

# LUXURY TRAVEL MAGAZINE – SADIA

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Luxury villas in Bali are now becoming popular in the holiday resorts for holidaymakers travelling in 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 latest hope that it can stay as luxurious as 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 1,000 private villas now available for rent on the island, 10 per cent of them marketed as luxury, they're becoming 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 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 even purpose-built 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\$5 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.

**WHY GO HOME?**  
An average room rate 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 most 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 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 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 or drink by the way it.

The domestic staff will also take care of your laundry on site allowing 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\$50 for a half day use, or on the day you make use of it all day, A\$80. 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)

*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.*

**THEY ARE PROPERTY**  
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 is, the arrangement of space is a private villa rental.

**HOW TO BOOK**  
When you book a room in a resort you can have some confidence that the resort is interested in providing the experience of its brand. That means that if you're staying at a four-star resort in Bali, 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. Villas don't have the same advantage when you rent a private villa. Luxury villa

rentals have reported significant events like no hot water for a half day or having been disrupted 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 motivated to make your stay trouble free and relaxing, or depending on the culture created by the manager, may be more motivated 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 expectations 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 address by choosing 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-out luxury villas. As a guest of the villa you're subject to the taste and budget of the villa owner. In intimate and small, luxury villas the art has been meticulously selected by interior designers to be being enough so to create a very wide range of guest amenities, 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 from what it does anywhere.

If the villa documents do not mention you, the search, search and search of local living, working and parking issues comes into play. Private villas are often set in local neighbourhoods and so these vehicles may be subject to the same from parking both being



Best off, or the local mechanics of some from the harvesting equipment or the hanging search of the same ones in the house, designed to prevent their eyes.

Bali's luxury resorts on the other hand, are generally well within extensive grounds that act as a buffer zone between guests on holiday and local going about their daily lives. In fact, where there's any threat to the sanctuary of a luxury resort, the general manager have been known to quickly lose sight their usually cultured and sophisticated with local workers 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 interest, culture but being aware these don't fit as very hard, in many ways, to address.

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 knowledge prepared the beach for a once-in-every-five-year village construction ceremony, his housing half night, half waking was actually involved. 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**  
Rates: 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 bedrooms with ensuite.

Facilities high end shops, restaurants and entertainment venues such as a bar/club, this villa and the Living Room are all within a five-minute drive of the villa. Hand-out butlers 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 meals.

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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.

## *Villa Sadia*

**Rates:** US\$495 (about US\$490) per night in low season to US\$695 (about US\$688) per night in peak season. All rates are subject to a 5% service charge and 10% VAT. Sleeps: up to eight adults.

The two-storey, four-bedroom Villa Sadia is in the traditional village of Tiyingtutul, ten minutes drive from the beach at Canggu on Bali's south west coast. The fine dining restaurants, nightlife and boutiques of Seminyak are 30-minutes drive from the villa.

Each bedroom has its own en-suite and there's a separate sitting room upstairs that is great for separating adults and children in this otherwise open plan house. Other entertaining areas include a ground floor terrace that looks onto a lawn that slopes down to a 12-metre swimming pool and pool bar. The long distance view from the terrace is of a traditional, working rice field.

A staff of nine oversees the running, maintenance and security of the villa and meal arrangements are by the "market price" system.

Villa Sadia is a member of the nearby Canggu Club where villa guests are welcome to use the club facilities which include a full gym & spa, tennis & squash courts and football pitch. The Greg Norman designed Nirwana Bali Golf Course is also a short drive.

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