

Holistic Escape

Satisfying your craving for an adventure and balancing that with a wealth of wellness experiences is Naya's newest private retreat Writer Danielle Parla

BAUSUMISE IN THE RICE FIELDS/THINKSTOCK

Bali captured my heart more than ten years ago and since then she has beckoned me back to her shores to renew our love affair more than once. As I board my flight from Switzerland, I gleefully exchange my daily responsibilities with the warmth of the tropics and a chance to explore a side of this beautiful island in Indonesia that is completely new to me – adventure.

Lucky for me, Naya (meaning ‘new beginnings’ in Sanskrit) has invited me to experience the newest of their five private retreats and it looks like the perfect balance between wellness and adventure. Naya opened in November 2013 and is situated in Sayan Village on the edge of Ubud – the pulsing spiritual heart of Bali. Adventure is on the menu, but no visit to Bali would be complete without a Balinese healing

massage, yoga and time for quiet reflection – and I am delighted to see the retreat beautifully weaves them all in.

DAY 1

Stepping off the plane in Denpasar, I am welcomed to Bali by Naya’s driver and the kiss of heat and humidity as we set off on the 1.5-hour drive to Ubud. It is 6pm and 31 degrees Celsius as I relax in the back seat of the air-conditioned car and observe the changes in the landscape since my last visit.

As I step into Naya’s softly lit open-air lounge and reception, I am warmly greeted and take in the ambience as I sip my chilled tea welcome drink. The space is enchanting with hanging pendant lanterns, a large daybed swing and an inviting pool in the area beyond. I am escorted along the lush garden path to my beautiful suite to a chorus



THIS PAGE: One of the suites at Naya. OPPOSITE PAGE: The retreat offers an ideal environment for those wishing to reconnect with nature; Naya’s pool. OPENING PAGE: Beautiful sunrise over Bali’s rice fields



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of frogs that sounds as happy as I am to be here. My suite is one of three private retreat suites located within Naya’s primary retreat space, however, guests wishing for more privacy have the option of staying off site at Villa Naya.

Located 100 metres up the lane, Villa Naya is set amidst rice fields and is comprised of two bungalows containing a private yoga shala, bedroom, two bathrooms and an outdoor dining area. If I was travelling with my husband, I would relish the seclusion in this intimate space with private swimming pool; however, I welcome the possibility of being social (if I want it) in the primary retreat space.

I am utterly famished as I sit down to an ambitious three-course dinner of pumpkin coconut soup, nasi goreng and black rice pudding that I eat to the soul-soothing sounds of a water fountain supported by the distinctive background vocals of the resident geckos. With amazing foresight from my hosts, I am escorted to the Naya Spa for a 60-minute Balinese massage that irons out my flight-induced stiffness and sends me off to bed in a perfectly relaxed dreamy state.

DAY 2

I wake early grateful that I am not feeling the effects of jet lag and take in my room and surroundings. My room has a thatched roof and whitewashed teak wood interior walls and canopy bed frame that gives it a distinctive air of romance. The sunken outdoor bathroom has a large natural stone Balinese terrazzo bathtub and separate rain shower surrounded by small river stones interspersed by a path of large stepping-stones.

I order a fresh papaya juice and head to

the yoga shala for a private kundalini yoga class with Naya's owner Rebecca Plaum. Plaum is passionate about kundalini yoga and I understand her enthusiasm as I feel my back readjusting with an orchestra of snaps and crackles as mantra fills the air. The large open-air yoga shala is simply exquisite from its raised vantage overlooking a stream and bamboo forest that rustles in the breeze.

As my body adjusts to the heat, I choose to go light with a green smoothie and fresh root vegetable salad for brunch by the pool before heading off on my first adventure to one of Bali's most famous temples, Tirta Empul Holy Water Temple near Tampaksiring. Built in 962 AD, the Hindu

to watch and walk with the procession of villagers and marvel at the artistry of the Ogoh-ogohs that could easily be mistaken for a fantasy movie set. The Balinese are deeply spiritual people and their distinct expression of Hinduism is married with Animism and a strong connection to the natural world. Later I relax in the hands of my gifted masseuse as the enchanting sound of gamelan rolls over the rice fields and carries me to bed.

DAY 3

Last night the skies opened and rain poured heavy, leaving me with a wonderful and poignant sense of purification as I woke to



temple is famous for its holy spring water where the Hindu Balinese go for ceremonial purification. It is particularly powerful to visit the water temple today – the eve of Balinese New Year or *Nyepi* – and as the water washes over me, I set a clear intention to let go of the things that do not serve me. As we drive back to Naya I can feel the streets building with anticipation for the Ngrupuk parade that will see thousands of gigantic and menacing Ogoh-ogohs carried through the streets of Bali tonight to attract dark spirits.

Later I walk to the local village of Sayan

Nyepi – a day where Bali's airport closes and the streets fall quiet as everyone takes rest and silence at home. The smell of rich earth and water fills my lungs as I enjoy continuing to melt the tension in my private hatha yoga class with Naya's yoga teacher, Sandy. After class, I have breakfast and meander back to my garden suite to sit on my private balcony amongst the palms, feeling utterly released from doing what is not always an easy thing for me to do.

With nothing on the schedule today, I relish the silence within and all around me as life becomes deliciously simple. I observe

THIS PAGE: Having a fresh salad for brunch is the perfect way to start a day. OPPOSITE PAGE: Naya's suites are spacious and cosy; white water rafting down the river



how the silence invites my five senses to expand and I become more present to the environment around me. I love steam baths and the invitation to get hotter and sweeter in Naya's new steam room couldn't be resisted and ensures that my Swiss winter skin is deliciously quenched.

DAY 4

Downing my fresh pineapple juice, I settle onto the mat for a private one-hour yin yoga class and breathe in with gratitude that this particular practice was scheduled for today. Day by day I can feel my body acclimatising to the heat; nevertheless, my body meets the practice with resistance this morning. Knowing I am exactly where I need to be, I breathe towards surrender and feel the deepest tissues of the body release.

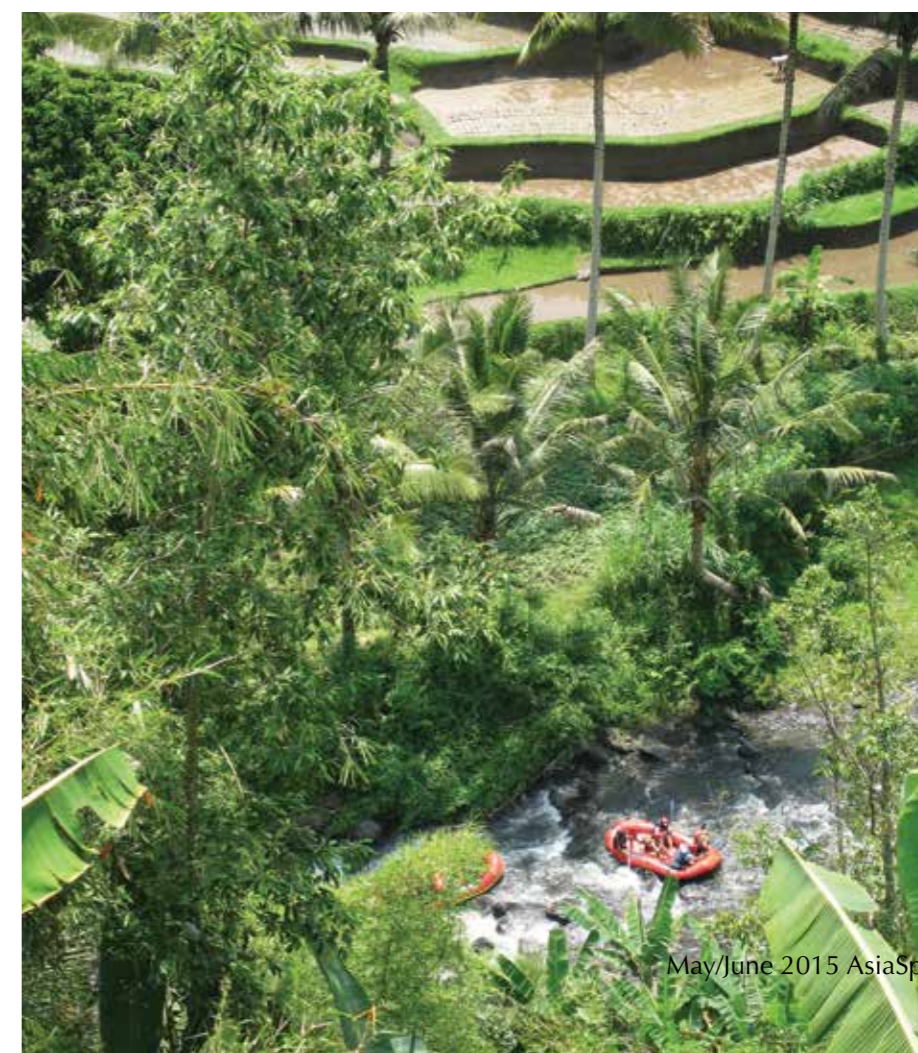
Guests at Naya enjoy an à la carte breakfast with complimentary tea, coffee and water available throughout the day. I can't resist starting my day with a fresh fruit platter and green banana pancake made with pandan leaf. I can feel the pressure to be productive easing off as I recline in

JILL GOCHER, NEAL HARRISON

a poolside lounge drinking coconut water from a topped green coconut when I see Ambe' Inaiya Ray – a beautiful and inspiring transformational facilitator, healer and guide walk in. Ray is hosting workshops and personalised three-day retreats at Naya to facilitate the inner alchemy of Conscious Evolution. Having heard about her work, I cannot turn down the invitation to sit together and give me an Akashic Intuitive Reading that will assist me to embody, live and create from a larger and ever expanding pattern and paradigm for my life. Her insights and gentle manner are graciously received and provide me a lot to reflect on.

DAY 5

I wake to my alarm chiming at the unnatural hour of 1:30am and am driven with four other travellers towards one of Bali's large and active volcanoes, Mount Batur. Situated on the shore of Bali's largest lake, Lake Batur, we summit the 1,730-metre crater in the dark to watch the sunrise. Admittedly, this early start is early even for a morning person like myself but I relish the rigorous activity





I tune into the realisation that the adventure activities I am enjoying perfectly celebrate the elements of air, fire, earth and water

and the cool morning temperatures as we climb. My neck cranes up to the dark sky and endlessly brilliant sparkle of stars and I wish I could lie down under them for a time – but we press on because the sun waits for no one. As we climb, the terrain becomes more sandy and steep but thankfully the members of my group are yoga practitioners from Sweden and Canada and we move with sure feet and at a steady pace. At the top, we witness the break of day and linger for a while before heading down for a simple breakfast in a hut at a lower vantage point, and the final descent under the beating sun.

Back at Naya, I take a short nap before having my unruly hair cut by the talented Sandy – Naya’s yoga teacher and Aveda trained hairdresser. The charming bamboo salon is set amidst the flora and I welcome her fresh perspective on my hair with the result being abundant curls thanks to the diminished weight and high humidity.

DAY 6

As I wake to the sound of roosters, I tune into the realisation that the adventure activities I am enjoying perfectly celebrate the elements of air, fire, earth and water and are aiding to balance and harmonise these elements both within and around me.

I opt out of yoga this morning thinking I’ll need my strength for the cycling tour I am going on today. I am picked up and delivered to the spectacular view of Mount Batur for breakfast before getting on our bikes and riding through rice fields and villages with a guide who shares about Balinese culture. We sample different Balinese teas and the famous kopi luwak that is made with the assistance of the mongoose-like civet; visit a Balinese home to learn about the living arrangements and structures within the village; enjoy the awe-inspiring nature and conclude with a delicious Balinese lunch. As someone who enjoys people, I savour the opportunity to meet people who come from all over the world and this easy bike tour gives us plenty of opportunity to talk.

Back at Naya, I head to the spa area for my Balinese massage. The simple spa menu offers the essentials like Balinese massage, facial, foot massage and mani/pedi finishing touches. I follow the treatment

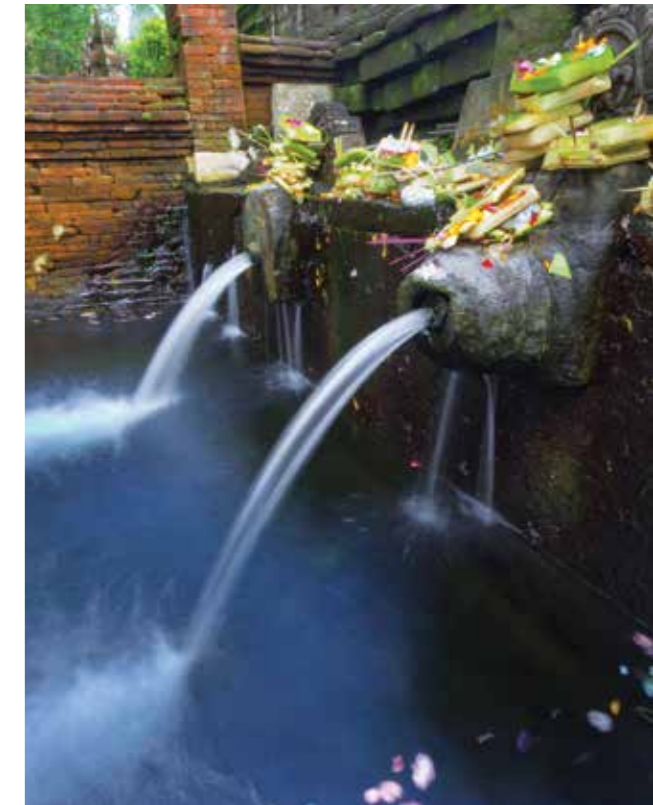
with a scrumptious gado gado and what could possibly be my downfall – Balinese Kue Dadar – a crêpe (actually three) with caramelised coconut filling. In my efforts to cut down on my sugar, I am grateful I didn’t discover it earlier in my stay.

DAY 7

I have the opportunity to join a group yoga class on my final day and the yin/yang class delivers the ideal balance as I prepare to fly out tonight. I quickly eat breakfast and am picked up for my final adventure before I leave to white water rafting down the Ayung River. While there are more difficult rapids to raft in Bali, this two-hour trip is perfect for me since it allows me to take in the exquisite natural landscape and the excitement of navigating Class I and II rapids.

Under the care of an excellent guide, I see kingfisher, monitor lizards, monkeys and rock carvings as we move downstream. Being surrounded by dense green jungle, I feel the power of the island like a healing elixir that nourishes every cell in my body. In the last 200 metres, I can’t resist jumping into the river and floating down to the shore before enjoying a delicious Balinese lunch and returning to Naya to pack.

I leave Bali feeling nourished by the time spent at Naya and exploring adventure on this beautiful island. While there may be more luxurious retreats in Bali – I love Naya for the accessibility, relaxed atmosphere and intimacy that is created in both the



physical space and in their retreats. The adventure retreat is a beautiful compliment to Naya’s existing retreats and will suit those wishing to explore Balinese culture, light adventure and the healing benefits of yoga and bodywork. www.nayaubud.com

THIS PAGE: The famous Tirta Empul Holy Water Temple; the cycling tour takes guests through rice fields and villages. OPPOSITE PAGE: Rice terraces in Bali



NEAL HARRISON; HOLY SPRING WATER TEMPLE, BALI/THINKSTOCK