

# Bali's Top 10 Rustic to Luxe Retreats

Experience Deeper Healing and Wellness on the Island of the Gods

*Written by Judy Chapman*



THE ISLAND OF BALI is one of the world's most established wellness destinations' and offers an array of stunning yoga, spa, surf, and Ayurveda retreats for you to explore. What's inspiring is the design of these incredible retreats. From sustainable bamboo yoga pavilions to luxury villas, and open-air spas beside sacred rivers, these soul-nourishing sanctuaries cannot be experienced anywhere else in the world.

If you are looking to stay at a rustic type boutique resort with a sustainable ethos, then **Bambu Indah** is for you. Created by John and Cynthia Hardy from 'The Green School', it is a gem hidden deep in the Ubud greenery. You will sleep in one of the old bridal houses



imported from Java. From your verandah you can watch your dinner grow (it goes without saying food is all organic and local). The centerpiece is Minang House, an incredible space (made from black bamboo) that is used for morning yoga. The spa is rustic (but when it comes to spa, what else do you really need except a comfortable massage table and healing hands?). There's no place like Bambu Indah in the world – we are ready to move in! [bambuindah.com](http://bambuindah.com)

**Como Shambhala Estate** is a high-end and holistic retreat that offers a sublime backdrop for wellbeing. Check into one of the stunning Retreat Pool Villas that comes with your own private steam room and onsen pool. Pre-book a retreat program and upon arrival, spend time with the resident naturopath, Ayurvedic or TCM doctor, all of whom can prescribe a bespoke program that works for you. Ayurveda, yoga and Traditional Chinese Medicine is central to their detox, stress management and rejuvenation retreats. Treatments are very well-executed – the signature massage is devised to counter our digital lifestyles and really works. Food and beverages at the GLOW restaurant are clean, green and raw,

but wine and coffee are available too (yay!). The yoga decks, hydrotherapy pools and Pilates studio overlooking jungle greenery are ideal for body-mind regeneration. [comohotels.com/comoshambhalaestate](http://comohotels.com/comoshambhalaestate)

It all feels very down-to-earth at **Desa Seni**, a popular (and affordable) yoga-focused retreat in Canggu. Inspired by the traditional Balinese compound, the retreat features an assortment of traditional heritage houses, open-air yoga shalas, a salt-water pool, organic restaurant and spa. A daily schedule



of yoga, dance and meditation classes are on the menu and, visiting guests are also welcome. There's also a 'Happening' calendar of spiritual workshops such as silent meditations and full moon film nights. Renowned and accredited and renowned yoga gurus facilitate on-going singles, couples and group retreats. Saving the best for last, we love their 'Merapu Svaasthya Wellness' spa set in a traditional joglo house - it all feels very rustic and relaxed.

[desaseni.com](http://desaseni.com)

When weight gain, digestive issues and fatigue get you down, think of **Svarga Loka Resort**. This is a medium-priced esoteric-detox retreat situated on the banks of the sacred Camphuhan river in the rainforest of Ubud. It offers 45 comfortable suites, two pools, yoga bales, a detox clinic and meditation spaces. The resort's Ayusha Wellness Spa consists of open-air riverside pavilions, river rock bathtubs and two Far Infra Red Saunas. The team has put together a compelling calendar of retreat programs that range from 'Sleep Beautifully' through to 'Life Change – Mapping your Passion' and a 'Silent Retreat'. They have also curated some exceptional Balinese experiences. Svarga Loka is the kind of place that you can travel to solo, or bring a friend to – it all feels very relaxed.

[svargalokaresort.com](http://svargalokaresort.com)







Dharma Shanti Bale at Four Seasons Sayan



Mandala Agung yoga pavillion at Fivelements

Situated in the heart of Ubud, **Yoga Barn** is a yoga-centric retreat. Founder is New Yorker, Megan Pappenheim (I happened to do my yoga teacher training with her back in 2002). Megan and her husband also head up the annual Bali Spirit Festival. The Yoga Barn has a relaxed village atmosphere and features a simple guest house, several yoga shalas, a charming Ayurvedic spa and an organic café. There's a daily schedule of yoga, dance, workshops and retreats – a highlight is the Sunday Dance held in the two-storey circular bale overlooking rice fields. On any given day you might connect with hula-hoopers, dancers, musicians – and others from all walks of life.

[theyogabarn.com](http://theyogabarn.com)

**The Shala Bali** is the new kid on the block. What sets this retreat aside from others is that it is also a yoga teacher training center. The destination itself is a gorgeous property consisting of rather deluxe Balinese bungalows and villas set around an infinity pool and surrounded by organic gardens. The stunning open-air yoga shala is constructed from local materials and is the place to be to stretch your mind and limbs. The retreat has lots of restful

spaces, but for deeper relaxation spend time at their Ayurvedic-inspired 'Darshana Veda' spa. Cuisine is primarily Indian and vegetarian and it's all organic produce. The Shala Bali has recently introduced a collection of Bali Immersion Retreats, where yoga programs are facilitated by notable yogis, including Mathew Sweeney and Louisa Sear. [theshalabali.com](http://theshalabali.com)



Ayurvedic treatments at Oneworld Ayurveda Retreat



Oneworld Ayurveda Retreat

If you are a follower of the plant-based movement and also seek to understand more about yoga, indigenous Balinese healing and spiritual growth, then **Fivelements** is perhaps the most unique sanctuary on the island. The retreat consists of spacious riverside bamboo villas, the iconic bamboo Mandala Agung yoga pavillion, and a healing spa. Wellness-wise, the focus is on sacred and holistic healing immersions. Imagine fire ceremonies with Balinese priests, water rituals and martial arts. Although yoga is not on the daily schedule, you may book classes with local teachers, and if you seek a detox, then colonic hydrotherapy is available. At the heart is the Sakti Dining Room where gourmet plant-based meals and raw desserts are devised by LA-trained raw food chefs. Depart transformed. .

[fivelements.org](http://fivelements.org)

With a resident Buddhist Nun to rock you to sleep, full moon yoga and the Dharma Shanti Bale, the **Four Seasons** is a serene sanctuary of sixty villas and suites, and features riverside dining, yoga and fitness classes, and a healing spa. The spa offers some of the most beautifully curated treatments in the

world. Another highlight is the yoga bale set amidst the ricefields. It was co-designed with Elora Hardy and is constructed entirely from sustainable bamboo. This is a serene setting for the AntiGravity 'flying' yoga, where a silk hammock supports you into inverted positions – surprisingly, easier than it looks! The hammocks transform into a nurturing cocoon for a new Sacred Nap, where you are rocked to sleep while listening to Buddha's life story. [fourseasons.com/sayan](http://fourseasons.com/sayan)

If you have been feeling stressed, sluggish and overwhelmed, then now could be the time for a Panchakarma detox at **Oneworld Ayurveda** in Bali. This is a sublime retreat with tasteful accommodation and elegant

facilities. Highlights are the beautiful yoga shala and the spa treatment rooms overlooking green rice terraces and coconut plantations. The minimum stay for your Panchakarma is seven nights (there are also 14, 21 and 28-day programs). A bonus is that you have the option to do the entire retreat (or part of it) in silence. True to Ayurveda, the consultations are thorough and treatments, meals and activities individually prescribed. Says founder Claude Chouinard who turned to Ayurveda after his own life-changing Panchakarma: 'People often do Panchakarma to detox and lose weight. However, a Panchakarma can also treat asthma, thyroid, anxiety, insomnia and stress and much more.' [oneworldayurveda.com](http://oneworldayurveda.com)

If your idea of a wellness holiday is roaming around barefoot, dressed in a batik sarong, with endless days of surf, massages and afternoon siestas, then **Temple Lodge** is for you! Set into a cliff with phenomenal views over the Indian Ocean, the accommodation is heavenly. Sleep in one of seven bungalows that are beautifully handcrafted out of driftwood (the Coral Cave Suite carved into the cliff is rather dreamy). Yoga is central to the Temple Lodge experience, and attracts the yoga-surf crew – you can share a nutritious meal with them in the communal dining area. The cuisine is a blend of vegetarian, Ayurvedic, Macrobiotic, Italian, and Balinese. The no-frills spa is simply a hut with two massage tables – all you need, really. With a gorgeous infinity-pool and nearby surf beaches, it's all too easy to get into the rhythm of rest and rejuvenation.

[thetemplelodge.com](http://thetemplelodge.com)

Owned by American entrepreneur, Christopher Burch and hotelier, James McBride, **Nihiwatu** is a luxury surf-centric resort located on a secluded coastline on Sumba Island (while not technically in Bali, it deserves a mention). While most folk are drawn here for the famous Occy's left-hand surf break, the yoga and wellness make this a stunning retreat destination. The villas are incredible but you could also stay in one of the jungly Mamole Treehouses. There's a cool Chris and Charlie's Chocolate Factory for kids to explore, endless white beaches, surf and Horse Meditation led by a horse whisperer and yes – horse surfing! A must-try is the off-the-grid Nihi Oka Safari, a cluster of open-air bales overlooking secluded coves. Staff cook you up a healthy breakfast on the open fire and then you can indulge in unlimited treatments – all day! □

[nihiwatu.com](http://nihiwatu.com)



Nihiwatu Resort

**About the author:** Judy Chapman is the former Editor-in-Chief of Spa Asia magazine and author of four books on spas and wellbeing. Over the past twenty years, Judy has travelled the world consulting and creating award winning spas and retreats concepts and indigenous beauty products and treatment experiences for luxury hotels and brands. She has personally created over 200 natural skin, hair and body care products, tea and candle collections. With a relentless pursuit of unique and original experiences, her curiosity has led her to Himalayas spending time with Tibetan and Ayurvedic doctors to onsen bathing in Japan and Ayurveda retreats in Kerala. Just some of the destinations Judy has consulted on spa and retreat projects include Australia, Bali, Germany, India, Maldives, Middle East, Myanmar, Singapore and New York.