



Spa Catcher

Valley, Paddy, Spa

Two new resort spas in Bali's picturesque Ubud region register on Hanna Rodian's 'spa-dar.'

Uma Ubud: Valley Views

On entering **Uma Ubud**, a Shambhala Retreat which opened this July, visitors are greeted by three stone monoliths from Flores, with glimpses of the infinity pool, yoga studio and bar beyond. Avoiding the now overdone minimalist design, apart from the uncluttered, bare walls in the rooms, Japanese designer Koichiro Ikebuchi had added some distinctly cosy touches - muslin curtains with lace cut work, 'Venetian' mirrors, totally whitewashed furniture, and unusual lamps both inside and out.

The reasonably priced Terrace Rooms are not particularly spacious and offer little privacy, but they are light and airy with views through the greenery over the river gorge far below. For a few dollars more, the Garden Rooms are refreshingly different and have a Sri Lankan feel about them. Entering a small courtyard with stepping stones through a fish pond, I opened all the floor-length plantation shutters and found a totally unexpected black terrazzo bathroom with a muslin-canopied bathtub on one side and a pale beige and white bedroom on the other. Utterly hooked on the Shambhala 'At Home' soap since staying at Bangkok's Metropolitan, I took advantage of the same quality body products here.

A focal point of any Shambhala Retreat property is the spa. Uma Ubud has four treatment and steam rooms, a sauna, and an open meditation pavilion overlooking the gorge. The ayurvedic massages, cleansing baths and healing reflexology treatments are arguably the best in town, yet less expensive than treatments available at many of Ubud's other spas.

It is also possible to 'spa out,' and if you feel extremely energetic, leave early for a five-hour guided trek along the Ayung River to the famous Begawan Giri Estate and indulge in spa treatments at The Source, one of the world's most beautiful spas. Have lunch overlooking the Ayung River, before being driven back; totally blissed-out.

Not wanting to eat great hunks of meat and drink too many martinis with the expat crowd at Naughty Nuri's near Uma's entrance, and having heard great things about Australian chef Chris Miller, I went to the Kemiri (candlenut) restaurant for a very healthy, organic dinner. Raw foodies and vegetarians alike will be very pleased with the menu. I had a delicious Sweet Potato-Stuffed Peppers in Coconut Milk with Braised Carrots and Mustard Seeds with light Indian overtones, followed by a decadent Orange and Clove Crème Brûlée. Remember to drink lots of imported herbal teas here, because at USD 0.30 a go, they must be the cheapest Penelope Sach teas on offer at any hotel on the planet!



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Clockwise from top left: Yogic meditation at the Chedi Club; the bathroom garden room at Uma Ubud; and petagonal stepping stones are an example of the design detail at Uma Ubud

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Chedi Club: Calm Javanese Gentility

In 1978, one of Indonesia's most famous architects and interior designers, Hendra Hadiprana, began to buy land to create a sanctuary for his family to escape city life in Jakarta. Over the years, Tanah Gajah (literally translated as 'Land of the Elephants' because of the famous elephant temple Goa Gajah situated nearby), a very peaceful place, was developed by the family, who built all the halls, open pavilions and villas facing east to welcome the dawn. The five-hectare estate, carefully landscaped over time, with lakes and pools fed by small streams from the neighbouring rice fields, has matured beautifully, and is home to unusual plants, trees and birds from all over Indonesia.

Recently, after months of renovation, the Hadiprana family has opened up their private estate for guests of GHM hotels, their new management company. I stayed in one of the Chedi Club's spectacular Pool Villas here, furnished with Indonesian antiques and paintings from the extensive family collections. An interesting feature is a gas 'coal' fire to take away the chill on damp evenings in the rainy season. The stunning, pale terrazzo bathrooms have a garden bathtub surrounded by pools for floating candles every evening. A comfortable dining pavilion overlooks a 10-metre long private pool with sturdy bamboo gates opening directly onto the rice fields. Every villa has a personal butler for discreet pampering. Mine made sure that the complimentary mini-bar was always well stocked, the cushions plumped and fluffy towels folded.

All the gym, beauty salon and spa treatment rooms have breathtaking views of the rice fields, and as well as a Chedi range of signature treatments, three, five or seven day Spa Rituals are on offer. Complimentary yoga classes begin at 8 am every morning and my butler took me on a gentle two-minute walk through the rice fields to Goa Gajah, the home of some ancient Ganesha statues.

Spa fanatics should stay in one of the

Spa Villas to indulge in their own private treatment room, bake in the sauna, take a cold plunge in a large terrazzo tub and enjoy a huge 'rainforest' shower without even having to leave the villa!

My butler served complimentary afternoon tea at The Bird Lounge (next to a huge aviary full of tweeting creatures) and I wandered for what seemed like hours around the grounds until dinner time. The Restaurant serves Indonesian and Balinese dishes, and the Vietnamese-born Danish chef Nam Nguyen plans to plant a herb and vegetable garden with the help of one of Bali's foremost organic produce suppliers. At night, The Restaurant seems to float above the rice fields, fireflies dance round the open windows and candles in huge bronze candleholders flicker in the breeze.



Uma Ubud:

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Banjar Lungsiakan, Kedewatan (next to the Neka Museum), Ubud
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Website: uma.como.bz

The Chedi Club at Tanah Gajah:

Jalan Goa Gajah, Tengkulak Kaja, Ubud
Tel: +62 361 975 685
Email: legian@ghmhotels.com
Website: www.ghmhotels.com

Things to See and Do within Walking Distance of Uma Ubud:

Naughty Nuri's: Definitely not fine dining but a bit of fun, and full of expats tucking in to huge plates of spare ribs and swigging martinis. *Opp. Uma's gate*
Tel: 977 547, cash only, seldom closes.

Mosaic: Five minutes walk from Uma, this garden restaurant offers fine dining in a romantic setting. Sometimes the menu combinations tend to be a little 'retro' but the place does get rave reviews everywhere! Tel: 975 768, book a table. Closed on Mondays. All cards accepted.

Indus: Fresh, tasty, simply prepared food, best for a quiet shopping break at lunchtime. Tel: 977 684, all cards accepted.

Shopping: Walk up and down Jalan Sanggingan; and wander into artist's studios, galleries, and interior design shops.