of Bali—Ubud. After a delightful breakfast of breads, fruits, eggs, and juice at Di Mare, our driver for the day, Mr. Joco, greeted us with an infectious smile. Much like Purnama, he exuded warmth and shared fascinating insights about the island. Our first stop was a charming shop brimming with

traditional Indonesian artifacts and clothing. Intricate patterns of Batik fabric caught my eye, the handiwork of skilled artisans reflecting the island's rich cultural heritage.

Lunch was a sensory delight—plates of fragrant Nasi Goreng, crispy shrimp crackers, tender duck meat, and flavorful Mie Goreng. Each bite told a story of Indonesia's culinary soul. Afterward, we strolled through a vibrant bird park where the iridescent feathers of Brazilian macaws mingled with the curious gaze of Australian Kookaburras. The crown jewel, however, was the majestic Komodo dragon. Its sheer presence was both terrifying and awe-inspiring, a reminder of the wild wonders this land had to offer.















But it was Alas Harum that stole my heart—a paradise on a hillside, draped in emerald green. The air was perfumed with the rich aroma of Luwak coffee, famously crafted from beans passed through the civet cat. We soared on exhilarating swings, capturing Instagram-worthy moments against a canvas of blue skies and golden sunshine. Sky bikes and zip lines added a rush of adrenaline, while the cascading rice terraces whispered secrets of centuries past.





The days that followed were filled with serenity. We spent hours by the pool, immersing ourselves in novels and the embrace of sun-warmed water. The resort's private beach was an untouched wonder—soft golden sand met crystal-clear waves, and each seashell we collected seemed to sparkle like a memory etched in time. Evenings were graced by twilight's masterpiece as pastel hues painted the sky, and we sipped on chilled drinks, savoring the gentle hum of the ocean breeze.

One afternoon, we watched the inspiring football movie 'Maidaan,' its gripping narrative tugging at our hearts. Later, a visit to a quaint church in Kuta for the Holy Mass filled us with a profound sense of peace. The church echoed with heartfelt hymns and the warmth of a community that welcomed us like family.

At a bustling mall, we stumbled upon an esports festival, where vibrant lights and the electric thrill of competition captivated my brother. His excitement was contagious, and we marveled at the skill of the participants. After exploring the countless shops and indulging in a delectable Thai meal of Pad Thai, green curry, and mango sticky rice, we returned to our resort, the night sky glittering like scattered diamonds. We also ventured to a traditional artistic village, witnessing the dexterity of Balinese artisans as they sculpted intricate wood carvings and painted vivid landscapes. Their creations spoke of ancient stories, a cultural heritage woven into every detail. A peaceful lunch in a bamboo forest followed, where the whispering leaves danced to the rhythm of the breeze, and every bite tasted like poetry.

Our days in Bali unfolded like a dream, each moment weaving joy, awe, and gratitude into the fabric of our memories. From the grandeur of Uluwatu Temple perched on a cliff to the majestic Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park, where Lord Vishnu's statue touched the heavens, Bali's spirit surrounded us in every sight and sound.





As our journey drew to a close, the bittersweet feeling of farewell lingered. With hearts full of cherished memories, we made our way to the airport. But as the plane ascended and the island disappeared from view, I knew Bali had etched itself into my soul. Our ten days in this paradise were nothing short of magical—a testament to the beauty of nature, culture, and the joy of being together. And somewhere, amidst the whispers of the sea breeze, I heard Bali calling me back, promising that one day, I would return.