

Bali 2011

*written by Irene Ashkenas*

As many of you know, in October I joined 20 other quilters and our hosts, Rosie and Vic Gonzalez (of Rosie's Calico Cupboard), on a guided tour of Bali. Bali is a rainforest island in Indonesia. Our transit time from Los Angeles to Denpasar, Bali, via Hong Kong was approximately 25 hours. Denpasar is the capital city of Bali and is very crowded with motor scooters being the main form of transportation. Entire families ride on one scooter and compete with cars, trucks, and buses. The countryside is mainly rice paddies along with sweet potatoes, corn, soybeans, and other vegetable and fruit patches.

Other than Denpasar, there are no cities, just clustered villages. Without the distinction of cities and suburbs, it was hard to determine where families lived. The Balinese, who are predominantly Hindu (the rest of Indonesia is mainly Muslim), live in family compounds. Each compound has a family shrine to honor the deceased family members. Each village also has a temple and the Balinese live their lives around their spirituality and make offerings at least 3 times daily, at home and at every business. These offerings are placed at the entrance to businesses, entrances to homes, and at each shrine.

Since we were all quilters, we had batiks on our minds. Batik is a method of wax-resistant fabric dyeing that is native to Indonesia. We visited three batik factories, each one using a slightly different technique. At one of the factories, the very talented and very patient employees each took one member of our group and helped us to apply wax to a design drawn on white fabric. The fabric was then dyed and, once dry, boiled to remove the wax. The result was a colored panel with a design outlined in white on it. In my case, a dark blue panel with koi on it.



*Artist applying wax on drawing*

One day, we were invited to have lunch with Princess Mirah at her palace. Princess Mirah is a charming, beautiful lady who is the granddaughter of the last King of Bali. Bali is now a republic and governed by a president, but the royal family still presides over ceremonial functions. Before lunch, we were entertained by the nieces and nephews of the Princess who performed Balinese dances. After lunch, the Princess had a high priest come and perform a purification ceremony and then bless each of us. This was a very rare and memorable experience.

On other days, we visited a coffee plantation, the Bali Bird Park, woodcarvers, a native village and school, rode an elephant, the monkey forest, and shopped.



*Me with two hornbills*



*My roommate and I at the end of our ride*

On the last day there, as we were checking out of the resort, we were treated to a 6.8 earthquake. While everyone else was running in panic, us Southern Californians sat calmly in the lobby until Security made sure we were all out on the driveway!

If you get the chance to visit Bali, take it!