

## “ Oh missus, missus we are so sorry... But we do not know where your luggage got lost... ”

**T**he little Balinese guy tried once more to call the Singapore Airlines centre, but couldn't get any detailed information. He really did seem to be sorry, and the dark circles under his eyes showed that he was quite tired as well.

Not as tired as me, though. It was midnight and we'd just arrived at the airport of Ngurah Rai on Bali, having been travelling non-stop for the past 30 hours. I was dizzy from the jet-lag and the journey, but before going any further we had to endure the tedious hour of formalities re the missing windsurf boardbags, which must have been left behind at one of the airports on our way.

I hoped this bit of stress wasn't going to set the tone for things to come. Earlier this summer, after the tiring PWA Tour on the Canary Islands, I'd decided that what I needed was a nice relaxing trip somewhere. So I packed my bags and headed east – to Indonesia. The area is already well known for its surfing, packed with perfect peeling waves resulting from swells travelling up across the Indian Ocean from the 'Roaring Forties'. However, rumour had it that some of the breaks had good wind as well. It hadn't been easy to get any solid information about the conditions, but it sounded worth taking the

risk and checking it out for myself. And if there was no wind, what the hell, I could paddle out and try some surfing anyway. Whatever the conditions, I was also interested in experiencing more of the Asian culture which I only knew from a snowboarding trip to Japan.

I have to admit, this trip didn't turn out to be the easiest I've ever made. There were some problems along the way, but that happens – especially if you don't know a country very well. You have to be philosophical – you can learn a lot from problems and mistakes, and this trip certainly taught me a lot about myself and about how to react towards people. And overall it was definitely worth the pain, as the reward was some of the most incredible conditions I've ever sailed in.

My original plan was for only the briefest of stopovers in Bali – I had already booked my ticket with Merpati Airlines (a local airline) to continue to Sumbawa, an island to the east. But as I had to learn immediately, it's not necessarily wise to have fixed plans in Indonesia. You're better off 'going with the flow'. The friendly guy at the counter of Singapore Airlines gave us 30,000 rupees to spend the night in Bali, apologised again for the inconvenience and told us to come by again the next morning to see if our equipment had arrived.

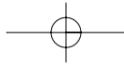
So the next task was to find a bed for the night. We took a taxi straight to Kuta, which is (without traffic jams) only 15 minutes away from the airport. We headed for a little hotel (Mekar Jayar) that a friend had recommended. It was midnight and Kuta was clearly very much alive and kicking, with good music coming out of the open doors of the bars. A happy throng of Indonesian, Australian and European people were on the streets fully enjoying the nightlife! We were too tired, but we made a note to definitely check the place out some other time.

After a good night's sleep and a typical Indonesian breakfast (banana pancake) we made it back to the airport...

*"Sorry missus, the equipment did not arrive with the next plane out of Singapore. Maybe tomorrow. I am very sorry missus..."*

There was nothing I could do about it – other than curse myself for having tried to be so very organised. I had already booked the whole 'Sumbawa package' (including flight, transport and hotel) through a travel agency, but unfortunately they weren't very flexible and wouldn't help with changing my flight. We had no real option other than to just wait for my kit to arrive, and then look at booking new flights onward. Looking on the bright side, it now meant we had time to see something of Bali...





Bali is home to over 3-million people, along with a whole lot of tourists, many of whom are there for the excellent surfing. However, today it seemed to be kind of windy – and although we had no kit, we were still windsurfers, right? It would be nice to know whether Bali had any windsurfing potential. So we checked the map and found a surf spot called Changgu, 20km west of Kuta, where the coastline looked to be at the right angle to the wind. Thence followed some negotiation with a taxi driver (100,000 rupees for the return journey) and we were off.

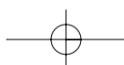
What an adventure, this traffic in Asia! Motorbikes everywhere. Mama, papa and baby all together on one bike in shorts and flip-flops (but no helmets), little wagons with horses, Jeeps, old trucks with a maximum speed of 20kmph (and smelling *really* good!) – you name it. And the only bit of most vehicles that was evidently in perfect working order was the horn...

I had no idea where we were going. The city of Kuta seemed to be endless, so many people everywhere – on the street, beside the street – houses everywhere, little temples all around the place, so much noise. But finally we emerged into the countryside, and rice fields as far as the eye could see.

After an hour of travelling (for 20km!) we arrived at the spot. Yes, it was windy – and to our surprise, there were about 15 sails on the water. Clearly no secret spot, this! The wind was sideshore and there were some nice waves breaking on the outside reef. Not quite the hollow gnarly waves I was expecting to find in Indonesia, but still very nice. Sitting on the beach without my stuff and just watching

the people having fun was quite hard. But hold on a minute – I suddenly realised that I actually *knew* most of the people out there! There was a group of French guys from the World Cup, and also some Italians I'd made friends with last year in Mauritius. How small is this windsurfing world?!? Soon we got to greet and embrace each other – what a nice surprise! The Italians were even kind enough to lend me their kit. How great it was to be in the water! In just shorts and a lycra top I sailed into the sunset and took my first Indo waves. It was an easy wave, perfect to try some aerials, no worries getting out through the break. The wind was getting very light now as evening drew onwards, leaving me some glassy waves to enjoy on my own.

This session made my day. We invited the Italians for a beer in Kuta to thank them for their kindness. But first we had to get back to town. Suddenly our taxi driver wanted another 100,000 rupees to drive us back! We had no choice, we had to pay – but we learned never to hand over any money until we'd got what we'd paid for. Generally the Balinese people are very hospitable and welcoming, but like anywhere, there are also the rip-off merchants and those who see the tourists as easy meat, so you have to be careful and learn how to bargain. The mass tourism has sadly, but inevitably, spoiled the region a little bit. For us Europeans everything is still very cheap, and as a result many of the tourists just hand over whatever they're asked for; rates way above what the locals would consider paying. Thus the local population gets divided into people working for





the tourists and earning incredible salaries, and the rural population living from fishing and agriculture earning a pittance in comparison.

So the first evening in Kuta I ended up with 10 Italian guys in an Italian restaurant (what else could it be with Italians?) Kuta was going off, restaurants everywhere, one bar after another. It seemed like the whole city was on fire! You could really see why Bali is renowned as the party capital of Indonesia. I was expecting something like this as many people had told me about it, but still it was quite amazing just how much was going on. Australian live bands playing their songs, young Europeans, Australians and Japanese dancing, singing and drinking. And plenty of beautiful Balinese women waiting for some rich European men, hoping they would pay them for a life in 'luxury'. And in the middle of all this music and sound, the monument to the bomb attack in 2002 when 202 people (mostly foreign tourists) got killed, and further 209 injured.

The next morning we went to the airport again – and our stuff had arrived. How nice! And we were early enough to catch the plane to Sumbawa later that same day. I was anticipating some major haggling for the excess baggage, but their quote of €30

seemed extremely reasonable and was eagerly accepted.

The hour-long flight was on a little propeller airplane, and the journey to the neighbouring isle took us over innumerable beautiful reefs and incredible waves. The Indian Ocean really is very beautiful!

So, finally we were on Sumbawa. Bima, the airport city, is in the north-east of the island, but we were heading for a spot known as Lakey, in the south-east. As, indeed, were pretty much everyone else on the plane – surfers from Australia, Spain, Tasmania, France, Norway, Brazil... Indonesia in general, and Sumbawa in particular, has become a giant magnet, attracting surfers from all over the world. So we shared a car with some of the others and just paid around 125,000 rupees for this three-hour trip to the spot.

This island was really beautiful. Drier and less tropical than Bali, with forests, lots of agriculture, nice houses made out of straw – and less people (although there are still 1.5-million inhabitants!) We passed several small villages, muslim children going home from school in their uniforms, women carrying pots and big packages on their heads, little children everywhere, waving at us, horse-drawn carriages bringing vegetables and fruits to the market. I liked the atmosphere, but the

rubbish at the side of the street – which gets burned every now and then – was a reminder that it's still a very different world from Europe.

It was already dark when we arrived at Lakey Peak, but the next morning we got to see what it was famous for. The surfers all wake at 5am, banging on each other's doors even though it's still completely dark. The noise woke us up, and going back to sleep was impossible, especially when I heard the waves roaring and crashing on the reefs! So I got up as well, and watched a stunning sunrise. The morning sun just presented the waves around the spots in their best light.

It was incredible! I could see three different surfing breaks. The tide was low, so the surfers could walk out over the reef of the lagoon to the breaks. At high tide you had to paddle through the lagoon. So high tide would also be better for us windsurfers, as we could sail straight out through the channels.

On the very left, upwind, there was the spot called Lakey Pipe. A wonderful, fast, sucky wave, with a very hollow end-section, and some boogie-boarders out getting amazing tubes. It looked beautiful – but sailable? At the moment there was still no wind, so it was hard to say...

Straight in front of the hotel was Lakey Peak – the perfect surfing wave. A triangular v-shaped peak breaking in both directions. The left was



longer than the right, but both sides were breaking perfectly. For windsurfing it seemed to be a little short, and slightly the wrong angle to the wind – just a little bit side-on.

At the right-hand side and quite far out was the impressive reef-break known as No Man's Land because it's not somewhere the surfers go – and we could see why. One big set after another was rolling in on it, and breaking in a huge crashing close-out nearly half a kilometre long. But at the end, quite far downwind, the wave got a bit slower, still breaking endlessly down-the-line and at the very end wrapping around the reef into a bay. This was Nungas, the third spot – and it looked perfect for sailing.

But right now it was glassy, so I grabbed my surfboard and paddled out to the peak. There were already about 15 other surfers out – and they were good, *really* good. As the wave was too fast for my level of surfing, I just sat and enjoyed the live surf movie. It was crazy!

There wasn't any wind that day, so we spent the time watching the surfing action and sorting out some cheaper accommodation. The first night we'd stayed at the Amangati Hotel (the only hotel on the beach) which was very nice, but quite pricey. We were able to find a nice bungalow nearby for just €5 a night.

The place was full of surfers – it's been a top spot for many years. But more recently, Lakey



## TRAVEL INDONESIA

has become a bit of a hit with kites, and it seemed like the entire wave-elite of the kiting fraternity was here. I have to admit that I had to fight for my rides when they were all on the water, as they catch waves very easily in the lightish wind! Windsurfing-wise, it was only our group of three sailors from Austria and Germany, until Scotty Mc Kercher and some of his Aussie mates turned up too, giving us a bit more strength in numbers.

We'd been hearing from a number of people that it was a weird year for wind. For some reason it was generally blowing a bit too much from the east, and thus not coming into the bay as it usually would. Indeed, on many days we could see the whitecaps out to sea, but with hardly a breath reaching us on the inside. But on our third day the wind came in late morning, coinciding perfectly with high tide and a fresh new swell. I went out on my 4.7 Ezzy and the 69L Oxygen, and started off on Lakey Pipe, the upwind spot. This green sucky tube was the most powerful wave I have ever sailed. I could only sail the end section for two turns, but these turns were so powerful that I was totally stoked. Perfect for aerials – if you had the guts to hit that lip! It was also perfect for the photographer, as he could swim safely in the channel and take his pix. It was quite an adrenaline session. While doing a bottom turn the wave was so sucky, and built up so fast that I was close to getting barrellled. Sessions like this were what I had come to Indo for!

After a short break, I sailed out again – this time to Lakey Peak. The tide was still high, so I could go out in the channel. As I'd suspected, the wind was really a bit too side-onshore to be ideal for riding this wave, but if I got the timing right I could speed out through the channel and get some big jumps. It only came together occasionally when I hit a big set at exactly the right time, but it was fun. However, I hadn't come to Indo for jumping, so after a few runs I sailed downwind to the Nungas. And it was without doubt *THE* perfect down-the-line wave, breaking for endless turns. The reef was shallow

but not too dangerous. If I got the wave on my head, the current took me out of the breaking zone. I sailed myself stupid, in a total rush until sunset. The wave was actually easy, but perfect and a lot of fun! To make things even more perfect, the kites left really early so we had the sunset session to ourselves. What a day...

I was totally exhausted when the wind stopped, and we were way too far downwind to sail back home, so we de-rigged at the beach and started to walk. But soon some locals came with their motorbikes to the beach and after some bargaining they brought us back home with all →





our stuff. What a nice day! It ended with the obligatory Bintang beer and some tasty marlin steak at a nice restaurant owned by a French guy.

After some more days of sailing everybody had their own private motorbike-driver. I have to admit it's not a disadvantage to be a blonde girl in this country. Kisan was a really nice guy and very proud of his nice red motorbike. He drove me around the whole area and showed me some other nice breaks, at least one of which could be a good sail at high tide.

Although the wind wasn't as good as it normally (allegedly) is, I got to sail at least 10 days out of the three weeks I was there. Actually, a lot of things had to come together perfectly to get a really good session. The tide (with low tide it was a walking game), the swell, the wind direction... But if you're wanting perfection you always have to be patient. (A thing which I very urgently have to learn in my life!) In the final tally I got three



super-perfect days – which are very, very rare. So all in all, it was definitely worth all the hassles. And after three weeks at that place I felt I had fully recharged my batteries after the stresses and strains of the World Tour, and was really relaxed. There was nothing else to do at this spot other than surfing, sailing, running on the lonesome beaches, some yoga, eating incredible fish and drinking Bintang beer...

But my trip wasn't over yet. I was going to finish my Indo exploration with a few more

days on Bali, checking out the spots over there. I spent three days sleeping on the beach in Balangan, another perfect surfing beach. Then I checked out all the popular breaks between Kuta and Uluwatu with a motorbike, visited some temples and went shopping in Kuta. Then I decided to rent a car (for the princely sum of €8 a day!) so I could put all my kit on the roof and explore further afield. I travelled west and found some much less busy surf spots, perfect for my intermediate level of surfing. I was really getting into it now! And I also managed to get in one more sailing session on Bali. The spot was called Medewi, and definitely had some potential; sideshore wind and a perfect point-break, but it needed a big swell to work properly, and right now it was small. On the way back to Kuta I decided to revisit Changgu, where I'd had that first Indo sailing session all those weeks ago. While there I made friends with an Indonesian family, and ended up spending two very nice days staying in their house. Their daughter was



about my age and spoke English quite well, so I got to know a lot about their country and mentality. A really nice way to end the trip.

There's no doubt that Indonesia – be it Java, Sumatra, Sumbawa, Sumba, Lombok, Timor, Bali or any of the thousands of other islands – has incredible potential for wavesailing. I guess we'll see a lot more pictures from there in the coming years. Go there with a surfing attitude, don't make too many definite plans, and enjoy the beautiful waves for yourself. c

## INDO INFO

**Visa:** €35 for one month, payable on arrival. If you stay more than a month you have to apply for a visa at your country's Indonesian embassy.

**Currency:** Rupiah (a.k.a; rupee). At the moment €1 = 113000 rupees.

**Malaria:** For Bali no prophylaxis required, but Sumbawa is a risk zone. The best stuff at the moment is Malarone, but it's very expensive (€300 for three weeks!) If you don't want to take it, take at least one packet for 'stand-by' medication!

**Other recommended vaccinations:** Hepatitis A & B, typhus, cholera, tetanus.

**Flights:** It's getting increasingly difficult with windsurfing kit! Lufthansa, Malaysian and Emirates seem to be the best choices. Expect to pay €900-1400. Flying from Europe to Ngurah Rai, Denpasar, Bali. Flights from Bali to Sumbawa; Merpati Airlines should be booked once in Bali. They fly once a day. €55 one-way. They can take kit, but not too much, so try to travel light! (And you also have to pay for it, but not very much.)

**Best time for wind and waves:** Bali – June to August. Sumbawa – August to October.

**Climate:** Air – 28-30° (nice!) Water – 25°. Shorts and lycra, but bring your shorty for the early morning and late evening sessions.

**Motorbike / car rental in Bali:** Bali Indah Beach Inn, Poppies Lane II. Motorbike 25,000, car 80,000 rupees a day – bring your international driving licence! Phone +62 361 752509 / e-mail [baliindah@yahoo.com](mailto:baliindah@yahoo.com)

**Kit:** 70-85L waveboards, 4.5-5.8m sails. Plus a 6'4" to 6'6" surfboard and a gun or a fish, depending on your level.

## ACCOMMODATION

**Sumbawa Lakey Peak:** Hotel Amangati ([amangati@telkom.net](mailto:amangati@telkom.net)) has rooms between €20 and 30 per night for two people. It's the nicest place there but also the most expensive. There are plenty of bungalows, all around €5-10 a night.

**Bali:** Accommodation to be found everywhere around 50,000-200,000 rupees a night.

**Mekar Jaya:** Legian Street, Kuta. Around 60,000 rupees a night – phone +62 361 754487.

**Changgu:** More expensive than Kuta! For a nice place with a private Indonesian family (you can even share their house with them) at Jalan Pantai Batu Bolong, e-mail [yuli-guri05@yahoo.co.id](mailto:yuli-guri05@yahoo.co.id)

**Attention:** Don't book any flight / transfer / hotel packages with any local travel agents on Bali. They charge double the normal price!