

Experience

BALI, INDONESIA

Words

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Romantic Rendezvous

In need of a little R&R (one R for Romance) with your loved one? Here are two destinations that provide all the right ingredients for a truly romantic getaway.

WAROENG DJAMOE SPA, HOTEL TUGU BALI

It was the resort's description that hooked us: "The road to Tugu leads you to the heart and soul of Bali - where the wind whispers romantic tales of Balinese spirits, ancient kingdoms and eternal love stories."

Two weeks later, my beloved and I were standing at the entrance to Hotel Tugu Bali in the peaceful fishing village of Canggu, just 15 minutes from tourist-laden Seminyak on the island's south-west coast. It was a genuine case of love at first sight – the lotus ponds, wild gardens, labyrinth-like walkways and the astonishing art and antiques collection were indeed whispering to the parts of our souls that need to be nourished by beauty.

We were fascinated to learn that the hotel's Indonesian owner, Anhar Setjadibrata, has been collecting antiques since the 1960s and opened his chain of eight Tugu Hotels partly to house his enormous collection and share his passion for art. ('Tugu' translates as 'monument').

It's obvious that Setjadibrata is a true romantic. The stunning red and gold Puri Le Mayeur villa - the resort's honeymoon suite - was designed around the love story between famed Belgian painter Adrian Le Mayeur and his muse and wife, the legendary Balinese dancer Ni Polok.

Our own villa, although smaller and less grand, was absolutely gorgeous, with four-poster bed, beautiful bathroom with soothing water features, outdoor plunge pool and private garden leading to Canggu Beach, making us feel very special indeed.

We were invited to treat Hotel Tugu like our home, adding to our sense of being somewhere wondrous, and were delighted to

discover this invitation was genuine – we loved being able to eat late, take evening swims, enjoy midnight walks and wander around the resort at our whim. We were particularly taken with the charming custom of 'point where you wish' – you can point to any spot on a map of the grounds where you would like to dine and a divinely romantic setting for two will magically manifest!

SHARING THE SERENITY

We also loved the idea of synchronised Spa treatments and opted for the Pijitan Mantra Massage in the tranquil Kamar Mantra room. The resort's Waroeng Djamoé Spa has four kamar (chambers), all sublimely styled and subtly fragrant, along with an outdoor gubuk (hut) for massage and grooming.

The Spa focuses on treatments comprising both physical and spiritual elements, so you can achieve a complete surrendering of body and mind. The highly trained therapists also use ancient oil blends and elixirs formulated to draw out toxins and promote maximum serenity.

As our massages began, two female therapists softly chanted healing Eastern mantras in unison – a soothing and transporting start designed to improve wellbeing through our unconscious minds. For the next 90 minutes, our bodies were coated with virgin coconut oil that had been traditionally warmed with an aromatic selection of herbal natural roots and spices, then expertly massaged in a circular motion to remove all trace of tension. The rhythmic chanting was repeated regularly during the treatment, encouraging deep relaxation.

After the treatment, I glanced over at my partner, who wasn't so keen on the chanting part before the treatment began, but had obviously succumbed to its power - he was fast asleep! I whispered that it was time to wake up and he laughed at having drifted off. It was a fitting end to a unique shared experience and our deep sense of calm lasted for days.

Fast Facts

Why stay here? This is where romance was born. It has to be the ultimate destination for couples in need of a magical escape and is ideal for weddings and honeymoons. It's also home to one of the largest private art collections in Southeast Asia.

Why Spa here? The Spa rooms are exquisite, the therapists are first class and the ambience throughout the resort is totally blissful. It is also ideal for men who like the idea of Spa treatments, but prefer complete privacy.

Must-try treatment: The Pijitan Mantra Massage is perfect for couples. It's a deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience.

Must-do activity: A walk along Canggu Beach at sunset, before savouring an alfresco dinner by candlelight in one of Hotel Tugu's many private dining spots. We opted for the tropical hut perched above the wild lotus pond, which was gorgeous.

Take home: Open-heart chakras and a renewed sense of peace and love.

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Jalan Pantai Batu Bolong
Canggu Beach, Bali
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www.tuguhotels.com



Fast Facts

Why stay here: This is absolutely perfect for a romantic getaway, offering a wonderful sense of remoteness. Modern luxuries are at your fingertips and the heart of bustling Ubud is just a short bus ride away.

Why Spa here: The glorious rainforest setting, the soothing sounds of the fast-flowing river and the excellent selection of healing treatments for both sexes make Ayung Spa extra special!

Must-try treatment: Girls, go all-out with the 180-minute Ultimate Escape, which includes a massage, body scrub, flower bath and fab facial. Book your man in for the Men's Specialty, a rejuvenating treatment aimed at soothing away all his stresses.

Must-do activity: For the real romantics, book in for the Secret Romantic Dinner, swim among the treetops in the hotel's main pool, and visit the dedicated Love Nest at the beautiful botanic garden nearby.

Take home: A complete sense of peace and love!

Ubud Hanging Gardens
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AUNG SPA, UBUD HANGING GARDENS

As soon as Ubud's verdant valleys, hills and rice terraces come into view, all the tiredness built up during our flight and slow journey through Bali's peak-hour traffic starts to fade. By the time we've arrived at our destination, sipped on welcome drinks, taken the cable car down the thrillingly steep incline and opened the door to our exquisite villa, my partner and I are already beginning to feel revived.

Ubud Hanging Gardens is breathtakingly beautiful. Dramatically defying gravity, the resort's 38 villas, onsite restaurants, Spa and pool cascade 250 metres down the hillside to the Ayung River valley floor below. Descending into the valley instantly brings on that special feeling of getting away from it all, heightened by the fact that the villas are all designed for maximum exposure to the lush environment, while minimising contact with fellow guests.

We are here to relax and regroup, and it could not be a more perfect venue. The spectacular setting, the complete privacy of our villa - with its own infinity pool - and the magical calm provided by the rush of the river below all conspire to provide a true taste of romance, Bali style.

This corner of Bali is so wonderfully romantic that it comes as no surprise to discover that author Elizabeth Gilbert discovered love among Ubud's paddy fields. It's a fact not lost on the hotel, which offers an 'Eat, Pray, Love' package as homage, complete with a blessing ceremony at the nearby Holy Water Temple. The package includes the use of mountain bikes, so you can roam around à la Julia Roberts in the movie (an exhilarating experience, but take care on the narrow roads).

HANDS ON

Getting pampered at the hotel's Ayung Spa is another exhilarating experience we both want to indulge in. Comprising three open pavilions set on the riverbank, with rainforest views and nearby waterfalls, this beautiful Spa boasts a range of locally produced potions made from fruits and spices.

We are in the double therapy area, a spacious oasis filled with the invigorating aroma of fresh lemongrass. My partner opts for the Vanilla & Peppermint massage oil, designed to cool the body, while I'm attracted to the soothing mix of Lavender & Ylang Ylang. We have both requested the Revitalizing Ayung Massage, which follows energy channels running through the body to "tune your energy, ease away blockages and replenish your own self with a renewed vitality".

Our two petite, yet strong and gifted, masseuses both work hard and I quickly feel the knots in my neck, shoulders and legs fade away. My partner says his back hasn't felt so free of tension in months. Listening to the flow of natural waterways and inhaling the scent of our chosen massage oils has a uniquely transporting effect. The sound of birds and the occasional monkey call add to the overwhelming sense of being at one with the rainforest, and we both feel completely blissed by the end of our 75 minutes.

We drift back to our villa and can't resist the temptation of an afternoon nap. An hour later, we're both feeling fresh, fabulous and ready to try something sensational at the hotel's renowned Beduur Restaurant, serving French-inspired food at its finest, with delicious drinks and rainforest views to match.

For us, Ubud Hanging Gardens proves to be a case of Eat, Stay, Absolutely Fall in Love. 🌿