

Traveller



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On the tourism numbers alone, Bali is now *twice as popular* as it was a decade ago. This year about 600,000 Australians – the largest group of visitors on the island by nationality – are heading there. The question is will they all fit? With 2.5 million tourists overall expected this year, some are beginning to think they won't, especially now that narrow roads originally designed to connect small villages in the over developed tourist hot spots are choked with traffic for much of most days.

"Tourists come to Bali to relax," Bali Hotels Association secretary-general Perry Markus was quoted as saying last week. "I can imagine how frustrated they will be if they end up getting stuck in the built up areas in horrendous traffic jams like in Jakarta."

Bali Governor Made Mangku Pastika last month took the unprecedented step of banning new hotel development in the island's three busiest areas, including the beach strips of Kuta and Sanur, the exclusive beachfront resort district of Nusa Dua and the rice-terraced hills around Ubud.

"There is a lot of hotel accommodation already built in these three regencies (local council districts)," the head of the Bali government's Investment Board, Nyoman Suwirya Patra, said. **"So we need to spread out the building of accommodation to other regencies such as Tabanan and Negara."**

"We don't want Bali to be viewed as a cheap destination because this island is too small. A cheap image will attract too many backpackers and result in overcrowding," Markus said.

"We want to project Bali as a quality destination so we can attract quality tourists who stay longer on the island and spend more."