

FINE RESTAURANTS & VILLAS – VILLA ALAMANDA

Edition 5.4 Dec 08 – Jan 09

FRV
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Rp. 48.000
ISSN 1829-927X
771829 927069

fine restaurants and villas
bali & southeast asian style
edition 5.4, dec '08 jan '09 Rp. 48.000

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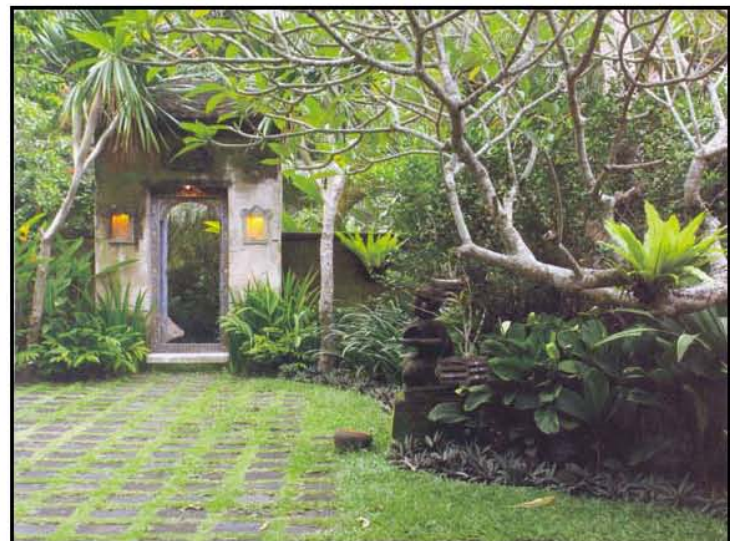
A DREAMY RIVERSIDE RETREAT

Villa Alamanda

Text by Rachel Love

Villa Alamanda is not a new property, and nor does it boast funky, ultra avant-garde architecture. Instead this classic, well established, rental villa takes the credit for being one of the dreamiest retreats east of Ubud.

81 The Business of Bali

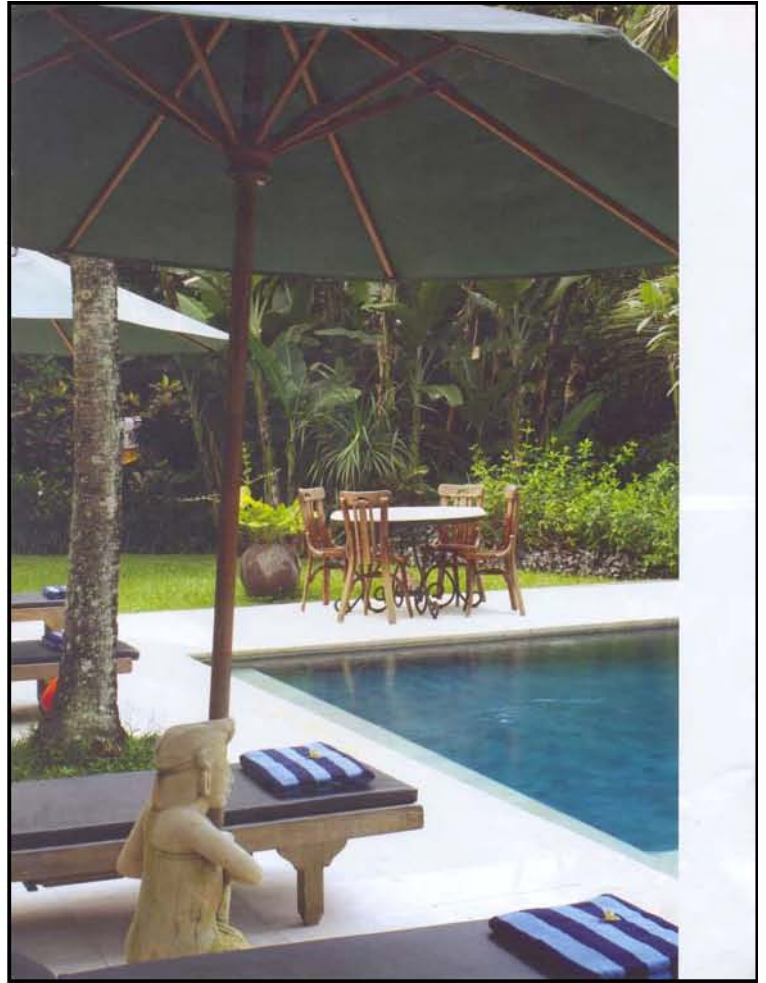


It is truly fascinating to drive through Bali and catch glimpses of the numerous, sumptuous, private villas that have appeared on this island over the last decade. Many are masterpieces of design, elegance and luxury. Some are re-imaginings of European castles, Italian palaces, and the kahols of North Africa; while others provide us with little glimpses of Hawaii and Hollywood. Not all, therefore, are in keeping with the spirit, customs and symbolism of Bali. Understandably the desire to blend the familiarity and comforts of home with an exotic ambience and a tropical climate, but this East meets West concept can also be accomplished in a manner that is far less glitzy and much more in keeping with the environment and culture.

A perfect example of this is Villa Alamanda, located in the traditional Balinese woodcarvers' village of Tingkahak, which sits on a fertile stretch of land between the Petanu and Pakisari rivers, east of Ubud and close to the mysterious Gati Gajah elephant cave.

If you walk through the back lanes of Tingkahak, you will hear the soft hammering, sanding, and spontaneous chatter of the woodcarvers as they sit cross-legged on the ground, surrounded by piles of freshly carved wood chips. In Tingkahak, you will also see farmers tending their rice fields, children playing in the river, and local staff from the village reporting for duty at the prestigious 'Club Club at Tanah Gajah'. A small intersection is the scene of a fruit and vegetable market, and colourful temple ceremonies are a common sight. In fact, just recently, a major ceremony called 'Karya Agung', took place to celebrate five years of work and the pooling of resources by the village's 400 families to upgrade and repair the cemetery, the market and the temple. The celebration was a series of religious ceremonies on a scale not seen in the village for almost twenty years.

Daily life in Tingkahak has not been slowed by tourism...



The entrance to Villa Alamanda is equally time-honoured. A gateway opens onto a paved courtyard where a pair of comical, smiling 'Welcome Statues' are complemented by an indigenous 'saw' stone wall, pieced together with random shapes.

Perched on a ridge above the Pitaru River, with valley views, this romantic hideaway blends neo-colonial architecture with Balinese style. The simple application of marble, red-hard hardwoods, natural stones, colourful fabrics and local materials, such as the along-along grass used in the construction of the roofs, is consistent throughout the property. Charming Balinese touches are subtly revealed. If you look at the water tower, for example, you will see that it has been decorated with fanciful carved dragons, birds and flowers. In fact, the villa was appropriately named after a flower – a cascading climber also known as Yellow Bell, Golden Trumpet or Buttercup Flower.

At Villa Alamanda, an arched gateway with rustic Balinese doors heralds a gorgeous garden, accessed via the descent of a dramatic stone stairway. At this lower level, a large relaxation bale sits beside an enticing swimming pool, which seemingly overflows into a backdrop of banana plants, bamboo, and towering coconut palms.



Meanwhile, another set of antique doors leads into the home, where a timber floored hallway extends towards a T-shaped wooden terrace. Furnished with antiques, this breezy open air living area runs the length of the building and features a delightful dining section that juts out over the tumbling gardens. The gentle murmur of the Pitaru River, as it carves its way through the steep gorge below, is accompanied by the melody of birdsong, creating a very peaceful ambience.

There are four bedrooms at Villa Alamanda; three are situated in the main building, while the fourth is housed within a separate thatched pavilion, known as the 'Garden Suite', which also doubles as an air-conditioned TV lounge. The villa's immaculate master bedroom is large and square with a pitched roof that wars to a central peak. Here, the colonial-style furnishings are enhanced with a bell jar ceiling lantern, Indonesian artefacts and paintings. Louvre doors lead into a dressing room, while glassless windows in the bathroom swing open in the manner of stable doors, allowing the cool breezes to permeate and presenting enchanting views of the main garden and pool.

Indeed, Villa Alamanda offers a true sense of living in Bali. **100**





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www.villaalamanda.com