

Bali volcano decreases in activity, alert status lowered

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Indonesian authorities lowered the alert status of Bali's Mount Agung volcano from the highest level on Saturday following a significant decrease in activity and said thousands of people who have fled its slopes for government shelters may return home.

More than 140,000 people fled the area around the mountain after its alert status was raised to the highest level on Sept. 22, indicating an eruption may be imminent.

The decision to downgrade Agung's status was made after several scientific indicators showed a [drastic decrease](#) in activity in the past month and all villagers who evacuated from its slopes could return home as the radius of the volcano's [danger zone](#) had also decreased from 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) to 4 kilometers (2.4 miles) from its crater, Ignasius Jonan, the minister of energy and natural resources, said in a statement.

"People's activities as well as tourism in Bali has been declared safe and there will no more disruption related to the volcano at this time," Jonan said.

The government volcano agency said smoke and tremors from the 3,031-meter (9,900-foot) [volcano](#), which indicate rising magma, have reduced significantly, but Agung remained on the second-highest alert level. The agency said that villagers could return home, but warned them not to venture close to the crater, which was still emitting smoke.

Indonesian officials first raised the highest alert five months ago, when seismic activity increased at the mountain. The activity decreased by late October, and the alert was lowered before being lifted to the highest level again in December, forcing more than 55,000 people to live in shelters. Tourists who were stranded when the idyllic island's airport closed for nearly three days rushed to leave.

Agung, located about 70 kilometers (45 miles) northeast of Bali's tourist hotspot of Kuta, last erupted in 1963, killing about 1,100 [people](#).

It is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to [volcanic eruptions](#) and earthquakes because of its location on the so-called "Ring of Fire"—a series of fault lines stretching from the Western Hemisphere through Japan and Southeast Asia.

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