



Serendipity, Bali Style...

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A pair of cheap airline tickets and a last minute scramble to find accommodation turned into our best vacation in years!

Many months ago we booked "cheap seats" to Bali. Two weeks before the holiday we looked for accommodation, trying three places recommended by friends... all fully booked. Then, by chance, we tried Villa Semana, located near Ubud. Ubud is in the hills of Bali, a one-hour drive north of the airport. Bingo.

We arrive at the Bali airport late and are met by congenial hotel staff who whisk us off into the dark night, to upcountry Bali. Once at the darkened retreat, we walk down a maze of cobbles, and are ensconced in the soon-to-be discovered Villa named Alamanda.

We sleep late and very soundly under the lovely canopy-draped bed, the aircon whirring quietly. We faintly hear a rooster in the distance. Sleep. Streams of daylight filter in, tantalizingly... wake up, they whisper. Look, fresh flowers all around our room. One by one, we gingerly open each window curtain and door and gasp... WOW! A private pool... a very private outdoor shower... a lovely view... a huge tub, a fabulous porch overlooking... a river on our doorstep! A hidden paradise found! The best is yet to come...

Knowing breakfast is served until 11 am, there is no hurry. We ooh, ah, and wow a while longer. The Villa is nicely appointed, with the very comfy white-laced canopied bed being the centerpiece. Quaint, local furniture adorns the Villa, in all the right places. Ah, the stereo... mood music, on, shhh... softly. Huge sliding glass doors open to the private pool... a cool breeze enters... aircon off. Coffee made, smells great, fresh fruit and cakes on the table... do we even want to leave the room? We must!

We amble out into the filtered daylight... there, an exquisite infinity pool, an incredible verandah for our meals... the river burbles... are we the only ones here? We look back at our Villa from a distance, ah... Villa Alamanda... we see the sign above the teakwood, hand-carved door... another wow. We'll be back!

Breakfast... fresh fruit, fresh juice, omelet, eggs Benedict, bacon, muesli, coffee... Bali (local) coffee... yes! Too much, what to have? Okay, three more mornings to go, enough time to try it all; maybe. Oh, have to check my email... wireless... perfect connection... put it away now... on holiday... laptop off!

Breakfast over, we wander the grounds... down to the Ayung River and the Semana Spa... very

dangerous... the wife will never, ever leave this place! A dozen different types of treatments... is there enough time? Thankfully, no. The river is mesmerizing all by itself... we melt into very cushy chairs... the river burbles... we drift off.

Reality, awake... up to the main meeting area, a shop cum office cum internet kiosk. It still seems like a resort though, you never lose that feel. May we have a tour of the grounds? Yes, follow me, says Dewi with a soothing Balinese lilt. Our journey begins... ten villas total, no more... each one different... we like them all... some big with outdoor living rooms (yes), upstairs bedrooms with grand views, some with two bedrooms, all with private pools, big tubs, immaculately appointed and landscaped... floating lotus gardens, rice terraces, a spice garden, of course.

What's not to like? Okay, so I missed the final round of the British Open (no TV)... probably a blessing. The food is so good I gained two kilos in four days... but I got plenty of exercise walking down the paths and up the steps. I didn't know my camera could hold so many photos at one go... but I had to recharge the battery (mine and the camera's) every night. So I missed the complimentary High Tea four afternoons in a row... I was saving myself for the fabulous dinners!

Oh, and then there's Bali, outside the perimeter of our new found Eden. Ten minutes drive to the town of Ubud - vibrant, bustling, intriguing shops and fare. It's all there, and the best thing is that you can escape back to Villa Semana in ten minutes... time to go!

Let's see, tonight, will it be Thai, Balinese fusion, or a mouth-watering steak (the best)? Don't miss the locally grown vegetables or the desserts - we can exercise again tomorrow. Wait, glass of wine first, drink, think and then choose. We are distracted by the back-lit infinity pool and spectacular flood-lit foliage. We want something that's not on the menu... no problem... they can do. All the staff, throughout Villa Semana, are top-notch.

So, this must be expensive. Exclusive yes; expensive, not really. Is there a price for paradise? If you want to relax, Villa Semana is a must. We're going again. For all the details go to: www.villasemana.com. Have fun!

If you can drag yourself away from Villa Semana and want to see the real Bali, contact our new friend and driver Darsa. He knows all the places, especially the ones off the beaten track. Call or text him at +62 819 1622-1713. You'll be very glad you did!

Oh, and then there's Bali, outside the perimeter of our new found Eden.



- 1 Steps leading to the Semana Spa by the Ayung River
- 2 Poolside next to restaurant
- 3 One of the 10 villas
- 4 Alamanda Villa
- 5 Semana Spa massage area
- 6 Daily offerings to the Pura
- 7 Hanging out in Ubud
- 8 Balancing act at Tampak Siring
- 9 Market at Bedugul

