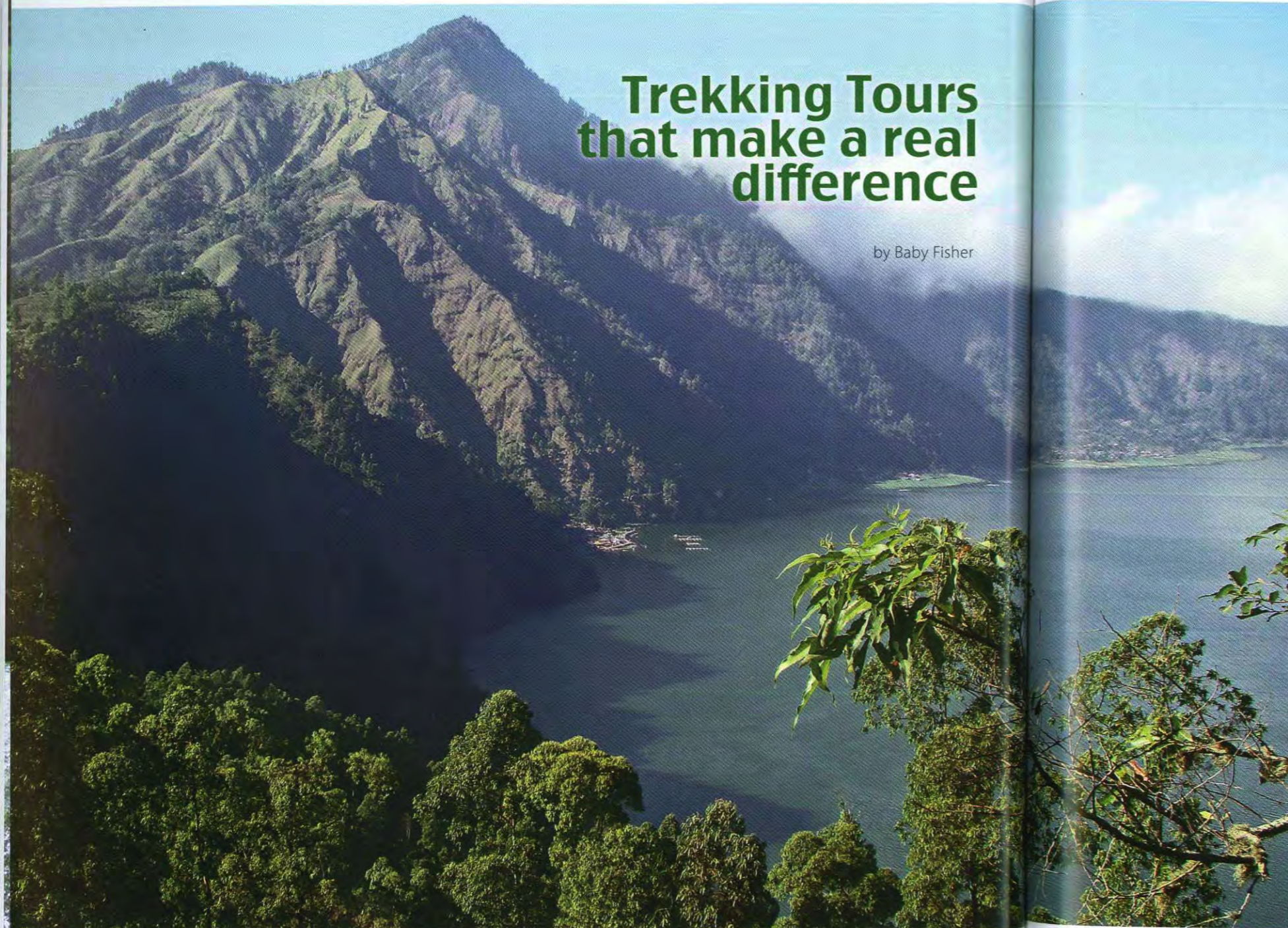


Trekking Tours that make a real difference

by Baby Fisher



The hidden beauty of Bali is often missed since there are few truly natural trails only known to the villagers, which have good guided tours. No more. Now you can walk in stunning beauty and help the local economy at the same time.

Daniel Elber, a retired Swiss banker came to Bali six years ago. He didn't just sit around the pool and enjoy the good things of Bali. He has made a huge difference to the villagers of Muntigunung on the Northeast coast of Bali. He set out to provide a water source to the 35 villagers in the area which gives them ample water through the dry season.

Not satisfied with that, he then assisted the villagers with an alternative and sustainable source of income to improve their circumstances.

"While working on the water problem I realized that the women in the villagers

were walking over the mountain to the road and taking a bemo or hitching a ride to Ubud or Denpasar to spend the day begging", said Daniel when I talked to him about his projects.

"I also realized that this was a most beautiful part of Bali – an area that many Balinese let alone Westerners have never seen.

"My next step was to set up a non-profit organization and start trekking tours over the mountain with the women of the village trained as guides"

The trekking tours have been set up and professionally marketed with all the

women in one village employed as guides. Another two villages are being set up as alternate trekking routes and the women in those areas also trained. Other women are being trained in straw hat making and these are being sold in the boutiques in Seminyak and Ubud.

"We only use women in the projects and they are paid a wage – a little higher than the average wage here in Bali", explained Daniel.

"We give them some in cash, some is put into a savings scheme and some is saved for the education of their children. This way the women are empowered with

the responsibility financial wellbeing of the family. The men now want to work so we are setting up businesses like processing cashew nuts and production of rosella nuts to bring in a sustainable income"

Trekking tours can be set up for a minimum of two people but the cost is lower if there are 6-8. Trekkers are picked up from their hotels in South Bali and Ubud areas around 6am and driven north to Songan near Mount Batur. From there the trekkers walk a short way and then it's downhill through some of the most beautiful countryside. On the way there are frequent stops with a break

at Cangking Village to enjoy young coconuts.

On arrival at Tiyeng Tali Village there is an inspection of the first water supply projects of Yayasan Masa Depan Untuk Anak Anak. Then it's off on a drive to the coastline with lunch by the sea and a chance to cool off in the ocean. Finally a drive back to your hotel.

Trekkers not only see some of the most unexplored countryside in Bali, they are also making a contribution by providing the women who used to walk these hills to beg for money with a livelihood that they can be proud of. **[NOW]**