



And The Shamira deserves to be inhabited. Unusually, there is no easily defined centre of the house, rather a series of areas that lead from one to another as in a maze, albeit one with few walls. So amble from garden to pool to balé, and then on through the house where the kitchen unfolds into multiple dining and lounging areas. The only defined space is the air-conditioned recreation room, piled high with DVDs (should the Encyclop'dia Britannica not be your first choice) and other rainy day diversions.

Two of the bedrooms are worthy of special mention: the stand-alone sleeping pavilion by the pool with its 1.5-metre-wide bed, and the (for want of a better term) South Wing, which shelters beneath a curved *lumbung* roof originally designed for rice storage. With a balcony hovering above the pool, this room is marked out as ideal quarters for youngsters.

For parents, the numerous hidden terraces off the three bedrooms in the main house are the perfect place to get lost, possibly in a good book. Essentially, The Shamira is a feminine abode, with elegant décor and a traditional aura, imbued not least by the cast-iron four-poster beds.

Echo Beach and its surf breaks are a short hop through the rice fields and the marvellous Hotel Tugu - part museum, part spa, part restaurant - is just down the road. However the temptation to stay closeted behind the lofty perimeters and glorious overgrown gardens of The Shamira is very strong indeed.

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