



# APT. 34

## GOTTA GETAWAY: {AN INSPIRING ISLAND RETREAT}

GOTTA GETAWAY

While cooped up in a house on maternity leave, one can't help but get travel fever – dreaming of beautiful far away places like Morocco, Cape Town, and Bali. In doesn't help that this time last year, our Editorial Director shared her incredible Balinese vacation and I was living it up on Mykonos! Since we're homebound this year, dear friend Jaclyn from Blog Society kindly offered to share her breathtaking Indonesian island retreat. Hosted by Natalie of Eat Read Love, some of Australia's top bloggers, stylists and photographers set out on a journey together that would change their lives! Warning: the following is likely to induce severe wanderlust!

Taking place at Villa Sungai – an award winning luxury villa in Cepaka, Bali, a group of amazing creative ladies joined forces on an international retreat to talk business and collaboration, creating a truly inspiring experience. The recounts of this magical trip will surely help you get through a lackluster Monday in the office! Jaclyn, take it away!





First off, Natalie is no stranger to hosting gorgeous events and our trip to Bali was no exception. She hosted a once in a life-time adventure – a complete ‘pinch me’ getaway that I was so grateful to be part of. Myself, Natalie, **Lisa**, **Nadean**, **Luisa** and **Sophie** were speechless when we arrived. There we were in the most luxurious villa we’d ever seen, surrounded by close friends and in a culture that is rich in tradition and history.



Over lychee martinis by the pool, we shared stories of success and failure – talking openly and passionately in the kind of freeing environment that only travel can offer. Walking through lush rice paddies, we created the ultimate picnic spot and sat while sipping on rosé and taking in the local surroundings – almost in silence, each of us reflecting on the impact that travel has on the soul. We watched the sunset together while talking about what the future holds and laughed until the wee hours. We explored the countryside and enjoyed balmy mornings that were hot and humid, with still air that was laced with incense.





Looking back it was the small moments of luxury – being surrounded by exotic flowers, fresh cuisine and indulging in a relaxing massage that made these incredible few days such an escape from reality. But the true adventure was bonding with my soul sisters over cocktails, a new culture and endless conversation – the ultimate trifecta of blog travel!



This trip that Natalie planned was just the beginning. She plans to create more international retreats coming up this year complete with gorgeous setting, brilliant company and a magical culture. Talk about dream getaway. It doesn't get much better than that! And if you're planning an escape to Bali yourself, here what you'll want to pack to get that perfectly chic island style!



Villa Sungai is located in the village of Cepaka, just inland on the southwest coast of Bali. Just 20 minutes from central Canggu, or an hour from Denpasar airport, it's conveniently located, yet just far enough away to provide the ultimate tranquil experience. The feel of Ubud but closer to the action.

Whilst I so often acquaint 'paradise' with white sands and turquoise oceans, Villa Sungai is by very definition, paradise, but behind closed doors. A jungle-like oasis, you step down a floral-lined stairway to a discreet doorway, behind which houses this Balinese paradise. If you're after the ultimate in holiday accommodation for a larger group, you can also take over Villa Sungai Gold, the equally luxurious neighbouring villa.

Having been transported by the lovely villa manager Made, who provided us with water, cold flannels and peanuts, we were greeted by four smiling staff members on arrival at the villa. Immediately adorned with Frangipani flowers in my hair, suitcases whisked away and replaced with the signature cocktail, the immediate feeling was one of complete relaxation - a sense that no request will be an inconvenience and no desire not be catered for.

Arriving at 3pm and walking into our new home, we were overwhelmed by the sight of a stunning 18-metre infinity swimming pool covered entirely in beautiful pink flowers. A huge open lounge area, decorated with nude toned interiors, wicker furnishings and traditional finishes. A stylish dining area complete with a water feature wall and a separate spa room for treating yourself to some 'you' time. The pièce de résistance however, was the master suite. The most spectacular of three bedrooms, the suite is luxury personified. From the four-poster bed, to the huge double bathroom and outdoor shower area; but it was the pink flower-filled bathtub that finished off the 'wow' factor. Waving around like 'I live here now', I was on cloud nine for several hours after checking in...



Meals are prepared by on-site chefs and a menu is shared in the afternoon for selecting your choice for dinner. Introducing an evening of gourmet cuisine, canapes were served at 7pm and included mouth-watering lamb spring rolls with hoisin dipping sauce and spicy Thai prawns served on Asian soup spoons. We were treated to traditional Gamelan Balinese music, performed by two talented brothers who were only too keen for us to trial the instrument too (I was never musically gifted!).

Sitting down to a main course of BBQ chicken with green chilli and lime dressing, which was outstanding - perfectly paired with a chilled crisp glass of Sauvignon Blanc (which, after drinking the local beer Bintang for days, was a complete luxury). One very satisfied stomach later, and a late-night swim in the floral pool and we were off to bed, looking forward to a full day of taking in Villa Sungai the morning after.

Breakfast is as equally mouth-watering as the previous evening's cuisine, and selected again from an extensive menu. I opted for parmesan, garlic mushrooms and spinach on sourdough with poached eggs, my friend chose a sweeter alternative of French toast, and both were superb.

After spending the afternoon working away in the peaceful surroundings (for reference, the WiFi is excellent), lunch was Vietnamese Chicken Salad for myself, a Pad Thai noodle dish for my plus one. Scheduling an afternoon spa treatment by the pool at 4pm, I was treated to an all-over body massage for 60 minutes, whereby my muscles were pummelled, alleviating all aches and pains from the previous two day's gym sessions.

Fitness classes can be arranged during your stay, as can trips to any tourist attraction you wish, however if staying for a short period of time, I recommend just luxuriating in the palatial setting, enjoying the exceptional cuisine and reclining in the turquoise pool.

By far, one of the most deluxe stays I've been lucky enough to review in my years of travel blogging and writing for publications, Villa Sungai can only be described as a little slice of heaven. A sought-after oasis of calm, the villa embodies the culture of Bali, fills you with smiles and leaves you with the best memories. I will be back...

# DENIZCOLAK



## JUNGLE VILLAS, CANGGU

I should start by saying, that I have never stayed in a place like this. Definitely one of the most outstanding places I have visited. If I could go to any place by tapping my red shoes together, it would be here! Bali's version of a luxury lodge – intimate and bespoke, tailored to the sophisticated and discerning experiential traveller looking for luxury accommodation with access to local experiences.

From its immaculate, elegant interiors to the extraordinary service, the villa is the definition of spoiling and relaxation, taking the 5-star hotel experience to the next level – perfect for couples, families, or friends holidaying together. I was lucky enough to have spent 4 full days in the gorgeous villa Sungai.

You wake to the most beautiful surroundings, and a feeling of calm. There are two villas, Jungle Houses I and II, we stayed in both, and each one is out of this world. What really sets it apart are the staff, who are simply incredible, you don't really realise they are there, cooking, cleaning, getting the temperature perfect in each room, making every single arrangement seem effortless right down to making sure the mosquitos stay away from your rooms. In 4 days, we did not get a single bite, and Bali is full of mosquitos.

It seems a strange point to make, but the attention to detail in making you feel completely looked after and happy is incredible, actually so incredible that you don't even notice the level they go to make your stay the best ever.

# Nena Kay

## JUNGLE VIBES AT VILLA SUNGAI

A trip to Bali is a magical experience whichever way you visit but, for that truly exceptional, once in a lifetime experience, you need to visit [Villa Sungai](#).

Set on the fashionable west coast but away from the bustling side of Bali, Villa Sungai blends two exquisite Balinese private residences with 5\* super luxury services and amenities to give you an unforgettable experience.

Imagine the most luxurious lodge, tailored to suit your every requirement with extraordinary staff in a beautiful setting - and then imagine it one hundred times better and you get the idea.



From the moment you book, the experience is all about you. On arriving at the stunning villas you can feel the peace and relaxation around you, see the turquoise river below – Sungai means river - and the amazing jungle spreading out before you.

You hear the cicadas and gentle noises from the animals around - the frogs at night are a great sound to fall asleep to! The flowers – frangipani and tuberoses - perfume the air and it all makes for a truly wonderful arrival that just keeps getting better.

The resort is divided into two villas: the main Sungai Villa with three suites and the slightly smaller ‘Owner’s Villa with three bedrooms. The attention to detail, comfort and luxury in both is wonderful.

From the huge comfortable beds with thick white bedlinen, beautiful wraparound lap pool, outdoor bathrooms and more, this is a pamper fest like no other. As a boutique and privately run business, Villa Sungai can be exactly what you want it to be: for a family holiday with or without children, you can book both villas and treat the place as the home you deserve.

For a romantic and private dose of luxury and bliss, then this a perfect engagement or honeymoon destination. The focus is fully on your wellbeing and happiness.

The staff are amazing; they have that ability to be there exactly when you need them but totally invisible at other times so you really feel that you are in your own private world. However, a private world with a menu straight from heaven. Offering gastronomy, the Villa Sungai more than delivers with a fresh, delicious, local Balinese menu.

Even better is the actual experience of a day to night service – you can see why I was so impressed! – of breakfast, snacks, lunch, canapés and candlelight dinner on the verandas. The chefs shop local produce every day so you can request your favourite or let them surprise you. It is basically having your own private chef and, for a foodie, that is pretty much paradise on a plate.



Although the villas are very close to all the things you may want to do in Bali – from temples to beaches, golf courses or jungle trekking to the volcanoes, you can also just relax and soak up the bliss that is Villa Sungai.



One evening, we were delighted with a musical evening of rindik – traditional Balinese music played on bamboo and flute. This was just so beautiful and a privilege to listen to.

Everything that the villa arranges is professional, beautifully executed and authentically Balinese. Recently they won Best Overseas Boutique Hotel, Villa or Lodge, an award that is thoroughly well deserved.

This is a gem of place and like nowhere I have every stayed before. Every tiny aspect is beautifully thought out and perfectly delivered to your satisfaction. No wonder their tag line is 'Exclusively yours'. We will be back.

[Photos by Suzana Simijonovic](#)



HOTEL REVIEW, BALI

# Villa Sungai

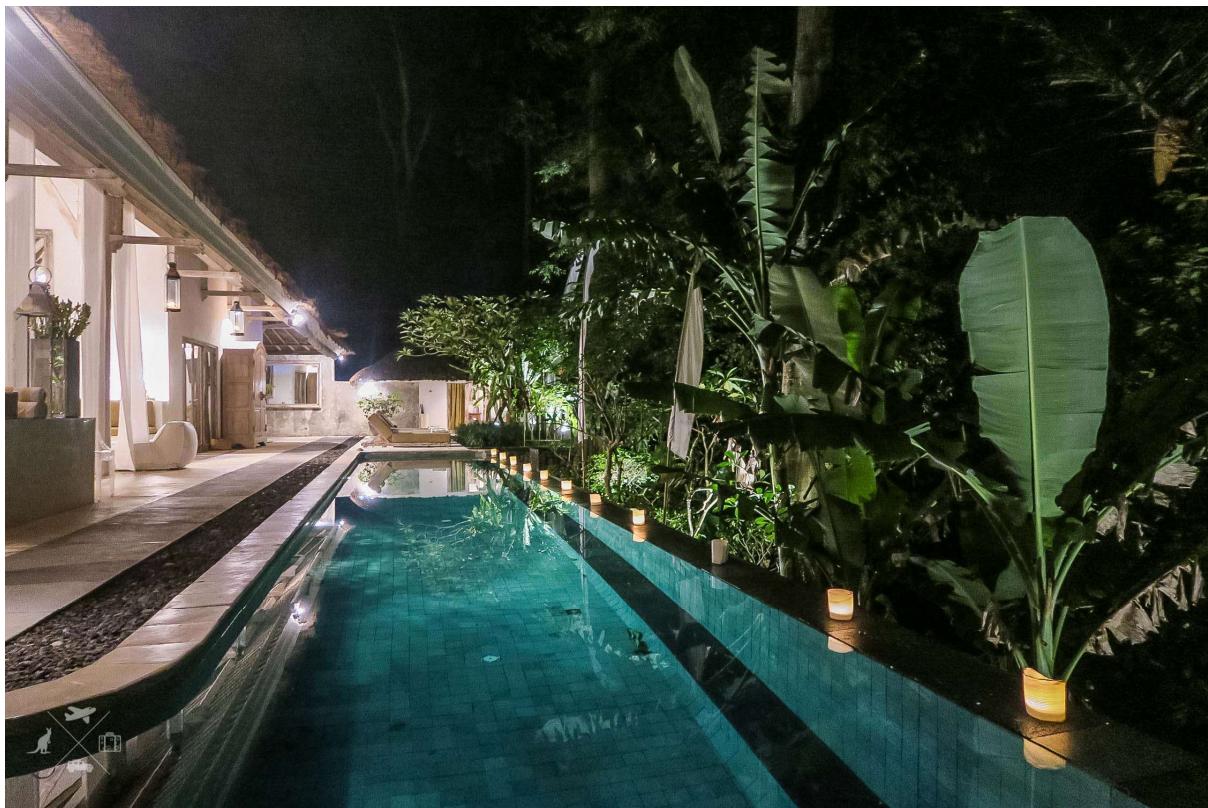


## First impressions

– Welcome to your home in Bali – we heard at the beginning, as we entered our secluded getaway. Our villa was hidden in the jungle.

We arrived after midnight – couldn't see much, but the atmosphere of luxury was easy to spot even in the dark. Drinks and plates of delicious snacks were served, the speakers were filled with delicate rhythms, but the fatigue quickly took over ...

Good that someone turned the lights out.



The rooster and the barking dog woke me up just after sunrise. I opened the curtain and ... We had it all to ourselves!

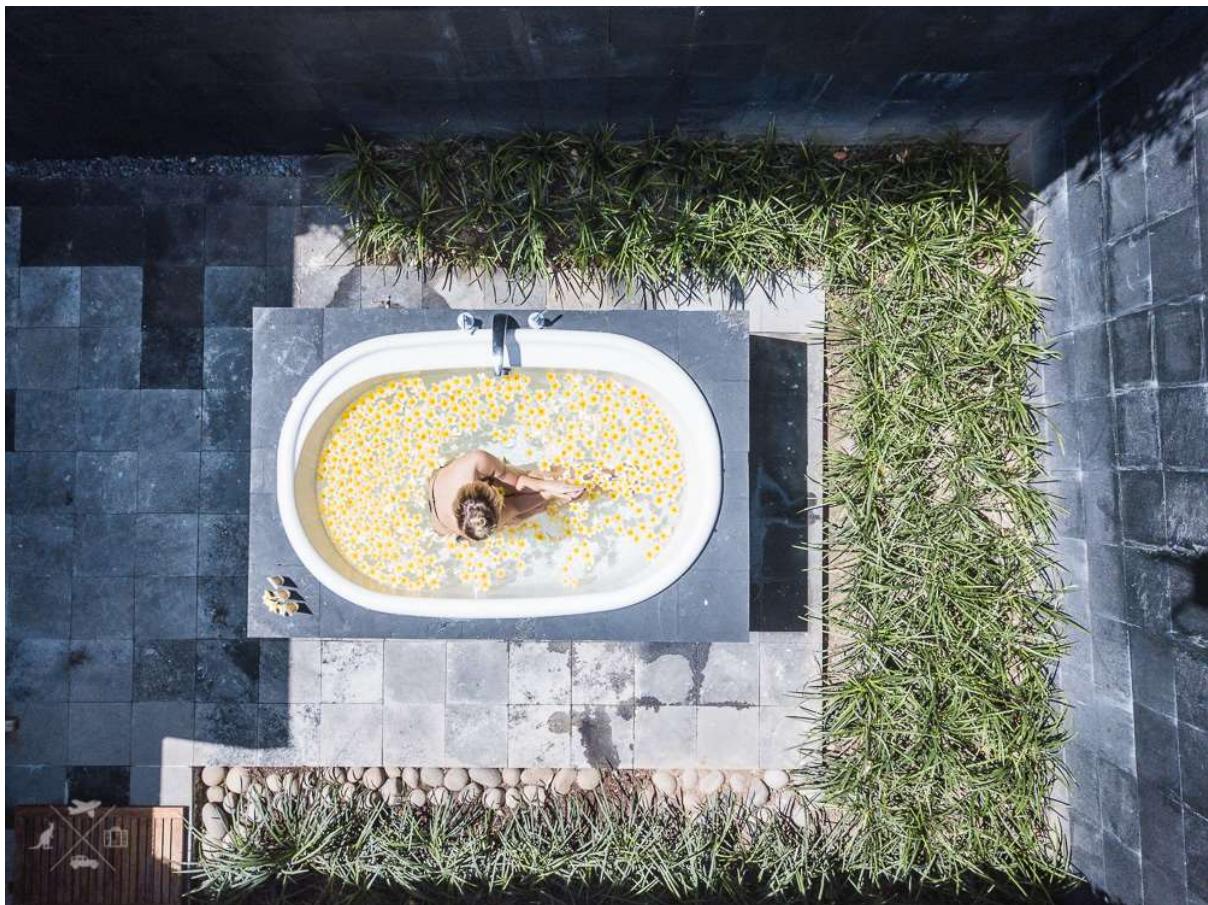
Soon I was sitting in the pool, drinking watermelon juice.

The waiters always came out of nowhere, exactly at the moment at which you wanted them. What more do you want on holidays?

In the afternoon our driver took us on a trip to a little-known temple where only the locals go. For some balance, at sunset, we went to the popular, crowded Tanah Lot Temple.

We had a nice dinner in the evening, back in the Villa, with the mood of melting candles and live music. Two players were sitting in the garden, playing Balinese rhythms.

The next day we were offered a walk in the village of Cepaka and among the rice fields. Within the few hours we only met a couple of tourists – they rode down the street on a scooter. Cepaka is clean and well taken care of, which unfortunately is not always the case in Bali.



## Hotel

**Villa Sungai** is located in the mountains, in the village of Cepaka, in southwestern Bali. The villa is not too far from the airport, but unfortunately through the traffic jams in Kuta, it takes over an hour. Guests arriving at the airport are picked up by a driver, who may also be available for the duration of their stay.

Villa Sungai is not a typical hotel – it's a private residence that you can rent out all to yourself and your group of friends, hidden away, among the trees – a perfect location for any special occasion or a quiet holiday with your family.

It consists of three rooms and a common area with a dining room, bar, comfortable lounges and a swimming pool – all open air. There is also a small SPA where you can enjoy relaxing massages and beauty treatments. There is no reception or typical lobby. The staff are available 24 hours a day, but appear only when needed – there is a doorbell in the dining area that facilitates communication. Next to it is a second, more luxurious facility – Sungai Gold.

## Rooms

There are three rooms in the Villa. All are spacious and bright, designed in modern Balinese style. Large four poster beds add to the luxurious atmosphere. The rooms have air conditioning and thick curtains, making it easy to stay in the tropics.

All bathrooms are located outside. Rooms have showers and the main one also has an outdoor bath. Bathing in plumeria flowers, under the blue sky, is an unforgettable experience!

## **Food**

Staying at Villa Sungai, comes with breakfast.

The breakfast is served with juicy fruit and good coffee. In addition, you can choose something from the menu – we really enjoyed the banana pancakes. The freshly squeezed juices were also great.

The dinner menu is set before your arrival and consists of several dishes. The food really deserves the five stars – the combination of local flavors with good quality products, equates to some amazing meals. Here we ate the best grilled chicken – it doesn't sound very special, but it really just tasted amazing!

## **Summary**

Villa Sungai is the Bali that everyone dreams of. Beautiful, a great atmosphere with good food. A dream residence with the atmosphere of jungle sounds. It allows you to escape from your daily routine and simply reset. It is an ideal choice for a romantic getaway, a trip with friends or a family vacation.

*Villa Sungai has been awarded many times by Luxury Travel magazine.*

## TRAVEL

### Why Bali should be on your bucket list



Bali's many things. Charming and mysterious, friendly and aloof, tame and wild. Most of all, Bali's luxurious. A destination for dreamers. For those who think of her silver beaches, black volcanoes and air of sophistication.

Lounge away the afternoon on a teak deck between frangipani trees and bamboo groves. Or watch the tropical birds dance among the banyan trees. Sip a cocktail or two, handcrafted personally for you by the resort mixologist.

#### **Why Bali?**

Famous for its pristine beaches and welcoming locals. But dig a little deeper, beyond the surfers and sunsets, you'll find your own inner peace. As Bali continues to grow in popularity, it's also becoming more aware of itself. Resorts and other businesses are adopting wellbeing and mindfulness practices.

Bali's ideal for those who want to get back into their heads, as the rest of the world struggles to get out of theirs. There's a real need for inner peace, and Bali delivers on that. The island's perfect for those wanting to find spirituality and connect with nature. In the last few years Bali's opened up many luxury resorts, as well as upscale restaurants, to help feed this philosophy.

### ***Luxury retreats in Bali***

Luxury retreats with a focus on wellness and mindful travel are in high demand. Balinese resorts are taking note. People want to feel cared for in a relaxed and comfortable environment. Choose to book a luxury retreat in Bali and you'll be nurtured and pampered. It's the perfect way to recharge your batteries in paradise.

### ***Luxury wellness retreats in Canggu***

Located just inland of the west coast near Canggu, the exclusive resort of Villa Sungai boasts everything you'd want out of a luxury retreat in Bali. You'll experience an elegant villa and exceptional service. The property takes the 5-star experience to the next level. Here you can indulge in yoga classes, spa treatments and bike rides.

### ***Villa Sungai Bali***

Enjoying a luxury retreat at Villa Sungai Bali is not just for couples. Family and friends can also enjoy their time here together. You'll appreciate the attentive staff, elegant interiors and exquisite jungle views. There's even a kid's zone. Enjoy a signature cocktail at the bar upon arrival – followed by all-day dining and a relaxing soak in your villa tub with Swiss Chopard bathroom amenities. Enter through Villa Sungai's gates and you can leave the world behind.

### ***Cultural retreats in Bali***

Tugu is Indonesian for 'monument,' which is a nod to the hotel's unique boutique museum motif. Founder Anhar Setjadibrata created these hotels to house his large collection of fine Indonesian art and cultural antiquities, for guests to enjoy. And the Indonesian experience does not stop there. Hotel Tugu Bali hosts lavish feasts and 14<sup>th</sup>-century banquets of kings – including parades of soldiers, dancers and offerings. The experience is balanced by offerings of humble village dinners cooked by old ladies with a wood fire, while the guests eat with their bare hands.

### ***Hotel Tugu Bali***

Luxury retreat at Hotel Tugu Bali include spa treatments. Featuring traditional jamus in the thermal apothecary, an ancient tradition. Mantra therapy is also offered. The property offers villas, suites and bungalows. Each individually created by the owner. Demonstrating his immense attention to detail. Room exudes the vibrant spirit and romance of Indonesia.

## Debbie & DNA do Bali

DNA have friends and family all over the world who share our passion for travel. From time to time we will feature their insights on our blog - Below good friend Debbie Price who has travelled the world extensively gives us an insight on the magical destination of Bali...

### **Debbie's insight:**

Whether you are looking for an idyllic beach holiday, a 24 hour party destination or simply somewhere to 'find yourself' Bali has something for everyone. In March 2017, [TripAdvisor](#) named the island the world's top destination in its Traveler's choice award - and it's not hard to see why.



I was lucky enough to first visit Bali when I was 10 years old with my parents. I was blown away by the culture, the people, the tropical climate, the lush acres of rice paddy fields and the 'exotic' foods (although growing up in South Wales in the 80's, even a banana was exotic!)

30 years later my best friends husband said he was taking her and their two children to Bali for her 40th and asked if I wanted to surprise her, of course I didn't hesitate.

We stayed in stunning Seminyak, only a 30 minute drive from the airport – nearby Canggu is also a very popular destination. The people of Bali are so welcoming and the restaurants and cafes are plentiful and cater for everyone. You can head to one of the beautiful cocktail bars on the beach or you can get a delicious noodle dish and a local beer from a cafe on the side of the road. The great thing about either is that there are no dress codes and no crazy door policies like so many places these days. Everyone is welcome.

**DNA's suggested accommodation Seminyak area:**

***Villa Sungai***



A short drive from the bustle of Legian and Seminyak, and even closer to the new hotspot of Canggu. This is Bali's version of a luxury lodge - intimate and bespoke, aimed unashamedly at the high-end international traveller looking for luxury experiential accommodation in Bali. Included with the villa are chefs, butlers, drivers, bar staff, gardeners, maids and spa therapists. There is a pre-arrival guest preference and booking/planning service and a concierge service to arrange all bookings, tours, cruises etc whilst there so you don't have to lift a finger.



Book the three-suite flagship Villa Sungai or its smaller sister the three-bedroom, couple-friendly Sungai Gold; or for the ultimate glam escape take over both. Exclusive hire brings a sense of relaxation – a tropical home paradise for your stay.

For keen golfers the acclaimed Nirwana course is just 15-20 mins

drive from the villa. The Nirwana Bali Golf Club is a visual masterpiece with dramatic ocean views and verdant landscapes. The 18-hole course was designed by Greg Norman with an eye to the island's natural, tropical beauty. It's said to be one of the most photographed and challenging in the world—what other courses have rice paddies as hazards? Even the caddies at Nirwana undergo extensive training to offer top level service and assistance on these challenging links.

*"Two ridiculously private residences that fuse a traditional village experience with five-star trappings to create a bespoke idyll" – Harper's Bazaar*

## BALI WITH KIDS

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I've always romanticised traveling with a backpack and no plans.

I tried it, too. In my late teens I ventured to Europe twice with said backpack and a rough itinerary but each trip was cut short. Turns out that roughing it alone isn't quite the experience I had envisioned.

We're currently in Bali and we're holidaying just how I like it; no cooking, no cleaning, not many plans and very comfortable beds. Turns out that a bit of luxury is my holiday preference and there's no shame in that!

I've also discovered that Bali with kids is best done in a villa. But finding appropriate villas for families isn't easy, despite the abundance of travel websites and reviews online. When we started researching this holiday we were underwhelmed by the options presented after we searched *family friendly bali villa*. Everything that came up was decidedly not family-friendly. But thanks to social media and a few emails, we've ended up experiencing two of Bali's most kid-friendly villas: [Villa Sungai + The Sea Shanty](#) (reviews to come) and as a result I've reached a newfound level of relax. We're here for another 12 days – days with lots of reading, napping, swimming and being. Just being. Without needing to hop in the car or get the washing in or reply to emails. This is just the rest I needed and I'm so grateful for it.

