NEWS LESSON

Bali Beyond the Hashtags: Who Shapes the Island's Future?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What can make a beautiful holiday destination disappointing?
2. Would you pay a visitor fee if it helped a place you loved?
3. When do visitors start changing what they came to enjoy?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**frictionless**	☐	A	there to look nice rather than to be useful
2	**scrutinising**	☐	B	examining something very carefully
3	**unauthorised**	☐	C	without limits or controls
4	**dominating**	☐	D	done without official permission
5	**intensify**	☐	E	having existed for a long time
6	**longstanding**	☐	F	having the most power or influence over something
7	**unrestricted**	☐	G	smooth, with no problems or obstacles
8	**decorative**	☐	H	to become stronger or more extreme

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

The Bali of a laptop beside an infinity pool looks easy. Behind the picture, international demand is changing land values and neighbourhoods, and residents are asking who shapes the island's future.

1 The digital-nomad version of Bali is almost frictionless: a laptop beside an infinity pool, inexpensive services and sunset after work. Turn the camera around and the picture becomes more complicated. The same international demand can raise land values, reshape neighbourhoods and give outsiders spending power unavailable to many residents. Bali's controversy is therefore not best understood as locals against foreigners. The argument is about who gets a say when international demand changes local housing, work and streets.

2 Bali's extraordinary appeal is not in dispute. The island welcomed nearly seven million international visitors in 2025, according to figures reported by Business Insider, and tourism provides income for countless local families. Foreign creators have helped restaurants and guesthouses reach international customers. Yet an influx of well-paid remote workers and investors can also alter the character of neighbourhoods, raise land values and intensify competition over commercial opportunities. The controversy is therefore not simply about misbehaving holidaymakers. It concerns the distribution of tourism's rewards and the ability of local residents to shape their own communities.

3 Indonesia's immigration authorities have become increasingly assertive. As Channel NewsAsia reported in August 2026, officials were scrutinising foreigners suspected of conducting commercial activities on visas that do not permit them. Even an arrangement involving a complimentary hotel stay in exchange for promotional posts can raise questions about unauthorised work.

4 Authorities said 342 foreign nationals were deported from Bali in the first half of the year for various immigration and legal breaches. It would be misleading to present them all as influencers, or to suggest that ordinary tourists are forbidden from posting photographs of their holidays. The unresolved issue is how clearly the boundary between personal expression and commercial activity is defined.

5 Economic regulation has become another flashpoint. Bali restricted new foreign investment applications in 18 categories of smaller businesses, including certain cafés, vehicle rentals and tourism services. The aim, according to officials and local reporting, is to prevent foreign capital from dominating activities that Indonesian entrepreneurs can provide. Critics contend that the rules risk discouraging legitimate businesses and may be applied inconsistently. Supporters counter that allowing wealthy newcomers to compete on terms unavailable to locals can hollow out an economy even while its headline visitor numbers remain impressive.

6 Cultural tensions complicate the debate further. Bali's religious traditions are not decorative additions to an international lifestyle destination; they are living practices around which communities organise their lives. High-profile incidents involving foreign visitors who have disregarded local customs have stirred up resentment. But collective blame is a poor substitute for thoughtful policy. Many foreign residents have long-standing relationships with their neighbours, create employment and contribute to Balinese life. Indonesian content creators, meanwhile, have argued that the central issue is fair competition rather than hostility towards outsiders.

7 For Bali, the challenge is to move beyond the false choice between unrestricted tourism and an island closed to foreigners. Transparent visa rules, fair business enforcement, responsible development and stronger opportunities for local entrepreneurs could preserve the benefits of international interest without treating residents as background scenery. The island has successfully sold the world an image of freedom. The next test is whether that freedom can coexist with the rights, livelihoods and cultural identity of the people who were there long before the hashtags.

Sources: Channel NewsAsia. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The figure of 342 deportations does not by itself show how many influencers were removed. T F NG
2. The writer suggests that foreign creators have done nothing to benefit local businesses. T F NG
3. Officials plan to review the 18 restricted categories next year. T F NG
4. Critics and supporters of the investment limits both worry about their effect on the local economy. T F NG
5. The article says visa rules are already clear and fairly applied. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

boundary	coexist	complimentary	disregarded	influx	livelihoods	resentment	scrutiny

1. The sudden _____ of remote workers pushed rents beyond what many locals could afford.
2. The resort offered guests a _____ breakfast, though in practice the cost was built into the room rate.
3. Years of rising prices had left a quiet _____ among families who could no longer afford to rent near the coast.
4. For fishing communities, new development along the shore can threaten their _____ as well as their homes.
5. Visitors who _____ warnings posted at the temple entrance risked being asked to leave.
6. Supporters insist that traditional farming and large-scale tourism can _____ if development is carefully managed.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The _____ of the island's economy on tourism leaves many families vulnerable. **(DEPEND)**
2. The law has been enforced _____, so similar cases end with different outcomes. **(CONSISTENT)**
3. Many long-term residents feel _____ by being blamed for the behaviour of a few. **(ALIEN)**
4. Campaigners are demanding greater _____ over how visa decisions are made. **(TRANSPARENT)**
5. It would be _____ to treat every visitor with a camera as a commercial operator. **(REASON)**

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Albeit and thereby introduce a reduced clause, notwithstanding works like despite, and hence is followed by a noun phrase.

albeit conversely hence insofar notwithstanding thereby whereby

1. The new rules are popular with many residents, _____ difficult to enforce.
2. _____ its popularity with visitors, the island struggles to house its own workers.
3. Housing costs have climbed sharply; _____ the growing number of families moving inland.
4. The scheme was approved quickly, _____ avoiding a lengthy public consultation.
5. Some argue that tourism protects traditions. _____ , others claim it turns them into performances.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should a destination protect even if it means fewer tourists?
2. Who should have the strongest say over tourism in a place?
3. Would you choose a quieter trip if it meant giving up a famous photo?

9 Role-play: a spare room for tourists

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the neighbour who rents out a room

You rent a spare room to tourists and earn extra money. Your neighbour is unhappy about it. Explain why it helps you and what you will do to keep things calm.

Student B · the worried neighbour

Tourists are noisy and rents on your street are rising. Explain your worries, ask questions and try to agree on some rules.

Useful phrases

I'd like to talk to you about the guests.
It's not easy for me to pay my bills.
I understand that, but the noise is a problem.
We're not trying to cause trouble.
Would you be willing to set some quiet hours?
Let's try it for a month and see.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you agree on any rules, and are they fair to both neighbours?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 G · 2 B · 3 D · 4 F · 5 H · 6 E · 7 C · 8 A

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 influx · 2 complimentary · 3 resentment · 4 livelihoods · 5 disregarded · 6 coexist

6 Word forms

1 dependence · 2 inconsistently · 3 alienated · 4 transparency · 5 unreasonable

7 Language focus

1 albeit · 2 Notwithstanding · 3 hence · 4 thereby · 5 Conversely

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