



Left: Fivelements is an award-winning eco-conscious wellness retreat in Ubud. Right: Cola Larcombe (front) practises meditation.



I make a stop for supplies at healthfood store Bali Buda and over a jackfruit sandwich, learn how they've been integral in spearheading the organic movement and about their support of the Recycling Eco Bali project, an initiative to develop sustainable solutions for waste management.

To consume more consciously and take sustainable action seems to be a thread throughout Bali. There is an encouraging international business community here that is clearly awake. As well as the sustainable practices undertaken on new developments across Bali, it seems the traveller is being made aware of their impact, too – with messages to conserve power and water, to keep Bali clean and plastic-free. All the while the Balinese stay peacefully protective and rooted in their devotion, despite the effects of expansion, climate change and the impending crisis of pollution in the seas and landfills.

Canggu – Samadi Bali

Sharing these values is Samadi Bali, my hub for the next week – a wellbeing oasis for alternative health and healing in Canggu. With arty accommodation for retreats and stays, it's the perfect location to have a reunion with my yoga training group and we take reign over the lush grounds, pool rooms and rice field apartments, to immerse in our daily *sadhana*, or devotional practice. Samadi's signature café, Samadi Kitchen, makes juices straight out of their garden and a statement studio is perched above a pond where regulars flock for Mysore-style yoga, workshops and weekend markets in the leafy courtyard.

Coming to the end of my time at Samada Bali I reflect on the importance of yoga as my therapy. With deep respect to its lineage, my time here has pleasantly turned out to be a rather freeing self-study. I have relished this time to travel and practice in one of yoga's sacred sites.

I'm drifting from my mat up to bamboo heaven – away from the urban yoga studios of Auckland to an outdoor shala in Bali, where islands rumble in warm Indonesian seas.

As I lay contemplating the first yoga sutra – chapter one in master Patanjali's ancient text to living– which in essence is to 'arrive where you are' – I think "so far so good". There are how many chapters?

After a direct flight from Auckland and my yoga session at The Practice – I'm feeling ready to take on this ride, just like the surfers down the road at Echo Beach.

People say when you come to Bali, it offers a new discovery every time. It brings you to the present and immerses you in the experience. So much is said about Bali that my excitement had been building to return to this 'Island of the Gods'.

In the Batu Bolong district of Canggu, a couple of neighbourhoods away from dressy sister Seminyak on the West Coast, I watch as locals go about their rituals and business in centuries-old Hindu temples and radiant green rice terraces. Here, traditional Balinese lifestyle keeps rhythm with the svelte travellers who've unrolled their mat to stay, populating the cafés to work and studios to stretch, while expat shop owners rest in their compounds, embracing nirvana in South East Asia.

In the neighbourhood
Good's pick of favourite Bali spots.



Samadi Bali
Unique accommodation space for holistic body treatments.

Samadibali.com



The Practice
Epic venue and world class teachers of tantra hatha yoga.

theppracticebali.com



The Slow
Stylish retreat for pared-back dining and accommodation.

theslow.id



WE-AR
Yoga and off-duty wear in both Canggu and Auckland stores.

we-ar.com

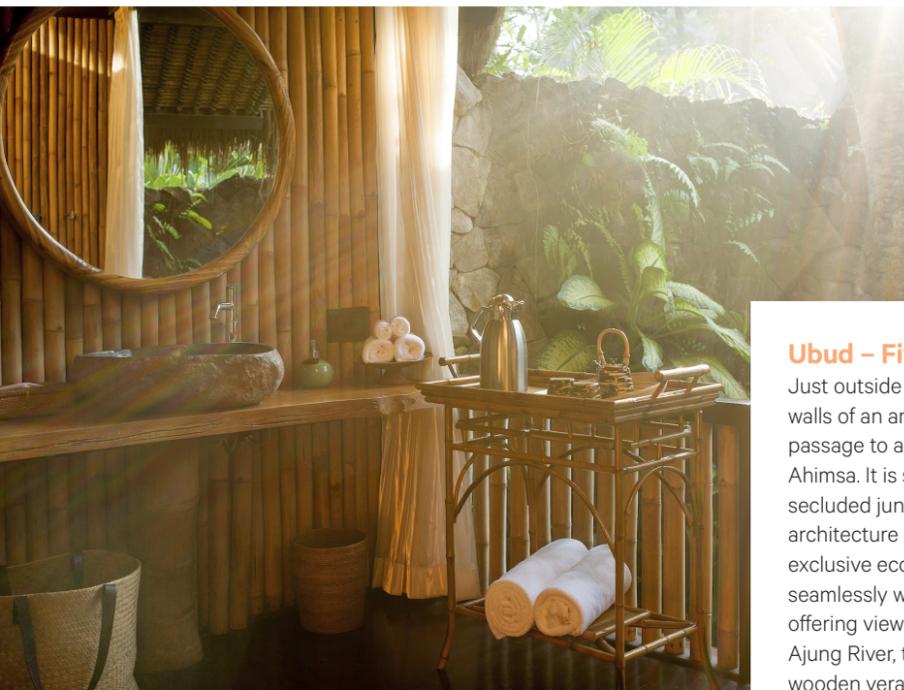
Good eats
The Common (great vegan burrito), Nalu Bowls and Gaya Gelato along Echo Beach road. For dinner try Dandelion, Gypsy Kitchen, Milk & Madu and Milu in Berawa, and Nook in Umalas.

WELLNESS

Bali rising

It's more than just a holiday destination, it's a place where spirituality pervades. Good taps into the wellbeing secrets of this Indonesian island.

Words Cola Larcombe



fivelements.org/en

Ubud – Fivelements

Just outside Ubud, we are quietly weaving between the stone walls of an ancient town wrapped around a holy spring. I am on a passage to a promised healing journey with Fivelements, Puri Ahimsa. It is striking and incredibly still as you enter a beautiful secluded jungle clearing through impressive high bamboo architecture and into this award-winning wellness sanctuary. Nine exclusive eco-luxe suites have been masterfully designed and fit seamlessly with the natural surroundings to form a healing village, offering views out to lush green forests, waterfalls, and the winding Ajung River, taken in from the privacy of your own overhanging wooden verandah and volcanic stone bath. The resort also

features the spectacular Sakti Dining Room, dedicated to high-energy plant-based cuisine, tranquil riverside treatment rooms, a large rock pool and a heated 'Watsu' therapy pool, while Sacred Spaces – connected along eight major energy lines – are used for meditation, ceremonies and blessings.

There is a menu of custom-made healing programmes, with signature retreat therapies like Balinese massage, acupuncture, and chakra balancing, as well as a living foods nutrition plan, culinary courses and sacred arts practices. My fire blessing ceremony, chanting and philosophy lesson with a local Tantra priest is exquisite.

There is a silent mantra here – love in action – and the goal at Fivelements is to form a positive outlook – of what you are, see, say, taste, touch and smell - that elevates your mind and brings peaceful transformation. The purpose of the mind is not desire – after the massages and beauty rituals given by expert loving staff, you're left to soak in blissful botanical

baths of local flowers, grasses, fruits and salts. The beauty of the flowers helps release our own thoughts and desires, by carrying them away, leading us to peace and stillness – a practice where the strongest *vritti*, or distractions, becomes the flower of the mind, to release to the divine ocean.

These activations are strong and balancing and after the rejuvenation you get to regroup and relax back in your own private resort grounds space, surrounded by the jungle. The effect is a very gentle yet powerful feeling of nature holding presence – a humbling moment. After three days I leave with these experiences and reminders of how to fully practice life.

Clockwise from above: Tranquil bathroom at Fivelements; traditional Balinese cleansing ceremony; The Matahari shala at Samadi Bali



For the bucket list

Bali locals share their favourite places and things to do.



"Snorkelling Menjangan Island, lush gardens of Jeda Villas Pemuteran, old school Bali in the north west" *Katy Carter from Hamsa Yoga*



"Sideman and temple Besakhi at the foot of the volcano, also the pyramids of chi in Ubud" *Danica from Bikes & Bends*



"Komune on Keramas Beach with its famous right-hand surf break" *Tearn & Co*

Photography RISE Yoga Immersion risemovement.com; Wonderful Nature / Shutterstock.com

Stay a while

Stays in Uluwatu on 'the Bukit' peninsula on Booking.com



Dreamsea Bali
Beautifully styled villas and sun terrace in an unbeatable setting, near Uluwatu temple.



Gravity
Retreat to the hills for boutique thatched roof bungalows surrounded by tropical gardens.



Bulgari
Premier Med-style, with a private beach, reached via a spectacular inclinator.



Hidden Hills
Spacious themed villas and ocean views near Nusa Dua and Jimbaran areas.



Anantara
Oceanfront suites. Visit Hindu temple, Pura Luhur and Garuda Wisnu Kencana cultural park.

To find these places and more. Booking.com

The state of yoga
"To be in a state of yoga is to see the universe as alive and dancing with patterns of vibration that are ultimately the same vibrations as you. Bali amplifies that and coaxes you to know yourself through direct experience – with potent agility. There's nowhere to hide here, even when 'retreating' (really, advancing). Mama Bali reveals yourself through herself, starting with all the myriad of ways that seemingly assault your senses when you arrive – the noise of traffic paralleled with ceremonial chimes, the open sewers engulfed with sweet frangipani, and the juxtaposition of burning waste next to lush verdant rice fields. It's a place full of sense objects waiting for you to refine your own sensing of all the forms of yourself. And in that, find beauty and pristine clarity in exactly everything you are, all that you couldn't quite see until Bali revealed it." *Adele Kinghan, Rise Yoga.*

Uluwatu – Suarga Padang Padang

Conscious travellers to Bali are seeking out smaller upscale sustainable resorts, such as Suarga Padang Padang, set along Bali's evocative southern peninsula.

The story of Suarga is one of a labour of love by a Flemish family, their inspired project stretching to near-on a decade. The environmentally committed boutique resort is situated on the clifftops overlooking Padang Padang and features 36 distinctive rooms, pavilions and villas. It offers all the needed luxuries, while promoting social-environmental awareness and minimal environmental impact. A registered applicant of the Forest Stewardship Council, Suarga Padang Padang is predominantly built using repurposed materials selected to endure as a living legacy, preserving the archipelago's cultural heritage. Teakwood dismantled from Borneo's Bank of Indonesia and East Java's colonial Dutch hospital has been masterly crafted into walls and shutters. The plastic-free resort applies renewable power in combination with low-energy consumption technology: solar panels produce more than enough power and many rooms feature a low energy, air-conditioned system alongside teak shutters allowing natural breezes. The heart of the resort can be found at Suarga's signature restaurant, Dugong, a semi-open bamboo structure. With its low-carbon footprint mindset and pared back bliss, this is sustainable luxury.

Final pose

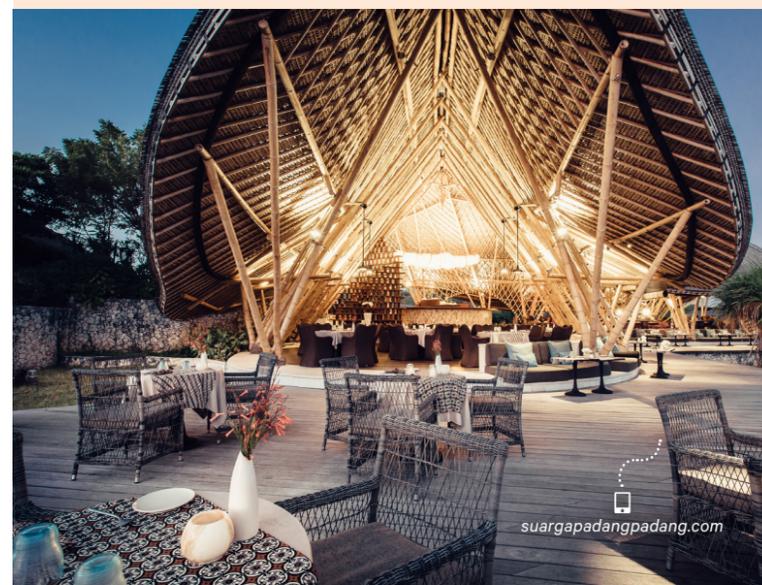
Up the sparkly stretch of coast from Padang Padang, I'm at Mû Bungalows Boutique Resort for a morning class at the invitation of a new friend. Our helmets are waiting on the bikes we rode in on, and soon we'll be carving back along a sandy, bumpy road above beautiful Bingin Beach, where we find breakfast down some rocky stairs at a white-washed bungalow bar on the sand. It's a great chapter to end my time in Bali.

It's strong nature waking you up in Bali. You can understand the Balinese devotion to it – the intensity and peace it brings.

Maybe it's my upbringing in Cape Town and connection to contrast and possibility; or maybe it's the water blessings and fire ceremonies that have washed the old away. With all its splendour, this place has been an inward journey. It has reminded me to show mercy and to honour what binds me to the here and now, to what matters.

I had secretly been hoping not to have an 'eat, pray, love moment' returning to Bali. I thought I'd had enough time with Kali, Goddess slayer, bringer of radical rebirth, and was quite content at the moment, thank you. But you can't immerse yourself in yoga and Bali and not expect this Devi (mother) to flip you. For me, the takeaway was being back in love with the beating energy, ironies and beauty of this world, and my wild embodiment of it. Bali blew the hinges off my soul. **g**

Thanks to the wonderful hosts at *Samadi Bali, Fivelements and Suarga Padang Padang*. To read more, see good.net.nz/travel.



suargapadangpadang.com