

EXPAT LIVING

VILLA SAN & THE CHALINA ESTATE

June 2012

TRAVEL

COUNTRY & COAST

A tale of two villas

Longtime *Expat Living* reader PATRICK ELGAR reviews a pair of villas in Bali. His verdict? Divide your time between two regions to maximise the visit!

I have been travelling to Bali for almost 15 years now and it maintains the same mystique and intrigue that I experienced on my first trip.

Granted, things have changed considerably in my short experience of this special island – development is rapid in places – but it still offers that wonderful mixture of spirituality, culture, creative cuisine, relaxation, nature and stunning scenery.

An ideal stay in Bali is probably a week, but if, like me, you have limited holiday leave, a long weekend or four-day break can be almost as rejuvenating.

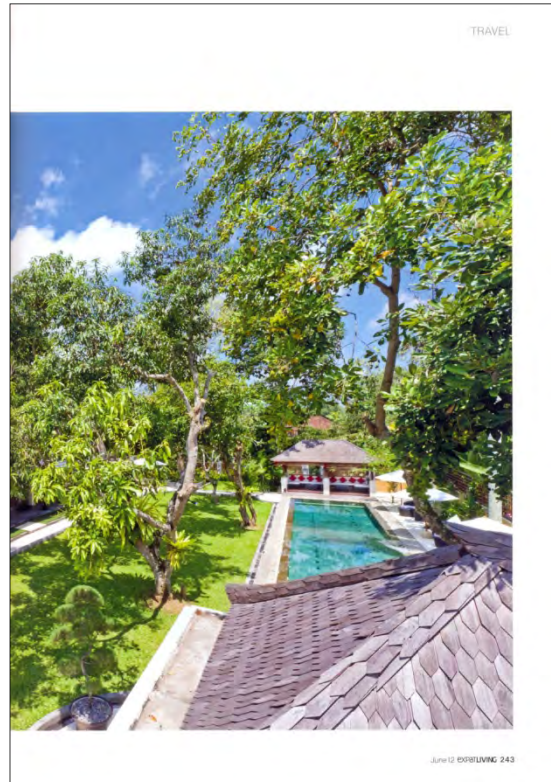
I would recommend splitting time between the area that includes Legian and Seminyak, and Ubud in the interior. By living up two separate villa stays, it allows you to maximise your time in those areas without extensive time in the car.

We started in **Ubud** on this visit, where Villa San provided a perfect central base. It is ideally located – just a short walk to top-class restaurants, 300 metres to the Royal Palace and not much further to the main shopping market.

This location means you can punctuate more distant visits to rice-paddy terraces (think *Eat, Pray, Love!*), coffee and spice farms, art galleries or white-water rafting with a nearby dance performance, an exploration of the palace, great food and awesome bargain hunting in the market.




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TRAVEL



And when you want to relax, Villa San provides a personal butler, a chef and a team of staff. We found them to be always welcoming and ready to serve with a smile.

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For the second part of our stay, we chose **Canggu**, a beach area north of Seminyak on the island's west coast. Our accommodation was the absolutely stunning Villa Chalina. Situated next to lush rolling rice terraces, with outstanding scenery, the villa is only a 15-minute drive to most major attractions, so it's a great place to be based, as well as having that "wow" factor.

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The estate has a number of private and communal areas, so a large group would still be able to split up into smaller groups and find their own space if required, ideal for large family vacations. The chef is fantastic and each pavilion has a personal butler. With masseurs and babysitters available upon request, there is no chance of ever feeling bored here.

We took a short drive to world-famous Echo Beach and it was well worth the trip to watch surfers gliding past treacherous reefs while feasting on a barbecue dinner at sunset.

Equally close – and also great as the sun goes down – is the amazing cliff-top temple of Tanah Lot, with a superb shopping market nearby. There's also golf for those who are keen, and of course the draw of top restaurants, quality shops and spas in Seminyak and Legian.



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Despite all this, it was actually quite tough for us to leave Villa Chalina as we were so comfortable there. It's a place we will definitely return to and we recommend it to anyone planning a Bali break. To be able to chill by a huge private pool while your choice of cuisine is prepared according to your schedule makes for an exceptional holiday.

Both villas offered a car with driver for convenience. We have been using our trusted and friendly driver Agus (+62 812 3774269) for over six years and he is great at tailoring the best sightseeing day, recommending places to visit and venues to eat, and even assisting with tough bargaining.

I think a villa experience is truly the best way to experience Bali and, if time permits, a whole week at each villa would be the way to make the most of your stay. It's a brilliant change from a hotel stay and everyone gets to be pampered with personalised service and attention.

Recommendations: Ubud

Stay

Villa San | www.villasanbali.com
Six bedrooms, capacity 12 people, private pool, gym, entertainment room

See

The Royal Palace, the central market, the Monkey Forest, Goa Gajah Elephant Cave, art galleries, jewellery workshops, cultural dances, rice terraces, temples

Recommendations: Canggu

Stay

Villa Chalina | www.chalinavillaestate.com
Seven bedrooms, capacity 14 people, private pool, large family area, entertainment room

See

Echo Beach (2km), Tanah Lot temple (8km), markets, casual restaurants, horse riding, Canggu Club for tennis and other sports; Seminyak (10km) is full of quality shops, stylish restaurants, chic bars and spas

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