

LUXURY TRAVEL MAGAZINE – PURI BAWANA

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Luxury villas in Bali are now becoming a preferred holiday resort for foodies and fitness groups. But how do you decide if a villa is right for you? Sarah Borham and Lucy Jones report.

T Bali is the kind of place people visit and think, "I could live here," and so they build their dream holiday house with the dream that they'll come day after day. But the reality is that the maintenance, it makes sense to make it available on the private villa market.

With over 1,000 private villas available for rent on the island, it's no wonder that competition is fierce, they're becoming so competitive to the island's thriving luxury resort industry.

There are different views on the advantages of the one over the other but there's little doubt that compared to staying in a resort, leasing a luxury villa will get you more space, privacy and value for your money on a Bali holiday.

With this in mind, and to better compare with the high-end resorts, the luxury villa management companies in Bali are attempting to make the villa experience as close as possible to a luxury resort experience in every way imaginable.

In some villas, for example, make the distinction between a cook and a chef and for a little extra, will provide the services of a restaurant manager. In most luxury villas the staff manager will act as a concierge during your stay, facilitating your requests from the villa to local restaurants, golf courses and other activities as well as by arranging on-site massages and beauty treatments. Some villas have a personal butler for this use in an attempt to bring it close to a resort spa experience. Fully fitting services can also be arranged for around A\$1 per hour and there are villas with fully equipped gyms.

However, staff costs and bills throughout the day and how often a firm does work in the evening. Some villas even provide a comprehensive range of luxury hardware products.

THE REALITY
An average resort stay in a luxury resort during peak season might be around A\$300 which is about A\$200 per hour, per night. Other benefits to be had in that one but other benefits, you'll pay for a much other things. If you have one night people in your group, enough to fill a four-bedroom villa, during peak season you'll pay around A\$200 per hour per night. In a villa you're already making a saving on the room size but you'll get some extras as well. Luxury villas have a staff of at least six whose services are included in the cost of the villa rental. Some of these people are trained to

look after the grounds and maintenance, the swimming pool and villa security but there'll always be at least one cook or chef, other domestic staff and probably a driver.

It will mean you'll often only pay the local market cost of the ingredients for all of the meals you choose to eat at the villa during your stay. The same goes for beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic. At the end of each day the staff will present you with a daily account including receipts of anything purchased that day on your behalf. The account is usually for a small amount, around any A\$10 per hour if you don't drink very much alcohol but by the way it's heavily taxed in Indonesia and so is relatively expensive.

The domestic staff will also take care of your laundry on site including clothes to your own washed, dried and folded or ironed and hung for either extra charge or a small per garment charge.

Sometimes a car and driver is included in the villa rate, saving you about A\$30 for a half day use, or on the day you make use of it all day, A\$60. The arrangement at each villa varies slightly but, regardless of whether the villa has a fully and car and driver, airport transfers for all of the guests are sometimes included in the villa rental rate. (Some goes for some luxury resorts)

THE REALITY
The average size of a four-bedroom luxury villa is around 150 square metres in built area on a land size of around 1,000 square metres. No matter how big the villa, the maintenance of a private villa costs more.

THE REALITY
When you book a villa on an island, you can have some confidence that the resort is interested in protecting the reputation of the island. That means that if you're staying at a four-bedroom villa, high standards are met in staff training and this will be reflected in the delivery of service during your stay. You can also expect a high standard of maintenance of the resort facilities. You don't have the same assurance when you rent a private villa. Luxury villas

owners have reported significant events like no hot water for a half day or having been displaced by an evening shower, very poor water pressure generally and a collapse of beachhead service delivery.

And on the topic of beachhead service, many of the luxury villas have WiFi and it's often free, but the speed is sometimes slowly compared to the five-star resorts.

The staff at the villa you choose may be highly trained and so trained to make your stay trouble free and relaxing, or depending on the culture created by the manager, may be more interested in giving the experience of being helped a little actually offering to help help as they can manage to get away with the Bali, as with everywhere else in the world, the experience of an appropriate tip. Between A\$20 and A\$50 for each guest - at the end of your stay you can go a long way toward enhancing the general mood of the staff.

Some of these problems can be avoided by the selection of a villa that is managed by a reputable villa management and marketing company with a brand that has spent some money promoting themselves and wishes to protect its brand. You can be more confident maintenance standards will be high and a certain level of staff training has been

undertaken.

A common, perhaps unsurvable problem in the standard of service, achieving the staff and through the villa owner. As a guest of the villa you're subject to the taste and budget of the villa owner. In Indonesia and Bali, luxury villas that are not managed by a reputable villa management and marketing company will be subject to a very wide range of guest conditions, as well as to be of a certain aesthetic standard. Local market as in a common choice for luxury villas in Bali and the standards of the local market varies from what it does anywhere.

If the villa documents do not mention you, the search, search and search of local being, working and peak season comes into play. Private villas are often not in local neighbourhoods and so their existence may be subject to the taste from public health being

There's little doubt that compared to staying in a resort, leasing a luxury villa will get you more space, privacy and value for your money on a Bali holiday.



best off, or the local mechanics of some from the harvesting equipment or the hanging search of the swimmers in the beach, designed to protect their eyes.

Bali's luxury resorts on the other hand, are generally well within the standard of service that you'd expect from a five-star resort. The general manager has been known to regularly lose sight of their usually cultured and sophisticated with local hotels to have the situation resolved or avoided. But while peace and security is guaranteed for the guests, this position might also contribute to the guest's overall culture but being aware that they don't fit as very hard, in many ways, to adjust.

All our private luxury villas in Bali, from across the island, are licensed for an entire day into the evening and the early hours of the following morning, as a village leader on a hand held budgetary prepared the beach for a once-in-a-lifetime village celebration ceremony, his housing half night, half morning was actually booked. Our villa manager arrived on, on behalf of his community, to attend the ceremony and some of our group went along. They described it as one of the most moving events of their lives and they felt privileged to have been included. An opportunity like this is unlikely to arise often at a resort.

How are some private villas in Bali

Stas Ombak

Rate: US\$1,700 (about \$1,740) per night in low season to US\$2,010 (about A\$2,832) per night in peak season. All rates are subject to a 15% service charge and 10% GST.

Sleeps up to 10 adults.

The five-bedroom Villa Stas Ombak has 100 metres of beach frontage a few kilometres south of Lombok.

With jaw-dropping views out to the ocean from the living area and across the sea and a half of garden area, the villa sports over its generous land parcel. The two-story main building has three bedrooms, a dining area, a large open air living room and other entertaining areas. A lounge building houses two more guestrooms with ensuite.

Facilities include high end shops, restaurants and entertainment venues such as a bar/club, a hot tub and the Living Room are all within a five-minute drive of the villa. Stand-out features include the large open air living room set beside the 18 metre swimming pool for all day long family fun.

A domestic staff of 15 serves 10-12 guests. The market price system applies for 6 months.

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LUXURY **TRAVEL** MAGAZINE

Bali **HIGHLIFE**

Luxury villas in Bali are now serious competitors to the island's resorts for holidaymakers travelling in groups, but how do you decide if a villa stay is right for you? Susan Borham and Lucy Jones report.

Bali is the kind of place people visit and think, "I could live here," and so they build their dream holiday house with the distant hope they'll one day live permanently on the island. In the meantime, to help cover the costs of its staff and maintenance, it makes sense to make it available on the private villa rental market. With over 1,600 private villas now available for rent

on the island, 10 per cent of them marketed as luxury, they've become serious competitors to the island's thriving luxury resort industry.

There are different views on the advantages of the one over the other but there's little doubt that compared to staying in a resort, leasing a luxury villa will get you more space, privacy and value for your money on a Bali holiday. With this in mind, and to better compete with the high-end resorts, the luxury villa management companies in Bali are attempting to make the villa experience as close as possible to a luxury resort experience in every way imaginable. Some villas, for example, make the distinction between a cook and a chef and for a little extra, will provide the services of a restaurant standard chef. In most luxury villas the staff manager will act as a concierge during your stay, facilitating your excursions from the villa to local restaurants, golf courses and other activities as well as by arranging in-villa visits by local yoga teachers and spa staff for on-site massages and beauty treatments.

Some villas have rooms purpose-built for this use in an attempt to bring it closer to a resort spa experience. Babysitting services can also be arranged for around US\$5 per hour and there are villas with fully equipped gyms.

Domestic staff clean and tidy throughout the day and some perform a turn down service in the evening. Some villas even provide a comprehensive range of luxury bathroom products.

VALUE FOR MONEY

An average room rate in a luxury resort during peak season might be around US\$500 which is about US\$250 per head, per night. Often breakfast is included in that rate but after breakfast, you'll pay for most other things. If you have say eight people in your group, enough to fill a four bedroom villa, during peak season you'll pay around US\$200 per head per night. So you've already made a saving on the room rate but you'll get some extras as well.

Luxury villas have a staff of at least six whose services are included in the cost of the villa rental. Some of those people are around to look after the grounds and maintenance, the swimming pool and villa security but there'll always be at least one cook or chef, other domestic staff and possibly a driver.

At meal times you'll often only pay the local market cost of the ingredients for all of the meals you choose to eat at the villa during your stay. The same goes for beverages: alcoholic and non alcoholic. At the end of each day the staff will present you with a daily account including receipts of anything purchased that day on your behalf. The account is usually for a small amount, around say US\$10 per head if you don't drink very much alcohol (which by the way is heavily taxed in Indonesia and so is relatively expensive).

The domestic staff will also take care of your laundry on site returning clothes to your room washed, dried and folded or ironed and hung for either no extra charge or a small per garment charge. Sometimes a car and driver is included in the villa tariff, saving you about US\$50 for a half day use or, on the days you make use of it all day, US\$80. The arrangement at each villa varies slightly but, regardless of whether the villa has a dedicated car and driver, airport transfers for all of the guests are sometimes included in the villa rental rate. (Same goes for some luxury resorts.)

SPACE AND PRIVACY

The average size of a four-bedroom luxury villa is around 550 square metres in built area on a land size of around 1,000 square metres. No resort can offer you the extravagance of space a private luxury villa offer.

NOW FOR THE DISADVANTAGES

When you book a room at one of the international brand resorts, you can have some confidence that the resort is interested in protecting the reputation of its brand. That means that if you're staying at a Four Seasons for example, high standards are met in staff training and this will be reflected in the delivery of service during your stay. You can also expect a high standard of maintenance of the resort's facilities. You don't have the same assurances when you rent a private villa. Luxury villa tenants have reported significant events like no hot water for a half day (it having been depleted by morning showers), very poor water pressure generally and a collapse of broadband service delivery.

And on the topic of broadband service, many of the luxury villas have WiFi and it's often free, but the speed is sometimes slowish compared to the five-star resorts.

The staff at the villa you choose may be highly trained and motivated to make your stay trouble free and relaxing, or depending on the culture created by the manager, may be more interested in giving the appearance of being helpful while actually offering as little help as they can manage to get away with. (In Bali, as with everywhere else in the world, the expectation of an appropriate tip - between US\$20 and US\$50 for each guest - at the end of your stay can go a long way toward enhancing the general mood of the staff.)

Some of these problems can begin to be addressed by choosing a villa that is managed by a reputable villa management and marketing company with a brand it has spent some money promoting internationally and wishes to protect. In that case, you can be more confident maintenance standards will be high and a certain level of staff training has been undertaken.

A common, perhaps unavoidable problem is the standard of artwork adorning the walls and throughout even luxury villas. As a guest of the villa you're subject to the taste and budget of the villa owner. In international brand, luxury resorts the art has been sensitively selected by

interior designers to be benign enough not to offend a very wide range of guest sensibilities, as well as to be of a certain aesthetic standard. Local market art is a common choice for luxury villas in Bali and the standards of the local artists varies there as it does anywhere.

If the wall decorations don't irritate you, the sounds, smells and noises of locals living, working and performing ceremonies nearby might. Private villas are often set in local neighbourhoods and so their residents may be subject to the smoke from paddy fields being burnt off, or the loud mechanical noises from the harvesting equipment or the banging sounds of the scarecrows in the breeze, designed to protect their crops.

Bali's luxury resorts on the other hand, are generally set within extensive grounds that act as a buffer zone between guests on holidays and locals going about their daily lives. In fact, where there's any threat to the sanctuary of a luxury resort, the general managers have been known to quickly lean upon their carefully cultivated relationships with local leaders to have the situation resolved or avoided. But while peace and serenity is preserved for the guests, this practise might also contribute to the quarantined, culture-less feeling resorts these days try so very hard, in so many different ways, to address.

At one private luxury villa in Bali, from across the rainforest, we listened for an entire day into the evening and the early hours of the following morning, as a village leader on a hand-held loudspeaker prepared the locals for a once-in-every-five-years village cremation ceremony; his haunting half singing, half speaking was achingly beautiful. Our villa manager invited us, on behalf of his community, to attend the ceremony and some of our group went along. They described it as one of the most moving events of their lives and they felt privileged to have been included. An opportunity like this is unlikely to have arisen at a resort. Here are seven private villas in Bali.

Puri Bawana

Rates: US\$1,025 (about A\$1,015) per night in low season to US\$1,425 (about A\$1,412) per night in peak season. All rates are subject to a 5% service charge and 10% VAT. Sleeps: up to 10 adults and up to five children.

The five-bedroom Puri Bawana is in the fishing village of Canggu, a 30-minute drive to the restaurants and shops of Seminyak and one hour to the cultural town of Ubud.

The villa is a series of thatched pavilions linked by pergola-covered walkways. The pavilions house an open living area, an elevated dining area, an entertainment room, two kitchens, the five bedrooms with ensuites and a children's bunkroom. There's a 30-metre swimming pool in the landscaped grounds.

Guests can walk a few minutes to Hotel Tugu beside the beach at Canggu where there is a fine dining restaurant and a spa. This villa is also a member of the Canggu Club and so villa

guests can use the club facilities, which include a full gym & spa, tennis & squash courts, football pitch and large pool.

Meals arrangements at the villa are by the market-price system. marketingvillas.com