

WORDS NIGEL HOPKINS
PHOTOGRAPHY NINA CHOI

Bali's new crop of luxury villas offers privacy, flexibility and space.

Triumph of the villa

Choose a private villa among the rice fields of Ubud (below); or opt for the antique-rich, walled pavilions of Hotel Tugu, Canggu (opposite)


HERE'S A LOT about Bali that is new these days – new roads, new shops and restaurants, fancy new spas and, most notably, a proliferating clutch of new villas.

International tourists may have temporarily shied away from Bali after the bombings in 2002 and 2005, but investors were confident they would return. The result is a changed landscape in areas such as Seminyak and along the coast to its north, not so long ago the refuge of expatriates, long-term visitors and boutique shops and villas. Just as the investors predicted, the tourists have returned. Australians, in particular, came back with a vengeance, records showing a 73 per cent increase in 2007 over the previous year, making Bali Australia's fifth most popular holiday destination. But they don't have Bali to themselves. South Koreans have taken over in terms of numbers, Russians love the spas and there's a lot of interest from India and Singapore.

Travellers are choosing the privacy, flexibility, space and affordable luxury provided by Bali's villa network. Ric Shreves, of Elite Haven's marketing arm BHM, says the villa market is booming and villa construction in 2007 was almost double that of the previous year. >

Soak up some greenery or, if you're bored with the pool, take the lift down to the beach at Bulgari Resort (below)

VILLAS BALI



PERFECT FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO SHUT THE DOOR, RESTOCK THE FRIDGE WITH BINTANG, SWITCH THE MOBILE OFF, HEAD FOR THE POOL AND BLISS OUT



BULGARI RESORT

Jalan Goa Lembeh, Banjar Dinas Kanjin, Uluwatu.
(361) 847 1000.

www.bulgarihotels.com

These are not ordinary villas. One of the newest of Bali's luxury hotels and only the second under the Bulgari banner (the other is in Milan), Bulgari has built 55 one-bedroom villas, three two-bedroom villas and the extraordinary three-bedroom, 1300sq m Bulgari Villa in a spectacular setting on high cliffs at the tip of the Jimbaran Peninsula. Each villa has its own butler and antique objets. This is a hangout for the glitterati. There are two restaurants and a lift down to the beach if the plunge pool isn't enough. From \$1395 for a one-bedroom villa; \$8500 for the Bulgari Villa.

Bali villa operations fall into three categories: luxury hotel villas, for example those run by hotel groups such as the Ritz-Carlton and Bulgari; villa complexes (investor-owned, but centrally managed); and individually owned villas, managed either directly by the owners or through a management agency.

Rentals for individual villas can be as high as \$4230 a night, as at the super-glamorous Luna2, a palatial "private hotel" fronting the beach at Seminyak. Top-end hotel villas, such as those at the Ritz-Carlton, can cost up to \$8500 for a three-bedroom, ocean-front villa.

More affordable are the mid-market villa complexes such as The Villas, owned by Australian entrepreneur and artist Jim Elliott, who got the ball rolling in the early 1990s when he built a three-bedroom villa for his own use in what were then Seminyak rice fields. High-season rates range from about \$440 a night for a two-bedroom villa to more than \$560, with low-season discounts of about 20-25 per cent. Be aware that tariffs are usually subject to an additional "tax and service" charge of between 10 and 21 per cent.

Villas such as these are perfect for the longer-stay visitor who has already done the Bali tourist trail and now just wants to shut the door, restock the fridge with Bintang, switch the mobile off, head for the pool and bliss out. >



Contemporary white and luxury is the theme at The Balé at Nusa Dua; many villa establishments are rich in antique detail (bottom)



Villa complexes

Affordable and good value, these resorts have clusters of individual villas with fully equipped kitchens, good-sized pools, ensuite bedrooms and generous gardens. They're all fully serviced - with a driver, chef, babysitter or masseuse simply a phone call away.

THE AHIMSA

Jalan Kunti, Seminyak.

(361) 734 904. www.theahimsa.com

The Ahimsa started with a complex of 16 private villas in the centrally located Jalan Kunti and has grown to include the adjacent Ahimsa Club (six villas), The Ahimsa Estate (six luxury villas on Jalan Oberoi) and the one-year-old Ahimsa Beach (11 villas) in Jimbaran. The villas feature contemporary architecture and interior styling, each with private swimming pool. From \$262.

THE DUSUN

8 Jalan Kayu Jati, Petitenget.

(361) 734 000. www.the-dusun.com

The thatched roofs of its 14 one- and three-bedroom villas protect modern Balinese-designed furnishings and art works. A short walk from Petitenget beach and the La Lucciola restaurant. From \$300.

THE VILLAS BALI HOTEL & SPA

Jalan Kunti 118X, Seminyak.

(361) 730 840. www.thevillas.net

The Villas pioneered Bali's villa scene and remains one of its best-value propositions. The one-, two- and three-bedroom villas have decent-sized swimming pools and well-equipped kitchens, satellite TV and wireless internet. Despite the mod cons inside, the villas are styled with Balinese *alang-alang* thatched roofs. From \$245.

SERENE VILLAS

22 Jalan Drupadi, Seminyak.

(361) 730 899. www.serenevilla.com

Seven luxury pool and garden villas with one or three bedrooms. Close to the beach, shopping and cafes, the villas combine contemporary furnishings with traditional architectural features. Outdoor bathrooms with raindrop showers are a nice touch. From \$128.

THE BALÉ

Jalan Raya Nusa Dua Selatan, Nusa Dua.

(361) 775 111. www.thebale.com

Overlooking the Indian Ocean at Nusa Dua. The Balé has 29 one- and two-bedroom pavilions, each with swimming pool and butler service. The roofs are thatched, but that's about the only traditional touch - everything else is contemporary white and luxurious. Child-free zone. From \$589.



BALI VILLAS

Private villas

Private villas are where real privacy and luxury can be found, often at reasonable prices. More remote villas are likely to have a driver and vehicle available, and resident cooks will prepare meals to order. Minimum stays of three to seven nights may be required, depending on the season.

VILLA AQUA

Seminyak. (361) 730 668.
www.villa-aqua-bali.com

This split-level, four-bedroom villa is built around a 23m pool in a high-walled garden and has a staff of 11. Extras include an outdoor dining area, poolside jacuzzi and a steam room. Bose iPod sound docks are ubiquitous. It even has a party room complete with audiovisual gear. From \$695.

THE MAHARAJ

Seminyak. (361) 418 381.
www.the-maharaj-bali.com

Set in a spacious estate with an in-house

cook, The Maharaj is good value for families. It has a three-bedroom, two-storey main house, plus a two-bedroom guesthouse flanking the 16m pool. Architecture is conventional Balinese, with contemporary interiors featuring stone, timber and marble flooring. From \$535.

UMAH DI BEJI & THE BEJI

Jalan Pantai Berawa, Canggu.
(361) 730 668. www.villabeji.com

Umah di Beji means "bath of the gods", but you'll have to settle for a 15m black lava stone pool. The five-bedroom villa, on a 3500sq m estate has its own massage hut, breakfast deck and dining area. From \$855. Next door is the even more luxurious The Beji, with six individual bedrooms spread through gardens surrounding a 27m pool and ornamental ponds. Vast bedrooms, extraordinary bathrooms, lots of retreat spaces – even a tennis court. From \$1180.

SIMONA OASIS & SPA

Canggu. (361) 730 668.
www.simona-oasis.com

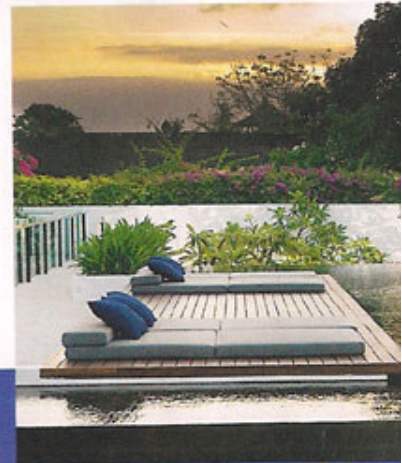
The location is sensational, on a spur

between two rivers, but then so is the villa. Built on a grand scale, it has five enormous, timber-floored bedrooms in individual pavilions linked by covered walkways, a huge outdoor dining pavilion, a 13m pool and 21 full-time staff. From \$1045.

VILLA MAKO

Canggu. (361) 730 668.
www.villamako.com

What it lacks in fabulous luxury, Villa Mako makes up for with comfortable family accommodation. Three large bedrooms, a lounge area overlooking a lotus pond and a 15m pool. Child-friendly. From \$395.



LUNA2

22 Jalan Sarinande, Seminyak. (361) 730 402. www.luna2bali.com

More of a private boutique hotel than a conventional villa, with five generous bedrooms, Luna2 has a great location on the beach. It attracts a private clientele who can afford up to \$4230 a night. Managed by a former executive chef at Sydney's Park Hyatt, with another Australian chef in the kitchen, it has 24 staff to look after 10 adult guests. From \$3210.

Luna2 shines.
Villa Aqua
(above right)

BALI VILLAS



Clockwise from left:
The Ritz-Carlton, Bali
Resort & Spa; The
Club at The Legian;
serene scene

Top-end hotel villas

Villas in the sense that they're separate from the main hotel; private with the highest levels of comfort. Kitchens? Don't bother – no-one here cooks. The downside? Pools are often little more than plunge – but then the hotel's main Olympic-size oasis and spa are not far away.

THE RITZ-CARLTON, BALI RESORT & SPA

Jalan Karang Mas Sejahtera,
Jimbaran. (361) 702 222.

www.ritzcarlton.com/en/Properties/Bali

The Ritz-Carlton's 78 private villas create almost a small village within the hotel's 77ha grounds. Most are one-bedroom, perched cliff-side overlooking Jimbaran Bay, with two- and three-bedroom ocean villas also available. The one-bedroom villas have separate lounges, large bedrooms, marble floors, infinity-edged plunge pools and enormous bathrooms with two-person marble baths. Just call the 24/7 butler to set up your laptop, run the

bath or apply the sunscreen. The hotel's top-rated Thalasso Spa treatments are available in-villa. From \$850.

THE CLUB AT THE LEGIAN

Jalan Laksmana, Seminyak.
(361) 730 622 or 1800 667 731.
www.ghmhotels.com

Adjacent to The Legian boutique-style hotel is The Club at The Legian – 11 one- and three-bed villas fronting Seminyak Beach and smack in the middle of Bali's smartest shopping and dining precinct. Each villa has a private 10m pool, 24-hour butler service for in-villa dining, and complimentary minibar. Guests also get to use the other hotel facilities, including a 35m lap pool and highly regarded spa. From \$1015.


FOUR SEASONS

Jimbaran, Denpasar. (361) 701 010.
www.fourseasons.com/jimbaranbay

The 147 thatched-roof villas are hardly more than luxurious freestanding hotel rooms with plunge pools and sundecks overlooking Jimbaran Bay. However, its



nine private-residence villas, from two to four bedrooms, raise the bar – and the price – much higher. These are private, two-storey, mini estates hidden behind stone walls, with sizeable pools, kitchen and pantry, state-of-the-art audiovisuals, individual libraries and staff quarters. Facilities include a top-rated spa and excellent in-villa dining. Villas from \$680, private estate villas from \$1820.

 For airfares call Qantas on 13 13 13 or visit qantas.com. For holiday packages to Bali call Qantas Holidays on 13 14 15.