

Weighing the Offerings in Bali

By Bonnie Caton



Hidden behind a plain-looking building at the end of Monkey Forest Street, it's the busiest spot in Ubud before sunrise.

Hours before a ruckus of motorbikes, tourists, taxis, and noisy cicadas compete for air time in the streets, women gather daily in this main market.

Balinese and tourists alike come here to wander among flower petals, spices, chicken heads, bundles of incense and batik cloth. The best time to go is early in the morning when the locals show up.

That's also when tourists are scarce and prices are good. Sellers of fruits and coconut cakes will lure you in, calling "Morning price!" The first customer is always good luck.

Pick up bags of saffron or vanilla pods for a mere fraction of the price you'd pay in the U.S. Breathe in the perfumed scent of early morning offerings to the gods. Watch as women weigh bags full of flower petals, ready to be assembled into the thousands of daily offerings in the homes and streets across town.

And be sure to sample tropical fruits that you can't find back home. Try a mangosteen and a rambutan while you're there—both are succulent and safe to eat.

You can easily visit the Ubud market on your own. Ask anyone on the street and they'll point you in the right direction. Or, you can take a cooking class that includes a guided market tour. Plus, you'll get to sample them in traditional Balinese dishes, too.

That's how the AWAI Travel Division did it on their recent Bali Photography Expedition. This year, they're also taking groups to Ecuador, Venice, Maui, and Spain. If you'd like to travel overseas alongside a professional photographer at one of AWAI's Photography Expeditions, see: Thephotographerslife.com/signup/workshops. ■

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A Balinese woman weighs flower petals for sale at the Ubud market, Central Bali.