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BALI UPDATE

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## Enchanting North Bali

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"The beauty of the landscape and the serene ambience of Pemuteran, which is located in the coastal area of North Bali, Buleleng Regency, never fails to charm me. So to begin 2014, the family and I ventured out to Pemuteran, and were once again captivated by the exquisite natural landscapes of the place."

There are many roads to Pemuteran, and we took the windiest one, which passes through Candi Kuning village, made famous by Bedugul Botanical Garden. It was drizzling when we passed the Candi Kuning traditional market where huts selling local hand-made spinach chips formed a neat line around the fencing of the market area. We continued driving and left the fog covered Beratan Lake behind.

Entering the administrative border of Buleleng Regency, the first natural attraction is the Twin Lake Conservation Area, which comprises Lake Buyan and Lake Tamblingan. A downpour stopped us from driving off-road towards Lake Buyan. Instead we decided to drive up to Munduk, a village blessed with spectacular views of both lakes, side by side. Eventually, we stopped to rest at a restaurant for hot ginger tea and marvelled at the astonishing landscape.

Two hours later we arrived at Matahari Beach Resort & Spa. The jewel of the north, the resort is backed by a long stretch of lush hills and a tranquil beach as its front yard. Balinese style bungalows have been built amidst a beautiful garden setting. Our secluded bungalow was set amidst a lush garden, teeming with local shrubs. The interior seemed to be carefully designed to showcase beautiful Balinese design with several classic paintings hanging on the wall. After almost 4 hours of driving, I barely wanted to do anything... except perhaps have a massage! Parwathi Spa takes on all of the opulence of an ancient water palace. By the end of the evening, I knew that I had made a good choice, their 4 hands Royal Bali Massage relieved my tense muscles and made me feel rejuvenated.

The next day, it was a bright sunny Saturday so we decided to spend the morning on the beach observing the local fishermen, canoeing, and, most of all, savouring the serenity. At 11am, we went east towards Sambangan Village, which is only 4km out of Singaraja, the capital of the regency. Despite its proximity to the capital, this little village seemed quite remote. We visited Shanti Joglo Restaurant, located within the Shanti Villa compound. As soon as I sat down, I was completely hypnotised by the fascinating view. Ridges covered with lush green vegetation, layered waterfalls in several directions, and fog floating down to the valley and slowly covering the rice fields. While we savoured the authentic Indonesian cuisine, the friendly staff showed us some pictures of Sambangan Village. We regretted that we hadn't come earlier, as we might have been able to join their trek to the waterfalls and Banyumala River.