

DESTINATION  
BALI

# Private audience

Sheriden Rhodes surveys the island's luxurious villas - with staff, space and seclusion.

In Fiji you stay in bures and in the Maldives it's over-water bungalows but in Bali, the stylish choice is villas: privately owned, stand-alone, in clusters within exclusive compounds or plush hotel villas with all the trappings of a resort. Many come with their own staff - butler, chef and driver - while nannies and masseurs are a phone call away.

There's been a rush of new villas, fuelled by investor confidence in the island, and Australian arrivals are at an all-time high.

What differentiates a villa stay from holidaying in resorts or hotels is space, privacy and exclusivity. There's no fight for the best sun lounge, no need to share your pool with other guests and you can more or less set your own timetable: what you'd like for breakfast and when, what type of cuisine you'd like your chef to prepare, when you'd like to go shopping. If you want to have dinner at 9pm by the pool after you've put the children to bed, villa staff are more than happy to accommodate.

We've scoured the island and found a selection of outstanding villas in which to drape yourself on a day bed, gaze into the distance and sip an arak madu - a Balinese signature cocktail made from arak, honey and a slice of lime - amid tropical glamour with your favourite people.

## Entry-level villas

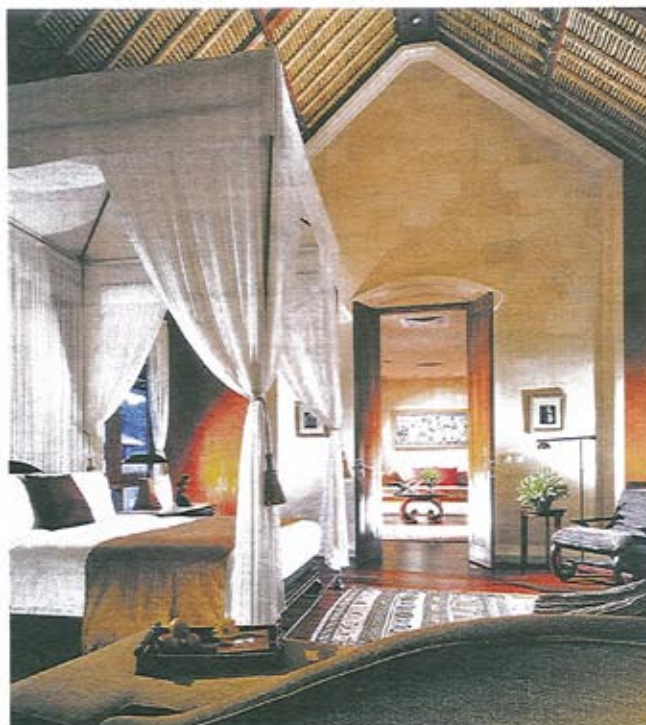
For the cost of a five-star hotel room, you can have your own secluded pad with pool, staff and room to move.

**Villa de Daun**, set back from the bustle of Jalan Raya Legian, bills itself appropriately as "Kuta's little secret". These 12 stylish villas (with one, two or three bedrooms) in a lush garden compound and each has a private swimming pool, outdoor leisure area, personal butler, kitchen, luxurious linen, kimonos and more. There's a chic reception area, a cafe and De Daun Restaurant but best of all is the sweet Dula Spa. Browse the shops nearby and then book a 2 1/2-hour Royal Wedding Ritual, which includes a Balinese massage, Javanese lulur, yoghurt body polish and a milk and flower bath.

Four nights in a one-bedroom villa, including daily breakfast, return air fares with Garuda Indonesia and transfers, cost from \$1746 a person ex-Melbourne and \$1761 ex-Sydney in low season. Phone 1300 365 331 or see [balionan-nybudget.com.au](http://balionan-nybudget.com.au).

**The Gangsa**, part of Bali's Kayumanis group, has 11 spacious villas in a secluded compound in a back street in the beachside suburb of Sanur, where tourism took off on the island in the 1970s.

The villas are nowhere near the beach but what they lack in location is made up by incredibly helpful staff, on hand to fix Wi-Fi issues or deliver a clean cot sheet at 1am. Nothing is too much trouble. And there's an air-conditioned car and driver to whisk you to the property's laid-back beach club at a moment's notice. These charming villas have private swimming pools, outdoor dining and living areas, spacious bedrooms and outdoor bathrooms. The presence of the on-site Gong restaurant (try the ayam sere lemo, roast chicken salad), lounge bar and spa mean you never need venture outside the compound, although staff are more than happy to



recommend and book restaurants or tours for you. A one-bedroom villa costs from \$US330 (\$480) a night. Guests booking for three nights receive the fourth night free plus a spa treatment. Book for five nights and get seven nights including a spa treatment and dinner. Phone +62 361 270 262 or see [thegangsa.com](http://thegangsa.com).

## Mid-range villas

Round up the gang and split the cost of a holiday in these deluxe villas.

The new, Moroccan-inspired **Space Villas**, within strolling distance of the shops and restaurants of trendy Seminyak. With soaring roof lines covered in traditional *alang alang* (thatched roofing) and contemporary fittings, the six spacious two-bedroom villas have king-size beds, outdoor bathrooms reached via huge walk-through wardrobes, upstairs living rooms, fully equipped kitchens and gorgeous pools with day beds and sun lounges. If you're travelling with babies, they'll sleep in handcrafted wooden cots with mosquito nets. Open the Balinese doors at the end of the pool and double the number of bedrooms.

The best thing about Space and the older sibling next door, the more affordable Serene Villas, is their location. Turn left outside and you're in the heart of Bali's best boutique shopping along

Jalan Laksmana, with the beach and restaurants within walking distance.

A two-bedroom villa and breakfast costs from \$US400 a night in low season (plus 11 per cent tax and service charge). Phone +62 361 731 100 or see [spacebali.com](http://spacebali.com).

The airy two-storey **Villa Vajra Ubud** is in the middle of lush rice fields, just north of Ubud. The three-bedroom pavilion and the separate, romantic, one-bedroom Villa Sati are owned by two US businessmen and managed by BHM, a well-respected villa management company in Bali. Lower yourself into a heady flower bath on arrival and listen to the sounds of the jungle. There's a pavilion perched over the River Oss for yoga and meditation and your own open-air lounge for reading and relaxing. When you can rouse yourself, take a scenic walk to Sunset Hill to experience local village life and take in the beauty of Ubud's rice fields.

Villa Vajra costs from \$US550 a night and Villa Sati from \$US215 a night in low season (plus 15 per cent tax and service charge). Phone +62 361 730 668 or see [villavajra.com](http://villavajra.com).

**Karang Kembar Estate** is a stylish cliff-top pad overlooking the Indian Ocean in the exclusive area of Bukit. It is owned by an Australian who lives in Hong Kong and its secluded location on Bukit Peninsula makes it ideal for



groups wanting to escape the bustle of Bali's main tourist spots. Decorated in neutral tones with eclectic artwork and antiques, the five-bedroom villa has three separate pavilions: a master sleeping pavilion with cute nautical-themed children's bedroom; a guest wing; and a central living and dining pavilion surrounded by landscaped gardens. It sleeps eight adults and two children. Wake to ocean views from your private sundeck, recline on funky love chairs designed for two and bathe in a sunken bath surrounded by lanterns in a flower-fringed courtyard. Start the day with an egg-white omelet and fresh juice served by your own chef beside the infinity pool. For dinner, tuck into pepes ikan (fish cooked in banana leaves) in the living pavilion with its floor-to-ceiling folding glass doors. A team of eight staff provides discreet service and a car and driver are on hand to take you to the estate's private beach club or the shops. A Karang Kembar villa costs from \$US775 in low season (plus 15 per cent tax and service charge). Phone +65 9018 1742 or see [balikarangkembarestate.com](http://balikarangkembarestate.com).

## Blow-the-budget villas

**Pantal Lima** is an estate of five jaw-dropping villas with beach frontage in the tiny fishing village of Pererenan, just north of the popular expat



lions are built around a courtyard and private pool. The owner, Englishman John Spence, was impressed by the concept of an all-villa resort, having holiday with his young family at traditional hotels and resorts where they'd be confined to one or two interconnecting rooms. Spence, who lives in Perth, says Karma has the privacy and space people are seeking from a villa stay but with all the trappings of a resort.

And the trappings are pretty enticing: the fabulous di Mare restaurant and rooftop Temple Lounge with 180-degree ocean views; the Nammos Beach Club, on one of Bali's best beaches (reached by inclinator); and the Karma Spa, managed by the well-known Australian spa therapist, Judy Chapman. Try the spa's oxygen facial (popular among the glitterati) or an infrared sauna, in one of the world's most astonishing, cliff-hanging spa settings.

A four-night stay in a pool villa including daily breakfast, return air fares flying Garuda Indonesia and transfers in Bali, costs from \$2429 a person, twin share, from Melbourne and \$2345 from Sydney in low season. Phone 1300 365 331 or see [balionanybudget.com.au](http://balionanybudget.com.au).

The 146 "villas" in the **Four Seasons** hotel overlooking tranquil Jimbaran Bay, while lovely, are stretching the definition for inclusion in the villa category. Cross the road, however, and in a separate gated complex are the hotel's nine swish, two to four-bedroom "residences".

These two-storey, thatched, Eurasian-style houses are mighty impressive. Each has a private swimming pool, library, sunken lounges overlooking lily ponds, enormous bathrooms, 24-hour butler service, beach access and more. Two-bedroom "residences" cost from \$US1800 a night in the low season (plus 21 per cent tax and service charge). Phone +62 361 701 010 or see [fourseasons.com/jimbaranbay](http://fourseasons.com/jimbaranbay).

#### Other stylish villas

□ **Villa Maya:** a four-bedroom riverside villa in the traditional village of Cepaika. From \$US690 a night in low season; see [villamayabali.com](http://villamayabali.com).

□ **The Viceroy:** 11 one- and two-bedroom villas and a gorgeous spa have dramatic views overlooking the Ubud valley. From \$US660 a night; see [slh.com/viceroy](http://slh.com/viceroy).

□ **d'Omah:** a charming and affordable hotel villa complex of 18 rooms, with lap pool and contemporary Indonesian art, a 10-minute walk from central Ubud, plus the recently renovated four-bedroom Annex to d'Omah. From \$US50 a night; see [ubudaccommodation.com](http://ubudaccommodation.com).



Private paradise ... (clockwise from far left) a Four Seasons residence at Jimbaran Bay; Villa Melissa at Pantailima estate; Nammos Beach Club at Karma Kandara; service at Pantailima; and Karang Kembar Estate.

area of Canggu. It is managed by French couple, Mathias and Gaelle Echeane, who own two of the villas. No expense has been spared in the fit-out. Each of the villas, of 2500 square metres, has contemporary and antique Javanese furnishings. There's a floodlit tennis court, vast landscaped gardens that can accommodate up to 250 for a sit-down dinner, pools and spas overlooking the surf, cinema rooms, spa rooms, conference facilities, the latest in technology plus fully equipped kitchens overseen by French chef Manuel Wendling and his team of sous chefs. The blend of French nouvelle cuisine and Asian fusion food is outstanding. This is the kind of place to celebrate a milestone, tie the knot or treat yourself and a group of family and friends to an unforgettable holiday.

Villas cost from \$US1400 a night in low season (plus 15.5 per cent tax and service charge). Phone +62 361 844 4555 or see [pantailima.com](http://pantailima.com).

You'd be forgiven for thinking you'd arrived in the Greek islands when you check in to the impressive new **Karma Kandara**. Perched on a cliff high above the Indian Ocean in Uluwatu, this all-villa resort has stone bridges and pathways that meander through gardens. There are 46 privately owned one- to four-bedroom villas. A contemporary interpretation of the classic Balinese compound, the villas' two or three pav-

#### FAST FACTS

**Getting there** Garuda flies to Denpasar non-stop from \$650 return from Melbourne and Sydney. Jetstar flies non-stop from Melbourne and Sydney; one-way fares from Melbourne start at \$373 and \$369 from Sydney (not including tax). Australians can obtain a visa upon arrival for \$US10 (\$14) for stays up to seven days and \$US25 for stays up to 30 days. Low season for airlines is generally considered outside Australian school holiday periods, while low season for Bali hotels and villas tends to be outside the northern hemisphere summer and Christmas/new year season. Check individual websites for exact dates.

#### Villa checklist

- Decide on your budget and location: beach, rice fields, mountain or city? And determine what villa size you need: a romantic one-bedroom villa for two, or a complex of interconnecting villas that can sleep dozens for a wedding or birthday?
- Surf the internet and make a short-list of

appealing villas and special deals (such as pay for five, get two nights free) and extras such as spa treatments, meals and transfers.

- Ensure the villa has the facilities you need. Cots, mosquito nets, a car and driver, masseur, chef, electronic equipment such as DVD players, sound systems and Wi-Fi access are often available but check.
- Read independent villa reviews at [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com), or browse the latest Bali Luxe Guide, a great reference to eating, drinking, shopping and villa stays on the island. See [luxecityguides.com](http://luxecityguides.com).

- BYO alcohol. A government crackdown on illegally imported alcohol and a tax hike on alcohol means there's been a shortage of wine and spirits and when available, prices are exorbitant. Visitors can arrive with one bottle of wine or spirits each. The cost and availability of beer seems unaffected.
- Well-priced packages, including air fares and accommodation, are available though Garuda's wholesale arm, Garuda Orient Holidays. See [balionanybudget.com.au](http://balionanybudget.com.au).