



Bathing in Bali bliss

Indonesia's top tourist getaway is the world's best when it comes to luxurious holiday making, **DIANA PLATER** writes

Bali has the best hotels in the world. Dubai and Abu Dhabi may disagree, as may New York or Hong Kong.

But for sheer aesthetics, I don't think you can beat Bali.

And with more and more hotels now including private villas complete with pools – and your own butler – the Indonesian island's luxury reputation is heading sky-high.

The latest is AYANA Resort and Spa, which used to be the Ritz-Carlton Bali Resort and Spa in Jimbaran.

It's been given a multi-million dollar makeover, now employs 1000 staff, with butlers certified by the Guild of Professional Butlers, and has become particularly well known for its new Rock Bar – a must-visit for anybody in the know.

Sipping cocktails as the sun melts into the Indian Ocean right in front of you and small jukung boats head out on fishing trips is pretty close to bliss (even if it is a bit hot). Just keep an eye on your bag – there's naughty monkeys ready to jump.

To get to the bar perched on, yes indeed, a rock, you ride down in an inclinator which also takes you to the Kisik Bar and Grill and the saltwater Ocean Beach pool, one of five pools at the resort.

AYANA is spread out over a 77ha site on the Jimbaran headland, across from the airport. You can watch the planes landing and taking off, but not hear them.

In our private pool next to our villa we took a midnight dip as fireworks lit up the sky – part of the entertainment for a wedding, one of many held at various venues, including two glass chapels overlooking the sea.

Some book out the incredible Presidential



Suite or even hold their wedding there. I met a bride, groom and bridesmaid the next day in the Aquatonic Seawater Therapy pool. As we bobbed from one water massaging jet to the next they told me they were from Jakarta and insisted Bali was the only place to visit in Indonesia. (I don't agree but still.)

The marine theme is continued in the Thermes Marins Bali Spa, which uses

Thalasso treatments, derived from seawater. There's also Spa on the Rocks treatment villas near Kubu Beach, the resort's only beach, usually accessed by golf buggy driven by your butler, or shuttle bus.

There are also shuttle services into town but it would really help to have your own transport unless you have no desire to leave the place.

The Jakarta businessman who owns the

If you go:

■ AYANA Resort and Spa Bali, Jalan Karang Mas Sejahtera, Jimbaran. Ph: 62 361 702 222. Visit: www.ayanaresort.com – It has a first anniversary package from \$US239 (\$A260) per night available until June 15.

■ Space at Bali: Jl. Drupadi 8 Seminyak. Ph: 62 361 731 100. Email: infospaceatbali.com Visit: www.spaceatbali.com

■ Club InterContinental, InterContinental Bali Resort, Jalan Uluwatu 45, Jimbaran, Bali. Ph: 62 361 701 888. Visit: www.bali.intercontinental.com

■ Garuda Indonesia operates flights to Denpasar, Bali from Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Prices: (from Sydney) \$1034; (from Melbourne) \$1016; (from Perth) \$744. Prices include Australian departure taxes and are for return economy-class travel. Valid for departures to March 31, 2011, black out dates and seasonal surcharges apply. Ph: 1300 365 330.

hotel rebranded and changed management companies a year ago after he successfully sued the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company in the US because it had opened a second resort in Bali under the name Bulgari, breaching an exclusivity clause in its management contract.

AYANA has been heavily marketing itself in Australia although we are fairly low on the list of customers – it's most popular with Japanese, other Indonesians, Koreans, Chinese and Europeans.

Villa guests have the option of several



S is the place for sophistication

By Diana Plater

S is for stylish Seminyak. All the cool places seem to begin with the letter, S, these days in Seminyak and surrounds.

There's Sardine, Sarong and Sip – restaurant/bars in the area, which also includes nearby Kerobokan (known more widely for Schapelle's not-so-salubrious accommodation) and Legian.

The old staples – which were tres chic when they opened – such as Ku De Ta and La Lucciola are still popular. But they're getting nudged out by even more stylish bars and restaurants such as Metis and fun ones like the Red Carpet Champagne Bar.

Seminyak for some time now has been Bali's capital of cool, in a triangle of traffic-hugging streets that fringe the beach, with the best boutiques and homeware stores, as well as scores of galleries, restaurants and hip bars.

It's the place to stay for those who like their cocktails without umbrellas and own a wardrobe that doesn't include a Bintang T-shirt.

Such patrons know instinctively that stilletos shouldn't be worn with sarongs.

And they never turn and stare if a movie star schmoozes past.

On the other hand, tattoos and dreadlocks are allowed if worn with style, I observe while having coffee at the Tuck Shop, a deli on a busy corner that is also a fashion boutique. I could be in Byron Bay if the northern NSW town was full of Europeans.

As I wave off hawkers peddling cheap DVDs from my large outside table, a girl arrives on a cute little scooter with matching helmet – and a laptop.

Braided hair, tiny shorts, midriff tops and thongs are NOT de rigueur in this part of town.

Shopping here is fun. Ex Aussie, Balinese and European fashion designers have come up with the goods – unusual and beautiful clothes, shoes and bags.

While locals love sunset walks, fishing and soccer games on the beach, and Japanese couples have their wedding photos taken there, those foreigners not catching the last bit of sun from their beach beds prefer to observe the scene over their cocktails.

Arriving in our chauffeur-driven car at the latest place to be seen, Metis in Kerobokan, we are shown to a seat overlooking the rice paddy for our pre-dinner drink. The night is young so it isn't pumping as yet.

Sardine just across the road though is filling up, although you certainly don't feel like you're packed in a tin. The rice paddy here has been especially sown, where a vegetable garden used to be, to give a more authentic feel.

Sardine was opened in September by couple Pascal Chevillot, a fourth generation chef and restaurateur from Burgundy in France, and Pika, a designer/artist originally from Slovenia.

Over dessert they explain they met in St Martin in the Caribbean, where they lived for 10 years and Pascal ran the Cha-cha-cha restaurant.

Then for seven years in Los Angeles when Pascal worked as a private chef to the rich and famous. They would visit Bali for a couple of annual months before deciding to relocate.

Pascal goes to the fish market each

If you go:

Restaurants:

■ Sardine: 21 Jalan Petitenget, Kerobokan. Ph: 62 361 738 202.

■ Sip Wine Bar: A French bistro opposite the Bintang Supermarket in Legian. Jalan Raya Seminyak, Kuta.

■ Metis: Jalan Petitenget No 6. Ph: 62 361 737 888; infometisbali.com.

■ Sarong: Jalan Petitenget No19x. Ph: 62 361 737 809; infosarongbali.com.

■ La Lucciola: On the south side of the Petitenget temple car park opposite the beach at Seminyak.

■ The Tuck Shop: Jalan Laksmana 10A, Taman Sari, Seminyak.

■ Kori: Poppies Lane 11, Kuta. Ph: 62 361 758 605 or visit:

www.korirestaurant.co.id

Bars:

■ Red Carpet Champagne Bar: Jalan Laksmana 42c. Ph: 62 361 737 889; inforedcarpetbali.com

■ The Legend Bar: Sahadewa Street No.09, Legian-Kuta. Ph: 62 361 755 376.

■ Karma Kandara's Nammos Private Beach Club: www.karmaresorts.com

Some shops:

■ Religion: Jalan Laksmana 4A. Ph: 62 361 731 916. Carries the Religion, Buddhist Punk and House of the Gods ranges.

■ Franklin Lee Boutique: Jalan Laksaman no 34a, Seminyak. Ph: 62 361 730 182. Carries locally designed women's clothes.

■ Word of Mouth: 9 Jalan Kunti, Kunti Arcade shop 10, Seminyak.

■ Allegra: Jalan Kunti, Seminyak.

■ The Prisoners of St Petersburg: 942 Jalan Laksmana, Seminyak.

morning and whatever is available influences the menu; the vegies come from their organic farm in the mountains.

They have used bamboo to create a contemporary, open design incorporating traditional roofing. Their "green" philosophy is aimed at using environmentally renewable non-wood forest resources.

The waitresses wear turbans and uniforms, designed by a local, which adds to the exotic and arty feel of the place. Uniforms seem to be the go in Bali with staff at The Red Carpet Champagne Bar, which opened last August in Jalan Oberoi, sporting pillbox hats and matching cute red outfits.

With government taxes on wine, the prices are expensive for wine and champagne at most establishments. Cocktails are often better value and the local beer is great (just don't wear the T-shirt).

Food can also be expensive at these places especially when you compare it to the prices for wonderful street food. But then the atmosphere makes up for that.

If live music and dancing is your thing, a few bars in Jalan Oberoi, including one owned by an English pianist who plays between sets, and further afield Legend in Kuta, owned by a Balinese pop singer, Dek Antony, are worth looking at.

different restaurants for breakfast as well as other meals, including Dava, which now has an a la carte menu. At night it has the Martini Club for that pre-dinner cocktail.

Or for the really romantic, you can organise a private dinner on the jetty near the Rock Bar entertained by a gamelan ensemble.

As general manager Charles de Foucault says, "In your 20s you go to Kuta, in your 30s you go to Seminyak... then in their 40s... they want something a little more sophisticated... they just want to appreciate the nature and not just the Bintang."

"When you take over after Ritz Carlton it's a pretty big task... but AYANA has been able to make a name for itself within the first year.

"The Rock Bar's a must do in Bali now. If you don't have a drink there at sunset you're nobody."

For those who are still too young for AYANA's form of sophistication there's always the options of renting a villa in Seminyak, a bit closer to the action.

Space at Bali is two years old and is designed in a Moroccan style, with high roofs, a kitchen, an upstairs relaxation or "chill" and massage space, a partially outdoor bathroom and large lap pool. Each villa has two bedrooms but one can be closed off. They also can connect with the neighbouring villa, via the Balinese doors at the end of the pool, so if you have a bigger group you can all get together easily.

The quiet and private villas are close to the shopping area of Jalan Oberoi and not too far from the beach although it's a bit of a difficult walk given Bali's lack of proper footpaths.

Space has an arrangement with a local spa so you can have in-house massages. (The reflexology in particular was hard to beat.)

Breakfasts are brought to the villas and

they can also arrange dinners there, and provide you with your own butler.

At around \$US300 (\$A325) a night, Space represents great value, especially for families.

Also at the high end of the spectrum is the InterContinental Bali Resort, with probably the best location in Bali.

It's right on Jimbren Bay, which has a beautiful gentle surf and none of the hawkers you face as soon as you set foot on Kuta or Legian's beaches.

The hotel has a Club InterContinental where guests are treated to an "elevated" standard of hospitality. It includes a private Club Lounge offering breakfast, snacks, English afternoon tea and evening cocktails. Its rooms and suites are sumptuous and Club guests have their own pool area as well.

It also has an Inspiration Space offering recreational activities and pastimes with Balinese themes, including workshops on painting, gamelan music and wayang puppet making.

The hotel's spa offers a wide range of therapies, including the two-and-a-half-hour Pure Indulgence at the Spa Villa Retreats, which begins with a cleansing foot bath ritual, then a massage, lavender body scrub, aloe and lavender body wrap, mini facial and ends with a flower bath.

Pure Luxury!

■ The writer was a guest of AYANA Resort and Spa, Bali, Space at Bali, The InterContinental Bali Resort and Garuda Indonesia.

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