Consummate Island Arts
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RESOURCES

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Experience Bali's moods and colors at home

A major benefit of Bali's thriving tourist industry to world culture enthusiasts is the abundance of mediums to promote Bali's beauty. You can enjoy vividly poetic descriptions by early visitors, scholarly expositions of every aspect of Balinese life, full-size photos, music CDs and detailed websites.

Foremost among the glossy, coffee-table style overview books is Bali, Morning of the World (97 pages, Periplus Editions), with fantastic rich photographs by world-renowned Luca Invernizzi Tettoni. African-born English writer Nigel Simmonds, living in Bali since 1992, opens one chapter: " 'Do you believe in God?' We were sitting, my Balinese landlord and I, on the floor of his house in Sayan, close to the town of Ubud, where painters and sculptors ply their trade amid deep green rice fields and steep river gorges. I wanted to rent his house; he needed to make sure I was a suitable occupant. 'Do you believe in God?' he repeated. 'I need to know before you rent this house.' He was dressed, like the rest of the village that day, in his temple clothes--an immaculate picture of white and gold, his cloth headdress set off by a sweet smelling champaca flower tucked in the fold of cotton cloth around his crown. In the background I could clearly hear the delicate tapestry of the gamelan

orchestra playing for the temple ceremony. 'Yes,' I said, 'I believe.' "Good!' he said with a flourish. 'Then we will be friends.' " Another lavish picture cornucopia is found in Offerings, The Ritual Art of Bali [see page 30].

Balinese mask drama--you won't know the half of it without Masks of Bali (131 pages, Danu Enterprise), written by educator Judy Slattum. With full page photos by Paul Schraub, the visually stunning masks literally jump out at you. Masks are powerful receptacles of wandering spirits, as well as representations of witches, gods, animals and people. Because many of the masks are sacred and never displayed, most Westerners have not seen their spectacular detail and craftsmanship.

Gunung Agung, Bali's "dwelling place of the Gods," is celebrated in a small section of Sacred Mountains of the World (291 pages, University of California Press,) by Edwin Bernbaum. Gunung Agung plus every other tidbit about Bali is found in the finest scholarly work we're aware of [see page 28], Bali, Sekala & Niskala (two volumes, Periplus Editions).

Needing great photos of Bali to accompany your travel brochure? Corel Professional Photos on CD-Rom can help. Two CDs with 100 photos each cover Bali's length and breadth. On their website (corel.digitalriver.com/) you can order a whole CD, or just one image for as little as US$9.

World music lovers will be delighted with the

international fame of Balinese gamelan which has resulted in many fine CDs. Music of the Gamelan Gong Kebyar (Vital Records), performed by musicians from the National Institute of the Arts in Denpasar, Bali, carries the essence of a frenetic style that is now Bali's predominant musical force. Amazingly, the US is home to 80 gamelan orchestras, the most accomplished bring the Gamelan Sekar Jaya based in California--they're about to release a special CD to honor their celebration of 20 years of artistry. Honoring a major part of Bali's musical ancestry is the Banyumas Bamboo Gamelan (Nimbus Records), a new CD of traditional music from Centra Java.

Now that we've seen, heard and read about Bali, let's go! Long years of tourism have yielded sensitive tour companies that truly educate about Bali's Hindu religious life, such as Art Research Tours (www.learningvacations.com/artis7.html), which offers hands-on classes in making offerings and other artistry. Websites are burgeoning with everything you need to know to plan a trip. Most spectacular is the award winning Bali Online (www.indo.com). Also exciting is Bali Paradise Online (www.baliparadise

.com). See you there!

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