

FAMILY

MONKEY FOREST

WILD AND

FREE

—Think Ubud is just for yogis and soul searchers? Think again. This Balinese town surrounded by serene rice terraces and lush forest may be the island's spiritual heart but it's also an unforgettable family paradise—

WORDS_SUE WHITE



CAMPUHAN RIDGE WALK



Get creative

ALL AGES

> Ubud doesn't have a lot of playgrounds but on the outskirts of town, it does have Yellow Coco Creative Nest, which hosts classes in puppetry and family acro yoga under a huge canvas tent. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, kids under four and their carers flock to the Early Years Creative Play group, where dance, stories and water play are all part of the mix. As this is in a quiet location, it can be worth getting your driver to wait.

fb.me/yellowcocoubud

Curl up with a book

AGES 2+

> Libraries don't typically attract tourists but Pondok Pekak Library & Learning Centre should. Just off Jalan Monkey Forest, this library and arts centre is home to over 30,000 books and an active cultural program. Kids can learn jewellery-making and gamelan (a musical ensemble) but the real gems are at the back of building, where hundreds of children's books provide a sanctuary from the busy streets of Ubud's centre.

fb.me/pondokpekak

Work on your kickflips

AGES 6+ (4-6 WITH SUPERVISION)

> Skateboarders of all ages will have a blast at Blue Bear Bali Skatepark, where group or private skating lessons provide a fun and active afternoon for everyone. Parents can join in and skate (or if they prefer to take it easy, there's great coffee on offer), while younger children play in the toy area. It's even a good opportunity for a dance – there's live music on Wednesdays and some Saturdays, as well as resident music days from 11am on Sundays. Rental gear is available.

bluebearbali.com/skatepark



SKATEBOARDERS AT BLUE BEAR

"CYCLE THROUGH QUIET VILLAGE STREETS, DENSE FORESTS WITH NARROW TRACKS AND PICTURESQUE RICE PADDIES."



GREENBIKE CYCLING TOUR

Cycle the back roads

AGES 2+

> Given that an active volcano looms about a 10-minute drive from where the GreenBike Cycling Tour begins, you might assume the biggest risk on a tour in the hills north of Ubud is an unexpected flow of lava. Apparently not. Mount Batur hasn't erupted for years; instead, it's humans who pose the greatest risk to families enjoying this 23-kilometre ride. Guides warn: "Watch for the village kids who want to high-five you. If it's hard, you might fall off." With younger kids nestled on the supplied child seat and tour guides taking up the front and rear, small groups cycle through quiet village streets, dense forests with narrow off-road tracks and picturesque rice paddies. It's hard to decide what's most satisfying – the relative serenity of Bali's back roads, the chance to spend an entire day surrounded by greenery or the fact that the whole thing is downhill.

greenbiketour.com

See shadow puppets

AGES 7+

> As Bali's cultural centre, Ubud abounds with dance performances – there's at least one show somewhere every evening. But venture to the back of the gallery space at Oka Kartini BnB on a Wednesday, Friday or Sunday night and it's shadow puppets entertaining the audience. Make no mistake, this is not an "easy" show but a traditional one, which will reward older children who can bear a slow start and appreciate the skill behind this traditional art form. The tiny performance area means you can stand to the side of the stage and watch the puppeteer and assistants at work – it's incredibly interesting.

balicultureworkshop.com

Do dinner and a movie

AGES 4+

> Like your cinema sustainable, thought-provoking and super comfortable? Ubud's unique Cinema Paradiso experience trumps Gold Class at home – not only can you have an organic, vegan meal delivered to your lounge during the show but the price of your movie ticket comes off the price of any food you order. Paradiso screens plenty of children's movies each week and this is a "shoes off" experience.

paradisoubud.com



Take a walk and admire the views

AGES 4+

> Wake the kids early and hike Campuhan Ridge before the heat hits. The two-kilometre (one-way) stretch isn't exactly undiscovered but it's still very peaceful. Walkers starting near the bridge on Jalan Raya Ubud (near the entry to the Warwick Ibah Luxury Villas and Spa) pass a large temple before the well-marked trail snakes past jungle-like scenery on both sides of the ridge. It can take more than two hours with a pre-schooler in tow but kids over six will handle this walk easily, especially if motivated by ice cream incentives (there are plenty of cafés at the end). The longer nine-kilometre loop is best avoided with young children.

Dive into the deep end

ALL AGES

> Parents who've spent much of the Campuhan Ridge walk lugging a small child will be feeling the heat. The cure? An afternoon at Jungle Fish. At this urbane pool bar attached to the upmarket Chapung Sebali resort, it's impossible not to decompress. Even the journey to get here is relaxing – the long winding roads leading to the hotel from Ubud's centre get quieter with every kilometre. Kids are welcome and the entry fee includes a towel.

chapung.com



BLUE BEAR BALI SKATEPARK

Tour a school with a difference

AGE 4+

> If the movie *Avatar* featured a school, it would look something like this. Set amongst lush forest about a 30-minute drive out of Ubud, Green School's wall-free bamboo classrooms are world-renowned. Daily guided tours of the wider campus are available (by booking online in advance only) and while it may seem a bit contrarian to spend school holidays in, well, a school, this feels more like a nature walk that also takes in the non-profit organisation's architecture and holistic teaching principles. The school is designed to be rugged so be prepared for a hike with steps, steep inclines and meandering paths down to the Ayung River. You might actually have trouble getting the kids to leave, especially once they discover the joys of hiding among the large bamboo "chimes" in the central building. Tour fees go towards supporting the school's Local Scholars Program. greenschool.org



A CLASS AT GREEN SCHOOL



INSIDE GREEN SCHOOL'S CENTRAL BUILDING



WHERE TO STAY

> Book an eco cottage at **Bali Swasti** (above; baliswasti.com), a short stroll from Ubud's famous (or infamous?) Monkey Forest, where parents can enjoy the daily yoga sessions while kids will love the circus classes and wandering the gardens. On the other side of town, **De Munut Balinese Resort** (demunutresort.com) is a well-priced and peaceful hotel with friendly staff, plenty of greenery and two pools.

WHERE TO EAT

> Kid-friendly dining is plentiful in Ubud but at **WAMM** (fb.me/whataboutmymother), the little ones can play on the soccer field outside or discover the toy corner under the stairs. **The Elephant restaurant** (elephantbali.com) is a favourite for vegetarian meals – and for the view over the Campuhan Ridge. The same owners also opened woodfired pizza joint Dumbo nearby. For dessert, try the coconut ice-cream at **Tukies Coconut Shop** (tukies-coconut-shop.business.site).

HOW TO GET AROUND

> Within Ubud, the streets can be busy. Footpaths are narrow and few areas are pram-friendly. Use taxis if you have young kids. **DMY Tour Bali** (fb.me/DMYtourtravel) takes visitors to Ubud from across Bali and have child seats. **Magical Bali Tours** (uniqubalitours.webs.com) offers family-friendly tours in the area, plus transfers.