

## ***The Development of Nature and Culture-Themed Accommodation in Jatiluwih: Opportunities and Challenges***

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### **Abstract**

Jatiluwih, located in Tabanan Regency, Bali, is renowned for its terraced rice fields and the traditional subak irrigation system, which has been inscribed as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage since 2012. This uniqueness makes Jatiluwih a strategic site for the development of nature- and culture-themed accommodation aligned with the principles of sustainable tourism. This article aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges of such development. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, using interview and literature analysis. The findings reveal considerable opportunities in terms of natural and cultural appeal, stable international tourist demand, and community empowerment potential. However, challenges remain in the form of infrastructure limitations, cultural commodification risks, environmental degradation, and stringent regulations. The study concludes that multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government, investors, and local communities is crucial to ensure that accommodation development in Jatiluwih not only drives economic benefits but also safeguards cultural authenticity and environmental sustainability.

**Keywords :** Jatiluwih, subak, accommodation, culture, sustainable tourism

### **Abstrak**

Jatiluwih yang terletak di Kabupaten Tabanan, Bali, dikenal dengan lanskap sawah terasering dan sistem irigasi tradisional subak yang telah ditetapkan sebagai Warisan Budaya Dunia oleh UNESCO sejak tahun 2012. Keunikan ini menjadikan Jatiluwih sebagai lokasi strategis untuk pengembangan akomodasi bertema alam dan budaya yang selaras dengan prinsip pariwisata berkelanjutan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peluang dan tantangan dari pengembangan tersebut. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif melalui wawancara dan analisis literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peluang besar dari daya tarik alam dan budaya, permintaan wisatawan mancanegara yang relatif stabil, serta potensi pemberdayaan masyarakat lokal. Namun demikian, tantangan masih dihadapi, antara lain keterbatasan infrastruktur, risiko komodifikasi budaya, degradasi lingkungan, serta regulasi yang ketat. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kolaborasi multipihak yang melibatkan pemerintah, investor, dan masyarakat lokal sangat penting untuk memastikan bahwa pengembangan akomodasi di Jatiluwih tidak hanya memberikan manfaat ekonomi, tetapi juga menjaga keaslian budaya dan keberlanjutan lingkungan.

**Kata kunci:** Jatiluwih, subak, akomodasi, budaya, pariwisata berkelanjutan

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries worldwide and has become a vital contributor to regional and national economies. In Bali, tourism plays a dominant role not only in generating income but also in shaping local development strategies. However, the rapid growth of the accommodation sector often creates tension between modernization and the preservation of local culture and environment (Wulandari, 2024). Several studies have highlighted that when accommodation development neglects cultural authenticity, it risks creating disharmony within communities and diminishing the destination's identity (Mahendra, 2024; Palar et al., 2024). Jatiluwih, located in Tabanan Regency, represents a distinctive case within Bali's tourism landscape. The village is globally recognized for its terraced rice fields and the *subak* irrigation system, which UNESCO inscribed as a World Cultural Heritage in 2012. The *subak* system is not merely an agricultural technique but also a cultural institution that embodies the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy, reflecting harmony between human beings, nature, and spirituality. This cultural depth and natural beauty have established Jatiluwih as a site with significant potential for eco-cultural tourism development. The global tourism industry is also experiencing a paradigm shift. Visitors increasingly seek authentic, sustainable, and meaningful experiences that connect them with both nature and culture. Reports by UNWTO (2022) confirm the rising demand for eco-tourism and cultural tourism, where destinations offering immersive and environmentally conscious travel experiences are favored. In this regard, Jatiluwih is well positioned to meet such expectations, especially through the development of nature and culture-themed accommodation.

Nevertheless, opportunities in Jatiluwih are accompanied by critical challenges. While the area offers strong international market potential and unique cultural assets, it also faces limitations in infrastructure, risks of cultural commodification, and concerns over environmental sustainability. Moreover, regulatory frameworks governing heritage sites add further complexity to development initiatives. Against this background, this article aims to analyze the opportunities and challenges in developing nature and culture-based accommodation in Jatiluwih. Relevant academic literature to provide an integrated understanding of how eco-cultural accommodation can be strategically developed while preserving the integrity of Jatiluwih's heritage landscape. At present, Jatiluwih is not only recognized as a nature- and culture-based tourism destination but is also experiencing an increase in domestic tourist arrivals. This trend has become more evident in the post-pandemic period, where local visitors increasingly value destinations that provide tranquility, green landscapes, and authentic experiences.

The increasing number of visitors to Jatiluwih has generated various implications, particularly rising pressure on rice fields and growing demand for accommodation that aligns with local cultural characteristics. This situation requires that the planning and development of accommodation in Jatiluwih be carried out with careful consideration of economic, social, and ecological balance. However, these ideal requirements have not yet been fully reflected in the current condition of accommodation development in the area. Despite its global recognition as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, accommodation development in Jatiluwih area remains limited and uneven. Currently, there are only seven available accommodations, one glamping site, and six villas (Daya Tarik Wisata Jatiluwih, 2024). This number is significantly uneven to the visitor numbers in Jatiluwih, which can be seen as an opportunity. At the same time, there are also a demand for accommodation that is sensitive to the area's ecological conditions and cultural identity (interview, 2025). These circumstances make accommodation

development a strategic issue in Jatiluwih, as it directly influences land-use patterns, community livelihoods, visitor experiences, and heritage conservation. Accordingly, this study positions accommodation as a strategic entry point to examine how tourism development can be guided to support sustainability rather than undermine the existing cultural landscape.

Table 1. Jatiluwih Tourist Data International and Domestic

<b>Tourist Visit Data</b> <b>Operational Management of Jatiluwih Tourist Attraction</b> <b>Year 2024</b>					
Month	Foreign Tourists – Adults	Foreign Tourists – Children	Domestic Tourists – Adults	Domestic Tourists – Children	Total Visitors
January	12,596	346	9,952	546	23,440
February	12,518	254	5,917	311	19,000
March	14,853	291	6,537	434	22,115
April	21,832	970	9,243	750	32,795
May	29,395	601	9,977	410	40,383
June	24,702	520	9,737	399	35,358
July	29,288	2,303	7,708	383	39,682
August	49,296	3,849	9,437	270	62,852
September	38,278	486	7,772	254	46,790
October	31,977	673	12,320	592	45,562
November	20,841	607	10,275	265	31,988
December	10,552	337	7,696	253	18,838
<b>Total</b>	<b>296,128</b>	<b>11,237</b>	<b>106,571</b>	<b>4,867</b>	<b>418,803</b>
<b>Average (Monthly)</b>					<b>34,900</b>

(Source: Jatiluwih Destination Management Organization, 2024)

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Accommodation development in tourism is no longer seen merely as providing lodging but as part of a broader experiential offering. Yoeti (2008) emphasizes that accommodation itself can become a tourism attraction when integrated with natural beauty and cultural identity, thereby reinforcing the distinctiveness of a destination. In the context of Bali, the fusion of accommodation with traditional cultural elements has been a key factor in maintaining destination competitiveness while also meeting visitor expectations for authenticity. In line with this, the concept of sustainable tourism has become increasingly prominent. *Ecolodges* represent a form of sustainable accommodation that ensures community participation, minimizes environmental impacts, and integrates cultural traditions into daily operations (Muda, 2025; Surya Diarta & I Gde, 2022). This model reflects the growing awareness among both tourists and operators that accommodation must align with sustainability principles, including responsible resource use and social inclusion. At the same time, challenges related to cultural heritage tourism continue to emerge. In the case of Bali, rapid tourism development has often undermined cultural authenticity, leading to weak destination management and risks of cultural commodification (Mahendra, 2024). Similarly, some studies found that many modern accommodations have neglected traditional Balinese architectural styles, resulting in cultural disharmony with local communities (Putra et al., 2025; Winarko & Putri, 2025). These findings underline the importance of embedding cultural sensitivity into accommodation development.

In addition to community-based tourism and sustainability perspectives, the 4A theory of tourism development, Attraction, Accessibility, Amenities, and Ancillary Services (Butler, 1980) offers a useful framework for evaluating accommodation in destinations such as Jatiluwih. The synergy of these four elements can also benefit the marketing goals achievement (Yoeti, 2013). Attraction refers to the core pull factor of a destination. In Jatiluwih, the terraced rice fields, the Subak irrigation system, and the cultural philosophy of *Tri Hita Karana* represent strong natural and cultural attractions that differentiate it from mass tourism areas in Bali. Accessibility highlights the ease of reaching the destination. While Jatiluwih is accessible by road from Denpasar and Ubud, challenges remain in terms of limited public transportation and narrow village roads, which can affect visitor flow and comfort. Amenities include facilities such as accommodation, restaurants, and supporting infrastructure. At present, Jatiluwih has relatively few accommodation units, most of which are small-scale and family-run. This condition creates both a challenge and an opportunity: while limited capacity constrains visitor stays, it also opens potential for developing eco-friendly and culturally sensitive accommodations. Ancillary services encompass supporting elements such as tour operators, local guides, cultural event organizers, and tourism associations. In Jatiluwih, the presence of community cooperatives and farmer groups provides a foundation for ancillary services that are strongly rooted in local traditions. Applying the 4A framework to Jatiluwih underscores the need for a balanced development approach. While its attractions are world-class and highly authentic, improving accessibility, enhancing amenities, and strengthening ancillary services are crucial to ensure sustainable and competitive accommodation development.

For Jatiluwih specifically, the existing literature underscores the need for balance between economic benefits, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. Its UNESCO-recognized *subak* landscape embodies the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy of harmony among people, nature, and spirituality, making it a living heritage site rather than a mere tourism commodity (Widana & Sunarta, 2025). Therefore, literature strongly suggests that accommodation development in Jatiluwih must follow an eco-cultural approach that safeguards authenticity while meeting the rising global demand for sustainable tourism experiences. Recent studies also highlight the importance of community-based tourism as a strategy to ensure long-term sustainability. In the context of Jatiluwih, homestay models managed by local residents have proven effective in providing added value without sacrificing cultural authenticity. The research shows that tourists often prefer accommodation that offers new experience dan local culture, such as living with local families (Lily Dianasari et al., 2020). Consequently, the literature emphasizes that the integration of community-based tourism, traditional architecture, and environmentally friendly practices is essential to achieving sustainable accommodation development in Jatiluwih.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature-based method. Analysis focuses on identifying opportunities and challenges across six dimensions: market, technical, socio-cultural, environmental, legal, and managerial. In addition to literature analysis, current conditions in Jatiluwih indicate the need for direct observation and in-depth interviews with local communities. Many farmers and landowners hold diverse perspectives regarding accommodation development. Some view it as an opportunity for economic improvement, while others express concern about the potential loss of cultural identity if development becomes uncontrolled. Therefore, triangulating data from literature, field

observation, and qualitative interviews is a crucial approach to achieving a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding eco-cultural accommodation in Jatiluwih.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The development of nature- and culture-themed accommodation in Jatiluwih presents both significant opportunities and notable challenges. A critical analysis of these factors provides insight into how accommodation initiatives can succeed while ensuring cultural and environmental preservation.

##### **A. Opportunities**

One of the strongest opportunities lies in Jatiluwih's distinctive natural and cultural landscape. The terraced rice fields and subak system embody not only agricultural productivity but also a philosophy of harmony (Tri Hita Karana) that resonates with the principles of sustainable tourism. Such authenticity differentiates Jatiluwih from mass tourism destinations in Bali, offering visitors experiences that combine environmental beauty with cultural depth. Activities such as trekking, cycling, yoga, traditional cooking classes, and rituals like melukat add value to accommodation packages, transforming them into immersive cultural experiences. The market potential also reinforces these opportunities. Based on the interview with the Jatiluwih destination management organization shows that around 80% of Jatiluwih's visitors are international tourists, predominantly from Europe, Australia, and North America. These markets are particularly receptive to eco-cultural experiences, aligning with global tourism trends. The reports show that eco-tourism and cultural tourism are among the fastest-growing niches, with travelers increasingly seeking destinations that emphasize sustainability and authenticity (Future Market Insight, 2025; Pandey, 2025). Given that Jatiluwih currently has only 25-40 accommodation units, the market remains underdeveloped, providing substantial space for investment and innovation. Another key opportunity lies in community empowerment and socio-economic benefits.

Nature and culture themed accommodation has the potential to generate local employment, strengthen SMEs, and create partnerships with local farmers and artisans. This ensures that economic benefits are distributed more widely and equitably. Studies in similar contexts reveals that community involvement in accommodation development significantly enhances both visitor satisfaction and local livelihoods (Nurrohmah et al., 2024). For Jatiluwih, incorporating community-based models such as homestays and cooperative ecolodges can create inclusive growth while strengthening cultural ownership. Finally, there is potential to position Jatiluwih as a model of eco-friendly accommodation in heritage landscapes. By adopting green technologies such as wastewater treatment systems, solar energy, and composting, accommodations can reduce environmental impacts while enhancing their appeal to eco-conscious travelers. This also aligns with UNESCO's heritage protection guidelines, which stress sustainable management as a prerequisite for safeguarding cultural landscapes.

Jatiluwih possesses a strong competitive advantage in the global sustainable tourism landscape. Its terraced rice fields, inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, represent not only agricultural productivity but also a living cultural heritage that embodies the Tri Hita Karana philosophy. This unique identity provides opportunities for accommodation development that goes beyond lodging services to offer immersive cultural and ecological experiences. Current visitor behavior shows a growing interest in joining agricultural activities, observing religious rituals, and participating in community-based tourism programs.

Accommodation that integrates these experiences into its packages will enjoy higher appeal and added value.



Figure 1. Jatiluwih Rice Padi Terrace  
(Source: Author Documentation, 2025)

Moreover, post-pandemic tourism trends such as wellness tourism and slow tourism have become highly relevant for Jatiluwih. Travelers are increasingly drawn to destinations where they can stay longer and engage in holistic activities such as yoga retreats, meditation in the rice terraces, and herbal healing therapies. This provides room for product diversification, including eco-lodges, boutique villas, and community-based homestays offering wellness-focused programs. Such initiatives would position Jatiluwih as an international destination for physical, emotional, and spiritual rejuvenation. Economically, the development of nature- and culture-themed accommodation strengthens local value chains. Agricultural products, handicrafts, and traditional culinary practices can be integrated into the accommodation experience through farm-to-table dining, workshops, and cultural exchange. This ensures that the economic impact is more evenly distributed, with local farmers, artisans, and small businesses becoming direct beneficiaries rather than passive bystanders. In this sense, accommodation growth has the potential to act as a driver of rural development and inclusive prosperity.

## **B. Challenges**

Despite these opportunities, accommodation development in Jatiluwih faces several interrelated challenges. The first is management and service standards. Many existing accommodations are small-scale, family-run establishments that rely on traditional management practices. While this ensures local authenticity, it also creates gaps in service quality, marketing, and financial sustainability compared to international benchmarks. Without targeted capacity building, Jatiluwih risks being perceived as lacking professionalism in its hospitality offerings. The second major challenge concerns infrastructure and accessibility. While the main road to Jatiluwih is adequate, public transport remains limited and village roads are narrow. This limits accessibility for larger groups and creates logistical constraints for developing higher-capacity accommodations. Infrastructure shortcomings also extend to digital connectivity and utilities, both of which are critical for modern travelers. A third challenge involves the risk of cultural commodification. Previous studies demonstrate how

accommodations that ignore traditional Balinese architectural and cultural values can disrupt community harmony (Putra et al., 2025; Winarko & Putri, 2025).

In Jatiluwih, excessive commercialization could transform authentic rituals and practices into staged performances, undermining their spiritual significance. Such commodification not only damages cultural integrity but can also erode the very authenticity that attracts visitors in the first place. Environmental sustainability also presents a significant challenge. Accommodation development, if poorly managed, can lead to soil erosion, water pollution, and degradation of the terraced rice fields all of which directly threaten the UNESCO-recognized cultural landscape (UNESCO, 2016). This tension is particularly critical, as Jatiluwih's World Heritage status requires strict adherence to conservation principles. Accommodations that fail to implement waste management or eco-friendly practices risk harming the environment and violating UNESCO's preservation standards. One of the most urgent is infrastructure pressure. The main access road to Jatiluwih is often congested, especially during peak seasons, and public transportation remains inadequate. The lack of efficient mobility solutions may hinder the destination's reputation as a serene and eco-friendly site. In addition, digital infrastructure is still limited in several parts of the village, making it less attractive to modern travelers who expect stable internet connectivity for both leisure and work.

Another significant challenge is the socio-cultural shift among the younger generation. Many young villagers prefer to work in the tourism sector rather than continue farming. While tourism provides higher short-term income, this trend threatens the continuity of the Subak system as fewer people are willing to maintain traditional agricultural practices. Coupled with the demand for new accommodation facilities, there is a growing risk of land-use conversion, which could reduce the very rice fields that form the backbone of Jatiluwih's global identity. The risk of cultural commodification is equally concerning. Rituals and traditions risk being turned into staged performances for tourists, diminishing their spiritual and communal value. For instance, ceremonies such as melukat or collective farming activities may lose authenticity if excessively commercialized. This would not only harm the community's cultural integrity but also weaken the destination's appeal for visitors seeking genuine cultural encounters.

Environmental sustainability represents another critical challenge. Accommodation development that disregards environmental limits could lead to erosion, water pollution, and damage to the rice terrace ecosystem. Current observations already indicate pressure on some agricultural lands due to construction. If such practices persist, Jatiluwih may face the same problems seen in other parts of Bali, where unchecked development has undermined the very assets that attracted visitors in the first place. Finally, regulatory and policy frameworks pose additional complexities. Development in Jatiluwih must comply not only with Indonesian national laws such as the Tourism Law (No. 10/2009) and Cultural Heritage Law (No. 11/2010) but also with UNESCO's management guidelines for cultural landscapes. While these regulations are necessary to protect heritage, they can also restrict flexibility for investors and developers. Navigating this regulatory environment requires close collaboration between government authorities, investors, and local communities to ensure both compliance and sustainability.

### **C. Integrated Analysis**

Taken together, these opportunities and challenges highlight the delicate balance required in developing accommodation in Jatiluwih. The area's unique cultural and natural assets position it strongly within global eco-cultural tourism trends, while the underdeveloped market offers significant investment opportunities. However, without careful planning, Jatiluwih risks replicating the problems of other Balinese destinations, where uncontrolled development led to

cultural commodification and environmental degradation. To avoid this, a multi-stakeholder approach is essential. Government authorities must establish policies that encourage sustainable investment, provide infrastructure support, and enforce heritage protection. Investors should adopt eco-friendly and culturally sensitive business models, ensuring long-term viability. Local communities must be central to the development process, both to preserve authenticity and to ensure equitable distribution of benefits. With these strategies, Jatiluwih has the potential to emerge as a global model for eco-cultural accommodation in heritage landscapes.

Balancing these opportunities and challenges requires a multi-stakeholder collaborative strategy. Local government must enforce land-use regulations that protect productive rice fields, while providing infrastructure improvements that align with eco-tourism principles. Investors should commit to green practices, including renewable energy, waste management systems, and architecture inspired by traditional Balinese aesthetics. At the same time, local communities and Subak organizations must play central roles in decision-making, ensuring that development is not only economically viable but also culturally sensitive and environmentally sustainable. With these integrated approaches, Jatiluwih can move beyond being a popular attraction and establish itself as a global model of eco-cultural accommodation development in heritage landscapes. This will allow the destination to capture growing international demand for authenticity and sustainability, while safeguarding its identity for future generations.

Table 2. Aspect, Opportunities, Challenges Table

Aspect	Opportunities	Challenges
Nature & Culture	UNESCO heritage <i>subak</i> , cultural immersion (trekking, yoga, cooking, rituals)	Cultural commodification, erosion of authenticity
Market Demand	80% international visitors, rising eco- and cultural tourism demand	Competition with other Bali destinations, global tourism fluctuations
Socio-Economic	Community employment, SME growth, local farmer partnerships	Unequal benefit distribution among community groups
Infrastructure	Adequate main roads, access to electricity and water	Narrow rural roads, lack of public transport
Environment	Potential for green technologies (waste management, renewable energy)	Risk of soil erosion, water pollution, degradation of <i>subak</i> landscapes
Regulation	Government support, UNESCO heritage status as added value	Strict national and international regulations
Management	Growing demand for eco-lodges and themed stays	Limited local capacity, service quality gaps

(Source : Data Processed, 2025)

## 5. CONCLUSION

The development of nature- and culture-themed accommodation in Jatiluwih presents significant opportunities due to its UNESCO-recognized subak landscape, strong international market demand, and alignment with global sustainable tourism trends. However, challenges related to management capacity, infrastructure limitations, risks of cultural commodification, environmental threats, and strict regulatory frameworks remain. Sustainable development in Jatiluwih requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, embedding the Tri Hita Karana philosophy



to ensure that accommodation development not only drives economic returns but also preserves cultural authenticity and environmental integrity. The development of nature- and culture-themed accommodation in Jatiluwih demonstrates a dual reality: tremendous opportunities coupled with significant challenges. On the one hand, the UNESCO-recognized Subak system, the breathtaking rice terraces, and the spiritual depth of Tri Hita Karana philosophy position Jatiluwih as a destination with unique global appeal. Tourism trends increasingly favor authentic, meaningful, and sustainable experiences, giving Jatiluwih a strong competitive edge in both domestic and international markets.

On the other hand, pressing challenges demand urgent attention. Infrastructure limitations, socio-cultural shifts, land-use conversion risks, environmental degradation, and cultural commodification are all critical threats that could undermine the sustainability of the destination. Without comprehensive and well-coordinated interventions, Jatiluwih risks following the path of other overdeveloped regions in Bali, where rapid growth led to the erosion of cultural and ecological assets. The central conclusion of this study is that holistic and collaborative governance is required. The government must design clear zoning policies and strengthen conservation frameworks; investors should adopt eco-friendly, culturally respectful business models; and the local community must remain the principal custodian of cultural and natural heritage. Additionally, educating visitors about the values of Tri Hita Karana and the importance of the Subak system will enhance mutual respect and encourage responsible tourism practices. If these strategies are effectively implemented, Jatiluwih has the potential to evolve into more than just a tourist destination. It can become a living heritage destination a place where economic benefits, cultural authenticity, and ecological integrity coexist in harmony. Such a model would not only sustain Jatiluwih's local community but also serve as an international benchmark for sustainable tourism development in cultural landscapes.

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