

(travel_bug)

DREAM TIME

Looking for holiday heaven? Time to check into a luxe villa with a view in Bali, says Alice Wasley

Bali as a holiday destination has always conjured up images in my mind of crispy-skinned tourists with braided hair flicking through racks of Bintang singlets. I realised I was trapped in a cliché of my own making, so looked into places to stay that were a little off the beaten track but still offered all the bells and whistles of a luxury holiday.

We begin at Alila Villas Soori, on the southwest coast of Bali. To get there, you drive through little villages and lush rice paddies to the resort, which sits on the edge of sparkling black volcanic sand. Our Ocean Pool Villa, as the name suggests, has a private pool overlooking the Indian Ocean, with its constantly rolling waves providing a soothing backdrop to our deepening state of relaxation. The villa is sleek and contemporary with decadent touches, including his-and-hers sinks stocked with the topnotch Alila Living product range.

You have the option to venture out of the comforting surrounds of the resort, wandering along the beach and checking out the nearby bat cave full of huddled, shrieking bats, which fly out en masse at sunset. One morning we decide to take a bike ride through the rice paddies to visit a local village, much to the amusement of the staff, but after cycling through the heat and dodging trucks on the road for a while, we head back to the resort and opt for massages in the cool, dark, cavernous spa instead.

Our next destination is the Alila resort in Ubud, the cultural centre of Bali. The annual Ubud Writers & Readers Festival attracts some of the world's best writers. The resort sits on the edge of the



ISLAND TIME

(clockwise from far left) A villa by the sea at Alila Villas Soori on Bali's southwest coast; lush scenery; a Terrace Tree Villa at the Alila resort, Ubud.



Ayung River valley in Bali's central foothills and is a few minutes away from the centre of Ubud, with its restaurants, cafés, galleries, boutiques and yoga studios lining the bustling main streets.

Our Terrace Tree Villa has a large wooden deck overlooking dense greenery deep in the valley below and rice paddies that snake along the banks. On arrival we have a cocktail on the terrace watching the macaque monkeys swinging in the trees. Later, when we return, the macaques have gravitated closer to our villa, but are surprisingly unwilling to pose for photos.

There are plenty of activities on offer at the resort – we sign up for morning outdoor yoga overlooking the valley, which becomes indoor yoga due to the rain. There is also a spectacular infinity pool that drops off right on the edge of the valley, or you can visit the spa for one of the many relaxing, rejuvenating treatments, or go on guided walks of the surrounding rice paddies.

My trip from the rugged, tranquil coast to the thick vegetation of the Ubud foothills covers a fair bit of ground and there's not a Bintang singlet in sight. Score one for Bali. **S**

Alila Villas cost from \$670 per night for two people. Visit alilahotels.com.

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SWITCH YOUR MINDSET *These havens aren't just for the riffraff* BY MEL EVANS

THAILAND



Forget full moon parties and buckets filled with alcohol by leaving tourist-laden Bangkok and Koh Phangan behind in favour of Koh Lipe's white sand beaches. Here, the mode of transport is longboat and travel season is from November to May. BYO bucket. Visit kohlipethailand.com.

IBIZA



If you happen to find yourself in Ibiza, know that there is much more to the Spanish island than *pingas* and dance music. From Cala Boix's dark sand beaches to the hippie haven of San Carlos, there's a yoga retreat at the end of a winding coastal road with your name on it. Strictly no glowsticks. Visit ibiza.travel/en.

DREAM ON, MURIEL!

LONHEA ALPINE CLINIC, SWITZERLAND

If your local chiro just isn't cracking it any more, take a trip to Switzerland's Lonhea Alpine Clinic. For a little under 10 grand a week (chicken feed, really), you can be cracked, massaged and personally trained to within an inch of your waist. Visit lonhea.com.

