

# THE AUSTRALIAN – VILLA RAMADEWA

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The screenshot shows the top of a news article on The Australian website. At the top left is the logo 'THE AUSTRALIAN' with 'LOG IN' and 'SIGN UP' buttons. Below it is the word 'TRAVEL' in large blue letters. A navigation bar includes 'NEWS OPINION BUSINESS REVIEW NATIONAL AFFAIRS SPORT TECHNOLOGY ARTS EXEC LIVING TRAVEL HIGHER ED MEDIA 50 YEARS'. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with 'WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE | WISH MAGAZINE | THE DEAL MAGAZINE | REVIEW MAGAZINE | EXEC LIVING | TRAVEL'. The main headline is 'Home for the holidays in Bali' with the sub-headline 'THE AUSTRALIAN | DECEMBER 06, 2014 12:00AM' and a 'SAVE' button. The author's name 'Susan Kurosawa' is listed as 'Travel Columnist Sydney' next to her profile picture. To the left of the main image is a 'SHARE' section with icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and YouTube, and a '21 SHARES' counter. The main image shows a large, modern villa with a swimming pool and a thatched roof. Below the image is the caption 'The pool, Villa Ramadewa. Picture: Chris Leggett Source: Supplied'. To the right of the main image is a 'IN TRAVEL' section with two sub-articles: 'Home for the holidays' by Susan Kurosawa, 'A VILLA in Bali is the ultimate dropout zone.', and 'With the birds and baboons' by Kevin Rushby, 'AN adventurous trek deep into South Africa's Drakensberg.'. At the bottom right is a section titled 'What lies beyond'.

## Home for the holidays in Bali

THE AUSTRALIAN

DECEMBER 06, 2014 12:00AM

Travel Columnist

Sydney

*BEAM me back, please, to Villa Ramadewa. Close my eyes and I am there, with fresh and foamy pineapple juice for breakfast and a splendid nasi goreng and lively sambal relish on the side.*

The delightful manager, Dewa, is asking what plans we have today. Would we like a car and driver to go shopping? Dining recommendations? Directions to local attractions? Perhaps a walk along surfy Petitenget Beach, a mere five minutes away, over the road and down the way. Then, sensing that we have lost the ability to make rational decisions, he quietly hands across the lunch menu and

makes sure the pool towels are properly furled and ready, each with a frangipani flower positioned on top, like little brooches.



Alfresco dining, Villa Ramadewa, Seminyak, Bali.  
Pictures: Chris Leggett *Source: Supplied*

He has surmised that we just want to stay put, and he is right. This three-bedroom oasis along the Lakshmana Villas estate laneway (boom-gated and guarded) in Legian, close to the bar and restaurant beat of busy Seminyak, has become our own private Bali for four days. Although we do venture out for the obligatory sunset-viewing martinis at Ku De Ta and have a slap-up dinner at the always reliable Mama San, it's the shiny blue 17m-long pool; the lawned gardens thick with stands of golden bamboo, breadfruit and frangipani trees and the punchy colours of bougainvillea; and the cool interior spaces of Villa Ramadewa that entice us back. Planned expeditions evaporate, sightseeing is cut short; exiting the laneway feels like popping out of a funnel, blinking and disoriented, into an altogether different universe. It's as if the villa has a magnetic force field we simply can't resist.



There are many hundreds of villas in Bali and it's no easy matter to make the right choice. We have rented before with Prestige Bali Villas, now integrated with Elite Havens and with three times the inventory, and Villa Ramadewa is one of this expanded group's key properties. Your checklist should of course start with location but if, like us, you are planning a house party, considerations must include layout, size of pool and distance from the neighbours. At Villa Ramadewa, there are two near-identical ensuite doubles downstairs (step onto the lawn, past the daybeds and into the pool) and a master suite above with a presidential-worthy office and furnished balcony. You could toss a coin to see who scores the biggest spread but I warrant no one could possibly be unhappy lodging on the lower level.



A long, covered breezeway connects this accommodation block to the kitchen and there's a small gym and lounging terrace above. Tall stone walls surround the villa so there is the feel of a snug compound. Few vehicles trundle along the slender laneway and we have merrily scampering

squirrels and flitting Java finches for company. One evening we hear fireworks, including a terrific cacophony of bungers, and there's the occasional whoop of joy and big splashes from pool-playing children next door, but who could blame them? We are childish, too. We have discovered an ABBA compilation loaded on the music system and croon like loons into the night.

That kitchen is a mere ornamentation as far as guests are concerned, as full-time staff whip up meals on demand from menus of surprising scope. There's even pea and chorizo soup and lamb cutlets with fresh mint sauce. It feels as if we are sleeping beside a restaurant. The remarkable chef Komang's burgers appear at any old hour as if in a puff of magic. The Vietnamese ricepaper rolls bulge with herby goodness. A local spa dispatches therapists for massages by the pool or in the air-conditioned guestrooms. "Please relax, madam," whispers the firm-fingered Ayu, "you have computer shoulder. Too much hard!"

We lose track of time, can't be bothered locating our watches or iPhones and realise we don't know if it's Monday, Sunday or anywhere in between. There are televisions in all the sleeping quarters, apparently with 50 channels, but none of us is interested. The real world is out there somewhere, beyond this holiday bubble.

Dewa just smiles knowingly at our idleness and, according to their shifts, dispatches butlers Putu, Adi and Made to bring more Bintang beers and squeezed juices. The dining table, always set with flowers, sits above one end of the pool on a Javanese joglo, or covered platform, with intricately carved ceiling and posts and ironwood shingled roof. There are even espressos on call, served in tiny fired-clay cups, and these jolts of caffeine become de rigueur to wake us out of a tropical coma.

Villa Ramadewa was built a decade ago by a London doctor who has been quoted as saying he wanted a holiday home that would seamlessly incorporate modern design with traditional Balinese principles such as alang-alang thatched roofs. He commissioned an Ubud-based architect, Joost van Grieken, and the result is almost a homage to Sri Lanka's Geoffrey Bawa, credited as pioneering the indoor-outdoor integration of tropical living spaces. It's all colonnades and unadorned facades, water channels, connected pavilions, pink coralstone walls and, of course, that centrepiece courtyard around which all else revolves.

Columns are of polished coconut wood; teak and rattan furniture was custom-made according to van Grieken's design; water jars have been repurposed as gently spouting fountains. Individual decor items span the Indonesian archipelago and often are featured, gallery-style, in wall niches. I take myself on a casual tour of the artwork, from monumental garden statuary to beautifully crafted vases holding stalky sprays of sweet tuberose. I prop a frangipani behind my ear and then it's time to go and lie down again.

### **Checklist**

Rates at Villa Ramadewa start from \$US795 (\$940) a night plus taxes in low season for six people, including breakfasts and airport transfers; chauffeured private sightseeing is available at good rates and there are substantial discounts for longer stays. Elite Havens has a wide selection of villas in Bali, from one-bedroom retreats to nine-bedroom party pads.

More: [www.elitehavens.com](http://www.elitehavens.com) ; [www.villaramadewa.com](http://www.villaramadewa.com)

## **AROUND AND ABOUT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

- The two-storey pavilion-style and open-sided La Lucciola restaurant and lounge bar overlooks Petitenget Beach and is a stroll from Villa Ramadewa; it's a lovely spot for brunch or lunch, with views across a coconut grove to the ocean from the upstairs level. Do try a granita in flavours such as tangerine and pineapple or lychee and lime or a dish of coconut gelato.
- At the end of the Lakshmana Villas estate laneway, just to the left as you face Petitenget Beach, is Satunama, a small store selling homewares such as resin pineapples in colour combos of the likes of punk pink with white topknots, recycled teak bowls and cushion covers screen-printed in designs of skulls, hibiscus blooms and tropical fruit. Venture to the right for more homewares and clothing shops, some housed in faux beach huts.
- The Bodyworks spa chain has branches galore but the closest to Villa Ramadewa is on Jalan Kayu Jati, where the menu includes a nourishing hair treatment (from about \$25 for an hour) and a variety of massage styles from about \$45 for 90 minutes.
- Australian designer Penny Pinkster's Mist clothing shops are in several locales in Bali, including an outlet a few doors up from Bodyworks. Pinkster's resort range is floaty and feminine, in pastel-printed cotton and lawn, often with decorative trims and ties.

*Susan Kurosawa*