

Tourism in Jembrana, Bali: A Hidden Gem Unveiled

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ABSTRACT

The island of Bali in Indonesia has long been renowned as a popular tourist destination, attracting millions of visitors each year. While regions like Ubud, Kuta and Seminyak dominate the tourist scene, Jembrana, a lesser-known district for foreigners located in the western part of the island, offers a unique and authentic travel experience. Its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and commitment to sustainable tourism make it a promising destination that combines exploration, relaxation, and environmental consciousness. Cultural Heritage and Festivals Jembrana is deeply rooted in Balinese culture and tradition. Despite its potential, Jembrana faces several challenges in developing its tourism industry. Limited transportation infrastructure and connectivity to other tourist hubs pose obstacles to attracting a larger number of visitors. Additionally, the lack of international promotion and marketing efforts has hindered the district's visibility in the global tourism market. To overcome these challenges, collaboration between the government, local communities, and private sector stakeholders is essential. By investing in infrastructure, marketing, and collaborative efforts, Jembrana can position itself as a sustainable tourism destination, contributing to the economic development of the district while preserving its rich cultural heritage and pristine natural landscapes. As travelers venture beyond the popular tourist spots of Bali, Jembrana's hidden wonders await, ready to enchant and captivate those who seek an extraordinary and meaningful travel experience.

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INTRODUCTION

The island of Bali in Indonesia has long been renowned as a popular tourist destination, attracting millions of visitors each year. While regions like Ubud, Kuta and Seminyak dominate the tourist scene, Jembrana, a lesser-known district for foreigners located in the western part of the island, offers a unique and authentic travel experience. In brief, the regency encompassed 5 sub-districts: Melaya District, Negara District, Jembrana District, Mendoyo District and Pekutatan District. Based on the results of the SP2020 BRS Provinsi Bali (2020), the total population in Jembrana Regency from 5 sub-districts is 317.064 people.¹ Jembrana Regency is one of the nine regencies/cities in the Province of Bali. It has a strategic location at the western tip of the island of Bali, thus, it also serves as the entrance to the island of Bali via Gilimanuk Harbor. Natural Beauty of Jembrana boasts a stunning coastline, stretching along the western edge of Bali, offering

pristine beaches with panoramic views of the Indian Ocean. Further, this article aims to explore the tourism potential of

Jembrana and shed light on its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and sustainable development initiatives.



Figure 1.² Image of Pura Jagatnatha Jembrana

PROSPECTIVE TOURISM SPOTS IN JEMBRANA REGENCY

The Jembrana district area stretches from the west end Gilimanuk cape to the east end Pengeragoan Village which has a 47 km long beach. As for the current use of the beach, aside from religious ceremonies such as *melasti* or *melukat*, at the end of 2006, the Regency government developed tourism activities, especially utilizing the beach as a tourism support area. One of the beaches developed as a tourism area is Medewi Beach. Until now, the beach has developed for marine tourism, such as diving and snorkeling. some accommodation facilities in the form of hotels, restaurants and tourist transportation services are easily accessed in its vicinity. for instance, Medewi Beach is a popular surfing spot that attracts both local and international surf enthusiasts seeking challenging waves and a laid-back atmosphere every year.^{3,4}

Cultural Heritage and Festivals Jembrana is deeply rooted in Balinese culture and tradition. The district is known for its diverse arts and crafts, such as ikat weaving '*Cagcag*;⁵ wood carving and pottery. Visitors can immerse themselves in the creative process by participating in workshops and interacting with local artisans. For a spiritual journeyman, Rambut Siwi Temple, located on a cliff overlooking the ocean, offers breathtaking vistas and serves as a spiritual sanctuary for locals and visitors alike. Moreover, the district is home to the West Bali National Park, a biodiverse conservation area that protects various species of flora and fauna, including the endangered Bali Starling. The cultural tourism attraction that is the mainstay of Jembrana Regency is the *Jegog*. This set of Bamboo-made musical instruments, has been developing in Jembrana Regency as a Tourist Attraction since 1912. Almost all villages in Jembrana Regency have *Sekaa Jegog*, a group of enthusiasts who performed *Jegog* as community entertainment. In 1989, the Sangkaragung Subdistrict was the first to package this musical performance as a tourist attraction.⁶

Jembrana also hosts the *Mekepung* Buffalo Races, a traditional event where farmers compete in racing with their decorated water buffaloes. This

exhilarating spectacle showcases the district's strong agricultural heritage and community spirit. The meaning of the word *Makepung* in Balinese is chasing around, this tradition developed around 1930 when the harvest season arrived, farmers competed to bring their crops home. Now, along with the development of the era, these activities are contested and preserved as tradition. Generally, Local identified *Mekepung* as two competitions, namely *Makepung Lampid* and *Makepung overland*.⁷ Besides that, Jembrana also has a tourist village. One of the villages inaugurated by the Governor of Bali as a tourist village on December 15, 2011, namely *Blimbingsari Village*, is located in Jembrana Regency. This tourist village has a variety of uniqueness that attracts tourists to visit. This village can be reached in approximately 3 hours from Ngurah Rai Airport in the direction of Gilimanuk or approximately 1 hour from the Gilimanuk crossing port to Denpasar. Geographically, this village is directly adjacent to the West Bali National Park to the north and west, *Ekasari Village* to the east and *Melaya District* to the south.

The village, which has a population of 1,080 people and 280 families, all of the residents are Christian of Protestant church. Most of the people in this village work as farmers, but some also work as civil servants, teachers and private employees. Garden products from *Blimbingsari Village* are cacao, coconut and bananas. Jembrana cacao beans have been known

internationally for their unique taste. The fermentation process and post-farm handling become vital in preserving the beans' finest quality. Recently the cocoa beans have been marketed to Japan, Germany, the United States, Austria, Portugal, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland and Belgium.⁸ In addition, there are chicken, cow and pig farms. This village was founded in 1939 by a Dutch missionary, assisted by dozens of Balinese followers who are Christians. They carry out forest encroachment in order to realize the dream of having their own village with a Christian nuance. So, it is no exaggeration to say that this village is the first Christian village in Bali.

Despite being promoted as a representative village of Jembrana in tourism, market limitations are still a problem for the management of the *Blimbingsari Tourism Village*. Ratu et al (2016) in their study proposed discussion onto the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by *Blimbingsari Tourism Village* using SWOT analysis, marketing strategies can be obtained, namely product packaging strategies, promotion strategies, repositioning strategies and strategies to provide extra services for tourists. The strategies that have been formulated can be implemented in marketing the *Blimbingsari Tourism Village*, as well as maximizing all potential to bring in more tourists visiting this tourist village.^{9,10}



Figure 2.¹¹ Mekepung Buffalo Races, a traditional event where farmers compete in racing with their decorated water buffaloes.



Figure 3.¹² Jegog Jembrana



Figure 4.¹³ West Bali National Park, a biodiverse conservation area that protects various species of flora and fauna, including the endangered Bali Starling.



Figure 5.¹⁴ Ready to export Cacao beans

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Sustainable Tourism Development Initiatives Jembrana is committed to sustainable tourism practices that promote environmental conservation and community empowerment. The district has implemented eco-friendly initiatives, such as waste management programs, beach clean-up campaigns and organic farming practices. Local communities actively participate in preserving natural resources and promoting responsible tourism. Homestays and community-based tourism projects allow visitors to experience the warm hospitality and daily life of Balinese families while providing direct economic benefits to the local communities. Such initiatives contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and enhance the socio-economic well-being of Jembrana's residents.

Despite its potential, Jembrana faces several challenges in developing its tourism industry. Limited transportation infrastructure and connectivity to other tourist hubs pose obstacles to attracting a larger number of visitors. Additionally, the lack of international promotion and marketing efforts has hindered the district's visibility in the global tourism market. To overcome these challenges, collaboration between the government, local communities, and private sector stakeholders is essential. By investing in infrastructure development, promoting Jembrana's unique attractions, and strengthening partnerships, the district can tap into its untapped potential and achieve sustainable tourism growth.

In Jembrana, Bali, while the district has significant tourism potential, there are several challenges that need to be addressed to fully harness and develop its tourism industry. Some of the key problems faced by tourism in Jembrana are Limited Infrastructure, Lack of International Promotion, Limited Accommodation Options, Tourism Seasonality, Limited Diversification of Tourism Products. Jembrana faces challenges in terms of transportation infrastructure and connectivity. The district's limited road network and transportation options make it difficult for tourists to access the area easily. This lack of efficient transportation



Figure 6.¹⁵ Jembrana Regent, I Nengah Tamba addressed the importance of Digital Marketing Promotion in training on digitizing branding, marketing and sales for managers of tourist villages, homestays/tourist cottages, culinary, souvenirs and photography on 23-25 November 2022 at the Bung Karno Art Building (GKBK)

infrastructure hampers the flow of visitors and limits the district's ability to attract a larger number of tourists.

In a matter of international exposure, the district has not received the same level of global recognition and exposure as more popular tourist destinations in Bali. As a result, Jembrana remains relatively unknown to international tourists, limiting its potential for attracting a diverse range of visitors. The area also has a limited number of accommodation options, especially when compared to more established tourist areas in Bali. The scarcity of hotels and resorts with international standards may deter tourists who are seeking a higher level of comfort and amenities. This lack of accommodation infrastructure can restrict the growth of the tourism sector in Jembrana.

Jembrana's tourism offerings primarily revolve around its natural beauty and cultural heritage. This western part of Bali tourism seasonality, with peaks and troughs in visitor numbers throughout the year. The district's tourism activities are heavily dependent on certain events and festivals, such as the Mekepong Buffalo Races. During the low season, there is a decrease in tourist arrivals, leading to potential economic challenges for local businesses and communities. While these are valuable assets, there is a need for diversification to attract a broader range

of tourists. Developing niche tourism products such as adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and wellness tourism could help broaden the appeal of Jembrana and attract a more diverse visitor base.

Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between the government, local communities, and private sector stakeholders. Investments in infrastructure development, including improved transportation networks and increased accommodation options, are necessary to enhance accessibility and attract more tourists. Furthermore, targeted international marketing campaigns and promotion can raise awareness about Jembrana as a unique and worthwhile destination. Supporting the development of diverse tourism products and initiatives that encourage sustainable practices will help unlock the full potential of Jembrana as a tourism hotspot in Bali.

CONCLUSION

Jembrana, Bali's hidden gem, offers a distinctive travel experience for visitors seeking authentic encounters with nature and culture. Its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and commitment to sustainable tourism make it a promising destination that combines exploration, relaxation, and environmental consciousness. Cultural Heritage and Festivals Jembrana

is deeply rooted in Balinese culture and tradition. Despite its potential, Jembrana faces several challenges in developing its tourism industry. Limited transportation infrastructure and connectivity to other tourist hubs pose obstacles to attracting a larger number of visitors. Additionally, the lack of international promotion and marketing efforts has hindered the district's visibility in the global tourism market. To overcome these challenges, collaboration between the government, local communities, and private sector stakeholders is essential. By investing in infrastructure, marketing, and collaborative efforts, Jembrana can position itself as a sustainable tourism destination, contributing to the economic development of the district while preserving its rich cultural heritage and pristine natural landscapes. As travelers venture beyond the popular tourist spots of Bali, Jembrana's hidden wonders await, ready to enchant and captivate those who seek an extraordinary and meaningful travel experience.

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