

Bali volcano ash drifts 4.7 miles high, airport shut 3rd day

November 29 2017, by Firdia Lisnawati And Margie Mason



Tourists wait as Ngurah Rai International Airport is closed due to the eruption of Mount Agung in Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history continued to erupt on the popular resort island, stranding tens of thousands of tourists as authorities extended the closure of the airport due to concerns that jet engines could choke on the thick volcanic ash from the eruption which was moving across the island. (AP Photo/Ketut Nataan)

An erupting volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the

world's most popular resort islands, has spread drifting ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) into the atmosphere and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday.

Authorities have told 100,000 people to leave an area extending 10 kilometers (6 miles) from Mount Agung as it belches grey and white ash plumes, the low clouds hanging over the volcano at times hued red from the lava welling in the crater. The volcano's last major eruption in 1963 killed about 1,100 people, but it's unclear how bad the current eruption might get or how long it could last.

Officials extended the closure of Bali's international airport for another 24 hours due to concerns the thick volcanic ash could harm aircraft.

Airport spokesman Ari Ahsanurrohim said more than 440 flights were canceled Tuesday, affecting nearly 60,000 passengers, about the same as Monday. The closure was in effect until Thursday morning. Without aircraft, getting in or out of Bali requires traveling hours by land and taking a boat to another island, enduring choppy seas in Bali's rainy season.

Ahsanurrohim said Wednesday morning that [volcanic ash](#) has not been detected at the airport yet, but observations from the Darwin Volcanic Ash Advisory Center show the ash has reached an altitude of 25,000 feet (7,600 meters) and was being blown southward and southwestward toward the airport.



Mount Agung volcano spews smoke and ashes in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the world's most popular resort islands, has spewed ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) high and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

"I don't know, we can't change it," said stranded German traveler Gina Camp, who planned to go back outside and enjoy another day on the island, which attracts about 5 million visitors a year to its famed resorts and world-class surf spots. "It's nature and we have to wait until it's over."

Experts said a larger, explosive eruption is possible or Agung could stay at its current level of activity for weeks.

"If it got much worse, it would be really hard to think of. You've got a huge population center, nearly a million people in Denpasar and

surroundings, and it's very difficult to envision moving those people further away," said Richard Arculus, a volcano expert at Australian National University, adding that an eruption in 1843 was even more explosive than the one in 1963.

"There are many examples in history where you have this kind of seismic buildup—steam ejections of a little bit of ash, growing eruptions of ash to a full-scale stratosphere-reaching column of ash, which can presage a major volcanic event," he said.



Clouds of ashes rise from the Mount Agung volcano erupting in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2017. Indonesia authorities raised the alert for the rumbling volcano to highest level on Monday and closed the international airport on tourist island of Bali stranding thousands of travelers. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

A NASA satellite detected a thermal anomaly at the crater, said senior Indonesian volcanologist Gede Swantika. That means a pathway from the storage chamber in the volcano's crust has opened, giving magma easier access to the surface.

Indonesian officials first raised the highest alert two months ago when seismic activity increased. More than 100,000 people living near the volcano fled their homes, many abandoning their livestock or selling them for a fraction of the normal price. The activity decreased by late October, and the alert was lowered before being raised to the highest level again Monday.

Nearly 40,000 people are now staying in 225 shelters, according to the Disaster Mitigation Agency in Karangasem. But tens of thousands of villagers have remained in their homes because they feel safe or don't want to abandon their farms and livestock.

"Ash has covered my house on the floor, walls, banana trees outside, everywhere" said Wayan Lanus, who fled his village in Buana Giri with his wife and daughter.



A view of Mount Agung volcano erupting in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2017. Indonesia authorities raised the alert for the rumbling volcano to highest level on Monday and closed the international airport on tourist island of Bali stranding thousands of travelers. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

Flows of volcanic mud have been spotted on Agung's slopes, and Arculus warned more are possible since it's the [rainy season](#).

"They're not making a lot of noise. It's just suddenly coming like a flash flood out of nowhere," he said. "You do not want to be near them. Stay out of the valleys."

Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and has more than 120 active volcanoes.



A flight information board shows cancelled flights at Ngurah Rai International Airport in Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. Mount Agung, a volcano with a deadly history continued to erupt on the popular resort island, stranding tens of thousands of tourists as authorities extended the closure of the airport due to concerns that jet engines could choke on the thick volcanic ash from the eruption which was moving across the island. (AP Photo/Ketut Nataan)



A foreign tourist uses her mobile phone to take pictures of a flight information board showing cancelled flights at Ngurah Rai International Airport in Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. Mount Agung, a volcano with a deadly history continued to erupt on the popular resort island, stranding tens of thousands of tourists as authorities extended the closure of the airport due to concerns that jet engines could choke on the thick volcanic ash from the eruption which was moving across the island. (AP Photo/Ketut Nataan)



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Mount Agung volcano spews smoke and ash in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Tuesday, Nov. 28, 2017. Mount Agung volcano on Bali has erupted for the first time in more than half a century, forcing closure of the Indonesian tourist island's busy airport as the mountain gushes huge columns of ash that are a threat to airplanes. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



In this Nov. 27, 2017, file photo, Mount Agung volcano erupts in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia. Mount Agung volcano on Bali has erupted for the first time in more than half a century, forcing closure of the Indonesian tourist island's busy airport as the mountain gushes huge columns of ash that are a threat to airplanes. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



A woman gives an offering as Mount Agung volcano spews smoke and ash in the background in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the world's most popular resort islands, has spewed ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) high and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Villagers watch the Mount Agung volcano spew smoke and ashes in a filed in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the world's most popular resort islands, has spewed ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) high and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Villagers work in a field with a backdrop of the Mount Agung volcano erupting in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the world's most popular resort islands, has spewed ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) high and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Villagers work with their cows in a field with a backdrop of the Mount Agung volcano erupting in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the world's most popular resort islands, has spewed ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) high and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Children sit with a backdrop of the Mount Agung volcano erupting as they wait for their parents work in a field in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the world's most popular resort islands, has spewed ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) high and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)



Children play in a field as the Mount Agung volcano spews smoke and ashes in the background in Karangasem, Bali, Indonesia, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017. The volcano with a deadly history on Indonesia's Bali, one of the world's most popular resort islands, has spewed ash 7,600 meters (4.7 miles) high and closed the island's international airport for a third day Wednesday. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

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