

Villa Kembali

HIP BALI

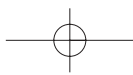
Bali is back and groovier than ever. Joan Koh gets into the swing of things.

Bali has always been an exotic escape for artists, honeymooners, wild singles and beach bums. But when it came to chic shopping, eating and partying, it never quite reached the same standing as Bangkok and Hong Kong. Time, however, has a way of morphing and contributing to the evolution of things on this island paradise. Bali is fast becoming more fashionable but without losing the charm, history, rusticity and spirituality of the past. These days, the siren call of the Isle of Gods is tempting visitors back for more than just the time honoured trinity of sun, surf and sea.



Paul Ropp

Bluefin





Uma Ubud

SLUMBER TIME LUXE

The lush, romantic Balinese look will always have its fans, but the world, Bali included, is still enamoured with the virtues of minimalism. These hotels are the epitome of minimalist chic, complete with all the luxe trimmings you'll ever need.

1. Each stark white pool villa at **The Bale** in Nusa Dua is designed to celebrate love in the sexiest way possible. It's the place for dirty weekends, you won't want to get out except perhaps to check into the wonderful Sanctuary Spa.

■ From US\$420, www.sanctuaryresorts.com



Villa Kembali

2. **Uma Ubud** is Ubud's hippest addition and an understated gem of a property. From the 29 fuss-free but super-luxe rooms to the nourishing Shambhala menu and soul-cleansing COMO Shambhala spa, spiritually-tuned-in guests will especially love waking up to daily yoga at the valley-edge pavilion.

■ From US\$185, www.uma.como.bz.

3. Rent-a-villa is the way to go for globetrotters jaded with the hotel chain formula. Each villa (usually) comes with a good-sized pool, breakfast — or all meals if that's what you desire — served in the privacy of your villa. The best thing is, you feel as if you're in your own holiday home. The newest kid on the villa block is the Kiwi-owned **Villa Kembali**. Just around the corner from Ku de Ta, it's modern, pleasantly minimalist and oh-so-sleek. Tell the staff what you're craving and they'll whip up a feast in your kitchen.

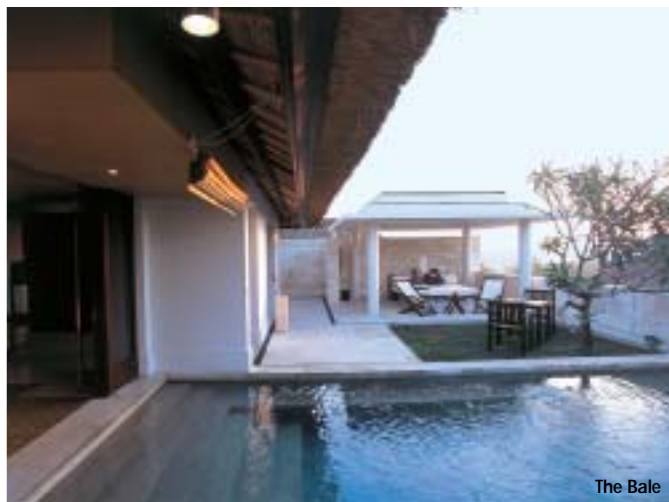
■ Rates from US\$320 (two-bedroom villa). Jalan San Dewi 14A, Seminyak; Tel: (62 361) 737 300.

4. **Alu Bali** is just 200 metres from Petitenget Beach. Outfitted with dark wood and earth tones, all seven villas feature 320-thread-count sheets, a Maxi Bar (as opposed to Mini Bar) and sumptuous food prepared by their bevy of competent chefs — ask for the nasi campur spread.

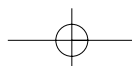
■ Rates from US\$230, www.alubali.com.

5. What began as Australian owner Stuart Smith's private villa soon transformed into **The Ahimsa**, **The Ahimsa Estate** and **The Ahimsa Club** when word of mouth alone kept demand high. The winning formula: Bold but cosy setting and personable service.

■ Rates from US\$235 (one-bedroom villa), www.theahimsa.com



The Bale





HIP BALI

DINING WITH STYLE

Cosmopolitan restaurateurs in recent years have (smartly) caught the Bali hip vibe and slowly transformed this former surfer's paradise into a smart gourmet paradise. When a street is dubbed "Eat Street" (Jalan Oberoi), it obviously signals that dining out is a big part of the Bali scene.



Hu'u Bar

1. Except for the name and the sublime lychee martini, splendid **Hu'u Bar** bears no semblance to the old outfit at the Singapore Art Museum. Whether it's the plush sofas on a sprawling, perfectly mowed lawn, the inviting 14-metre pool, the chill-out tunes and inspired Singaporean

cuisine (Hainanese chicken rice!) devised by chef Bernard Ang, Hu'u Bali is a much trendier incarnation.

■ **Jalan Oberoi, Petitenget, Kerobokan; Tel: (62 361) 736 443**
www.huubali.com

2. **Bluefin** rides the fusion wave with its ultra-creative sushi rolls that taste as good as they sound. Order the Black Spider Roll (soft-shell crab, crab salad, avocado, cucumber, flying fish roe and eel) and Rolls Royce (lobster and mushroom tempura, avocado, crab salad and eel). The dishes pair with anything on the extensive wine and sake menu.

■ **Complex Kuta Side Walk No. 16, Jalan Kartika Plaza;**
Tel: (62 361) 764 100.

3. In true modern, cosmopolitan style, handsome **Axiom** blends industrial cool with minimalist chic in a space that seats no more than 30. The limelight, though, belongs to executive chef Chris Patzold, once the original chef at another posh Bali restaurant Ku de Ta, who dazzles with inventive Modern Australian cuisine that's immensely flavourful yet clean on the palate. Patzold's gorgonzola gnocchi and saffron angel hair pasta with scallops and salmon are unforgettable. There's also a well-priced six-course degustation menu.

■ **Jalan Raya Seminyak 18A; Tel: (62 361) 738 820.**
www.axiom-bali.com



Axiom

4. The ever so smart **Ku de Ta** just keeps the locals, expats and informed visitors flocking back time after time. Set by the sea, this is where you wine, dine, pose, impress, be impressed, and work on your tan. It's perennially packed because there's always a reason for a Ku de Ta rendezvous. It's snazzy and so totally with-it, you half expect Uma Thurman to appear. Try the salt and pepper quail, blackened miso fish, wood-blackened baramundi and Valrohna chocolate pudding. DJs start spinning Buddha Bar-esque music from lunchtime.

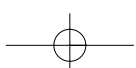
■ **Jalan Laksmana 9, Seminyak; Tel: (62 361) 736 969.**
www.kudeta.net

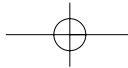
5. While restaurants are opening faster than you can say "bill, please", oldies (but goodies) are still making their presence felt. **Ary's Warung**, one of Ubud's dining institutions has jumped a few notches up the hip ladder with its goat skin bar stools and seductive sounding menu. Opt for the tasting menu so you can sample Ary's signatures.

■ **Ubud Main Street; Tel: (62 361) 975 053.** www.dekco.com



Ku de Ta





HIP BALI

SPA OUT

At the rate spas are opening up in Bali, masseurs may soon outnumber visitors; but nobody's complaining.

1. Pleasure seekers must dedicate half a day to **Kirana Spa**. A joint venture between Shiseido and the royal family behind the Pita Maha resorts, Kirana is perched above the Ayung River in Ubud with each of the 15 generously sized villas overlooking the beguiling serenity of the river. And though there are just four items on the menu — everything is good.

■ Desa Kedewatan, Ubud;
Tel: (62 361) 976 333. www.kiranaspa.com

2. **Suku** brings a sense of fun to the art of foot reflexology. Hotelier Pete Moore fills his tiny, two-storey space with bright orange hues and all eight treatment stations come with earphones tuned to your choice of music. The masseurs here are among the best on the island too.

■ Jalan Raya Kerobokan, Seminyak;
Tel: (62 361) 731 187.



Kirana Spa

3. Take a deep breath at the all-white, minimally adorned **Chill**, where masseurs work on your feet while balancing on gymnastic balls. It's run by the visionary people who spearheaded the rent-a-villa trend in Bali and are behind the palatial and very OTT Prana Spa down the street (book the Russian therapeutic massage).

■ Jalan Kunti 118X, Seminyak; Tel: (62 361) 730 840.
www.thevillas.com.

■ Prana Spa, Jalan Kunti 118X, Seminyak;
Tel: (62 361) 730 840. www.pranaspaandvillas.com

A FASHION MECCA

Forget mass-produced sarongs and beach sandals. A slew of boutiques by talented locals and expatriates are absolutely catwalk-worthy.

1. Jewellery designer **Dalia Brooks'** knack for immensely elegant pieces has seen her jewellery retailed at the island's top hotels. She works with sterling silver and semi-precious stones — garnet, tourmaline, fresh water pearl, among others. Be warned: everything **Dalia** is irresistible. Viewing by appointment only.

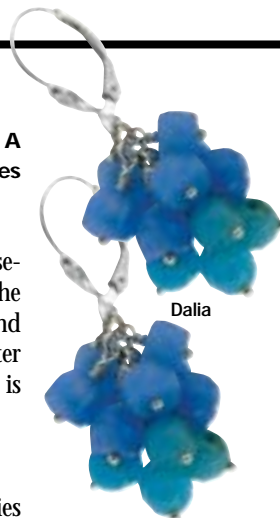
■ Tel: (62 361) 733 280. www.dalia.us.

2. New Yorker **Paul Ropp** blends East-West sensibilities with particularly strong influences from India, his style is loud, flashy and spirited. Everything is handmade — hand embroidered, hand-dyed and hand-woven.

■ Jalan Raya Seminyak 39; Tel: (62 361) 734 208.
www.paulropp.com

3. Milan-born, long-time Bali resident **Milo Migliavacca's** three-storey boutique, **Milo's**, in Kuta is a firm favourite with taitai types and royalty. He's dedicated a quarter of his collection to the orchid, with the rest inspired by nature and Asian culture. His ultra-glamorous pareo is a must-have.

■ Kuta Square Block E1-1A, Kuta;
Tel: (62 361) 754 081. www.milo-s.com



Dalia



Milo's

4. **Biasa** is founded by Italian Susanna Perini with designer Elisa Dal Pozzo (who's with Giorgio Armani). They weave Indian cotton and Chinese silk into sexy, multi-functional pieces that take you from the beach to a cocktail party in high style. The more upscale Biasa Knit across the street carries more formal togs and a discount store down the street stocks off-season pieces at fabulous prices.

■ Jalan Raya Seminyak 36; Tel: (62 361) 730 308.

FLY SINGAPORE TO BALI (return) for S\$333 (incl. Singapore tax) from 14 November to 23 December.

■ For more information contact Tradewinds at www.tradewindstours.com or call 6337 6868



Paul Ropp

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