

THE STARFISH – TAMAN AHIMSA

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TAMAN AHIMSA: HIDDEN GARDEN BY THE SEA

PETER RIGBY | PLACES | MARCH 19, 2013 |



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With Kuta and Legian now ridiculously congested and chaotic, and even chichi Seminyak a permanent traffic jam, we thought it high time to head out of town in search of the getaway Bali of yore.

Just ten clicks north of the 'Yak, we found just what we were looking for. *The Starfish* had been invited to stay at Villa Taman Ahimsa, located in a rural seaside setting on a tranquil beach at South Canggu.

Situated near the village of Cemagi, the Villa – which is actually a compound of villas – is approached via a small village, lush green rice paddies and delightful duck farms.

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Taman Ahimsa: Hidden Garden by the Sea

[Peter Rigby](#)

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On arrival, guests are met by beaming staff and seated at the communal dining table. A butler shimmers in and plucks up your bags while you are treated to a refreshing coconut drink and bedecked in frangipani leis. Relaxation mode clicks in rather rapidly in this little corner of Canggu.

At first we were a little surprised to find we were the only guests, but soon realized that that's the way it's supposed to be. The entire property, on a sprawling 4500 sqm of land, is usually booked out by the night (starting at \$1750 in the low season), and is specifically designed for groups to get together in an intimate setting.

Taman Ahimsa, which translates as 'garden of peace', consists of seven bedrooms. There's five separate bedroom "huts," scattered around a fragrant tropical garden, and two upstairs bedrooms with bamboo balconies with sweeping views out of the pool, palms and Bali Sea.

We were treated to the master bedroom, Manipura, the pride of the property. With its high vaulted ceilings, golden décor, ethnic Indonesian art, and luxuriously draped 2.3-metre-wide bed – ideal for honeymooners. That was one seriously big bed: I was convinced I saw the curve of the earth across the sheets – at least I think that's what it was.

All the bedrooms, designed to resemble boat hulls and sea shells, are air-conditioned and furnished with canopied king size beds, gamelan instruments, ornate fabrics, fitted wardrobes, writing desk, safe deposit box and private terrace. Each boasts its own butler, so Jeeves is close at hand.

Our semi-outdoor bathroom was a delight, featuring huge hollowed out river-rock tubs, river-rock basins, rain showers, slate paved floors and bamboo ceilings. There's always something liberating and earthy about showering and bathing in the open.

Venturing over to the sea-side pool, I stretched out in one of two day-bed gazebos just metres from the shore, and soon found myself in the Land of Nod. I was gently roused an hour or two later by a warm zephyr wafting in off the Bali Sea, and an attentive staff member delivering another drink to the 'boudoir'.

Offering privacy as well as inclusiveness with the attractive pool entertaining area and communal dining and living areas, the Villa is an ideal retreat for large family get togethers, small wedding parties, or corporate gatherings. Collectively the Villa offers great value per guest when divided among singles or couples.

There is a seasoned chef on the premises, ready to cater to most culinary whims, though on our one night at the Villa we chose to venture out to the nearest restaurant. This turned out to be more of an adventure than we'd anticipated.

Though we were just a gull's squawk from Echo Beach's praiseworthy eateries (a kilometre or two south along the beach), the winding cab drive loops back inland, then back to the coast and takes an arduous 20 minutes, a bit like going via Cape Horn. Moreover, due to what appears to be cabbie turf wars raging in the Canggu vicinity, we found ourselves having to traipse the last 500 metres towards our barbecued tuna platter, because our driver was too petrified to encroach on rival territory.

Getting home presented a similar scenario. This time we were forced to walk a kilometre from where we ate in order to meet our tremulous captain, now cowering even further afield, and terrified of rolling across an even wider cabbie cosa nostra no-go zone. We would therefore suggest using the Villa driver if heading off to Echo Beach for dinner, or perhaps take a bracing midday stroll down the beach for lunch – you'll get there in a third the time.

Following a hearty breakfast the next morning at the communal dining table we decided to explore the surrounding area. We strolled north up the beach and through the ruins of a former resort (many such places got hit by the deep Asian recession a decade ago, and have been reclaimed by the jungle and sea), and visited a lovely ocean side Hindu temple a little further on.

We later jumped on a couple of the villa tread lies and cycled to the village. This was a highlight of our visit. It was a chance to smile and nod with friendly locals, watch the hundreds of ducks waddling and quacking in on the rice fields, and visit the concession stands and little shops in the village. It was a fun outing in quintessential rural Bali, before returning to the serenity of the Villa and cool plunge in the pool.

Taman Ahimsa also boasts a range of excellent specialist massage and spa treatments. Local items of interest include the renowned Tanah Lot temple just 8kms up the beach to the north, and the nearby Nirwana Golf Course, one of the finest on the island. Then, of course, there is always the beach and waves directly in front of the villa, the perfect playground for bathers, surfers and beach combers.

With its isolated location, lush tropical gardens, attentive staff and laid-back atmosphere, the villa was a charming reminder of how peaceful, yet luxurious, rural Bali can be for the visitor.

There's always the madding crowd, boutiques and bars of Seminyak just down the road; but during our visit we were quite content to simply lounge and linger in the peace and tranquility that Taman Ahimsa does so well.

For further details or to make a booking visit www.taman-ahimsa.com

<http://www.thestarfish.com.au/taman-ahimsa-hidden-garden-by-the-sea/>