

EXPAT LIVING – VILLA SHAMIRA

EDITION JULY 2011



Sliding into Bliss

By Kate Roberts

The third day of a holiday is the day of surrender. The mental distance from home has finally caught up with the physical distance, and thoughts of work and school disappear. A beer at lunchtime is not out of the question, and an afternoon nap is the natural thing to do – not an indulgent luxury. Even if you only have three days, you can achieve this state of bliss at The Shamira, a gorgeous villa in Bali.

This is our first trip to Bali. Friends have mentioned to us that the villas in Bali are enormous, but five four-poster beds? We've just arrived, and after a grand tour of the villa and a test of all the beds, we come to an agreement about sleeping arrangements. The kids are delighted – there are no single beds, so they score a four-poster each.

Trailing through the house after the kids head off to put on a CD, it's obvious that we need another family to join us and really make the most of the space – and all those daybeds, sofas, dining tables and beds!

It's impossible to resist the lure of the 12-metre pool, so we adjourn to the hale (a thatched-roof daybed). The cool breeze and relatively low humidity revive us after the journey, and remind us what we've left behind: the oppressive heat of a Singapore summer. We've also left behind the claustrophobia of living cheek-by-jowl with millions of others.

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The villa's spaciousness and fabulous facilities are a reason to stay put and do as little as possible – and although we do make the effort to go on two excursions, we decide to avoid the crowds that we might find at Ubud or Kuta.

A morning's sightseeing around the local area is perfect. The 17th-century Pura Taman

Ayun temple, complete with moat, is worth a look; as is a ceramic and pottery workshop, tucked away in the rural village of Pejaten. The friendly owner shows us around and lets the kids make moulded shapes with the clay, and we purchase a few of the distinctive pale-green pieces as souvenirs. The tourist circus that is Tanah Lot temple, perched on



a craggy, windswept rock, is the last on our list. While it's worth seeing, we're glad to have avoided the sunset crowds that others have told us about.

With nothing to feel guilty about now (having ticked off the main tourist sites), we surrender to the comforts of the villa. The children have sorted through the large DVD

collection and are happily ensconced in front of *Chitri Chitri Bang Bang* – giving Mum and Dad at least two hours of quiet time.

The only choices to make are: where to sit, what to read and what to drink. With numerous balconies, nooks and verandahs all furnished in comfortable Balinese shabby-chic style, these are the hardest decisions we make all day.

TRAVEL

As it is so easy (and economical), we elect to eat in and discover the talents of the delightful cook Wayan, who prepares home-style Western and local dishes. My daughter declares that Wayan's lasagne is better than mine. After much coaxing, my son eventually tries the chicken curry and then proceeds to demolish it all. He even suggests we make it for him again. We all agree the chicken satay is the best we've ever eaten.

Throughout our stay, the staff pay particular attention to the children and delight in plaiting my daughter's hair, Balinese-style. It's this kind of personal interaction that makes a stay at The Shamira so memorable.

Having sunk happily into holiday mode and passed the wonderful third day of bliss, it's tough to pack the bags and leave our Balinese hideaway.

The Shamira is in Canggu, 20 minutes north of Seminyak and an hour from the international airport. Prices start from US\$500 per night. Call Private Homes and Villas at 6473 3121 or visit www.privatehomesandvillas.com.

Six top things about The Shamira:

- Step out on the verandah at night and you can see the Southern Cross, as Bali is located just south of the equator; this is a reassuring sight for Aussies.
- The enormous outdoor bathroom is perfect for rinsing off after a swim.
- There are rice paddies right outside the front door. Whether it's sowing or harvesting time, there is always activity.
- An easy 10-minute stroll away is Echo Beach, a quiet area of restaurants and shops – great for a sunset beer, or a massage or beauty treatment at Gold Dust (362 6394).
- Enthusiastic driver Pak Nyoman is recommended by the villa, and can be engaged for day trips.

The owners were involved in helping an Australian Bali bomb victim, Jodie O'Shea, who later died. This motivated them to do more for their community and they set up an orphanage in her name: visit www.careforkidbali.com for more information.

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