



Wellness Retreats
with a difference
In Bali

by Rachael Oakes-Ash



Abodes in pristine valleys, or near cascading falls, and overlooking endless sandy beaches that meet blue, blue waters may not be enough for some wellness seekers.

Bali has long been a wellness destination. Artists, Yoga masters and surfers have flocked to the island's shores seeking solace, inspiration, time out and the healing qualities of water.

It's home to some of the world's best day spas, including the hillside delights of the globe's premium day spa, Kirana, with its private spa villas in rainforest setting. Decadent spas exist on rocks (Ritz Carlton) in the ocean or surrounded by carp-filled ponds (Sayan Spa, Four Seasons).

Retreats are held every week in Bali from intimate yoga retreats in private villas to detox weeks at Panchoran at Linda Garland's Estate. Whether you want colonic cleansing, spiritual realignment or pure buff and polish pampering you'll find it in Bali. Kids are catered for at Jiwa Spa at the Conrad, male-specific treatments at the Maya Ubud and Jari Menari offers healing hands in the privacy of your own villa.

We look at four wellness retreats with a difference in Bali.



Images from (left-right): Surf Goddess Retreats; Puri Ganesha; Puri Ganesha.

Surf Goddess Retreats

www.surfgoddessretreats.com

Surfers look healthy. It's all that 'hanging out the back' in 'the green room' praying to Huey, the surf god. Some spend hours riding the swell just waiting for a wave. The rhythm of the tide, the sun, and the wind all contribute to the meditative state that surfers experience.

Rejuvenation isn't always a sole experience. Camaraderie and the sharing of laughter and experience can lift well-worn spirits to a much needed level. This is where Surf Goddess Retreats come in, women hanging out with women who share a love of life.

The founder of Surf Goddess Retreats, Shellsea, first arrived in Bali in 1975 as a child and returned as an adult to set up Surf Goddess Retreats.

The Surf Goddess mantra goes, "A surf goddess smiles with her eyes, laughs from her belly, speaks from her heart, lives with abundance and kindness, loves to be pampered, is young at heart and wise beyond her years, is energetic, strong and supple, *peace-full*, accepting and loving, is inspired and inspiring and loves to surf!"



A week-long retreat at Surf Goddess combines learning to surf, Yoga, spa pampering and time out with like-minded souls in a soothing rice paddy villa known as "the Sanctuary" in Canggu. Novice surfers, women who haven't seen a surf board in their life, those who have yet to catch a wave, gather at The Sanctuary for a week of half-day private lessons with Bali's best, daily Yoga, a two-hour spa 'goddess glow' treatment and *Qigong*, spiritual full-moon ceremonies, turtle release, belly-dancing and surf safaris when appropriate.

Then there's the 'surf gods', local Balinese surfers at the Rip Curl School who instil a lifelong love of the *wabine* stroke in women new to the surfing world.

Add three organic wholesome meals a day prepared by the Sanctuary staff. Wheat, dairy and refined sugars are kept to a minimum, and flavour to a maximum. Fruit smoothies, market fresh fish and cacao raw chocolate are just a few of the rejuvenating delights. It's enough to make you start waxing that board.

Rates and dates: USD1,880 gets you all meals, accommodation in The Sanctuary villa at Canggu, daily surf instruction, daily Yoga, a

two-hour pampering session and six nights/seven days of fun. Surf Goddess retreats run twice a month from April 9 to November 26. See website for details.

Living Food Retreat at Puri Ganesha

www.puriganeshabali.com

Diana Von Cranach has created an oasis of wellness at her Puri Ganesha retreat on the northern coast of Bali. Favoured by celebrities and high-profile Europeans, Puri Ganesha is a thousand miles away from the frenetic life in the South of the Island. Von Cranach's four villas are an eclectic mix of ethnic style noted by Hip Hotels founder Herbert Ypma as one of the top twenty Hip Hotel hideaways in the world.

There's an emphasis on Balinese cuisine in Diana's famed kitchen. A trained *coron bleu* chef, she has embraced the Balinese flavours and spices, and pepper them in her gourmet dishes. The retreat sits on the coastline with the national marine park of Menjangan Island nearby. Puri Ganesha's cooking retreats are well-documented, but this year they come with a twist.



Images from Como Shambhala Estate (left); Puri Ganesha (right)

The inaugural Living Food Retreat at Puri Ganesha combines the talents of Daniel Aaron Horne who founded Vibrant Living Yoga with a gourmet living food and juice diet. Herbs, salads, fruit and vegetables from Bali's organic farms will cleanse internal souls while a mix of Asana, Vinyasa, Pranayama, meditation, music and humour in Daniel's daily Yoga practice will rejuvenate.

Daniel teaches the Art of Vibrant Living through personal choice, encouraging clients to discover what makes them shine and not to settle for less. It's all about being responsible for your experience on Earth and finding and following your dream. Through a creative blend of Yoga, Daniel helps those who are looking to choose radiance as a way of living.

Rates and dates:

June 24 – July 1, 2006 & November 25 – December 2, 2006
USD2,600 per person, 7-night accommodation, all meals and non-alcoholic drinks, 12 Yoga classes and transfers.

www.danielaaron.com

www.puriganeshabali.com

ON YOUR OWN

Nirarta Centre for Living Awareness

www.awareness-bali.com

For those seriously wanting to learn meditation, there's Nirarta, a retreat in the rice-filled river valley near the Balinese sacred mountain Gunung Agung. Founded by Peter Wrycza, this retreat is inspired by the Balinese concept of harmony between one's small world with the wider one around us.

It's not for the pampering princess. Serious inner work is done during the signature ten-day Nirarta Experience. Time is spent connecting with self during a five-day silence retreat of solitude and reflection. This time is spent alone. A fruit and water fast enhances the process.

Trained therapists, including Peter, spend two days prior to the five days of silence coaching and exploring patterns in the guests' lives that they would like to address. Following the five days, time is spent with the same therapists to look at future steps.



There's no modern media or technology to interfere with the process, accommodation is in riverside bungalows and villas. Food is semi-vegetarian. The emphasis is on simplicity and self and reconnecting at Nirarta.

Rates and dates: The Nirarta Experience is an individual one. So you can book for a time appropriate to you. The ten-day, eleven-night programme costs USD950 and is inclusive of all meals, accommodation and the guided retreat.

DOING IT IN STYLE COMO Shambhala Estate at Begawan Giri, Ubud

www.cse.comoshambhala.bz

Christina Ong's trademark style and attention to detail comes to Begawan Giri with the recently opened COMO Shambhala Estate. It's all about a personal journey in a stunning setting with all the creature comforts and more. Personal assistants are assigned to guests when they arrive to meet their every need and answer every query.

A holistic clinic offers Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine and the spa complex is all-zen in muted tones and clean lines designed to soothe the soul and

declutter the mind. Yoga, *Tai chi*, morning walks and other activities are held daily for all guests at CSE. Join in if you will. It's all optional and complimentary. Glow Restaurant serves up a delightful mix of gourmet health cuisine with an emphasis on organic, flavour and both Western and Eastern styles. Choose to dine in the restaurant, in your residence dining pavilion or in your own suite. Nothing is too much trouble.

The rainforest setting is home to The Source, a mineral spring of holy water used in treatments at CSE. Take the walk down to the spring for a dip but be prepared for the three hundred odd steps on the way back up.

Stay for three, five or seven nights on your own programme or nightly without it. Accommodation is truly inspiring with a unique feel to each of the five residences offering four accommodation choices in each. Fire, wind, earth and water are all represented. For the truly spa-conscious, book into the new spa suites and lay back.

Group retreats are held throughout the year from such visionaries as Dr Robert Thurman. Join like-minded folk for a five-star plus adventure.

Rates and dates: Three-, five- and seven-day individual programmes are inclusive of arrival consultation, routine check-up, massage, daily activities, complimentary use of steam rooms, sauna, hydrotherapy pool and lap pool, daily breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner. Rates start at USD1188 for single occupancy in a resident suite for a three-night program.

Special mention:

www.questforglobalhealing.org

Join Desmond Tutu, Walter Cronkite, May Lee and other Nobel Peace Laureates, high-profile speakers and concerned citizens of the world at the Quest for Global Healing conference in Ubud from May 3 – 8, 2006 at the ARMA Museum. 