

BEST FOR 2019 ♦ BALI



PARTY BY THE POOL

Dive into new beach clubs, luxury hotels and smoking hot food

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Despite some temporary setbacks to tourism in Indonesia this year, the world is still going gaga for Bali. And with its spirited culture, jungle hotels, clifftop villas, world-class cuisine and barrelling waves, rightly so. In 2017, the Indonesian island attracted 5.69 million visitors and has ambitious plans for 2019, with a target of eight million foreign tourist arrivals, according to Bali Tourism Board.

There's a lot to get excited about on our island neighbour, from new hotels and beach clubs to sustainability initiatives and parts still largely undiscovered (yes, they do exist). Here's what Bali will look like in the new year.

POOLS AND PARTIES

Seminyak and Uluwatu have long been the go-tos for all-day pool play, but new beach clubs in upcoming and unexpected areas are shifting the focus. In Canggu, the team behind Motel Mexicola are cranking up the heat with Tropicola (tropicola.info), an intimate, '80s-inspired *Miami Vice*-style beach club and diner popping in primary colours with peppermint-scented bathrooms and poolside tequila chugging. Nearby, in Berawa, Finns Beach Club

(finnsbeachclub.com/vip/) has rolled out its Finns VIP area in the old Semara Beach House, with all-white daybeds and a rooftop bar. Further south, Jimbaran has welcomed Med-style Ibiza in Bali on Kelan Beach and, in the resort hub of Nusa Dua, the new Balinese-inspired Manarai Beach House is keeping its customers cool with homemade alcoholic popsicles.

Meanwhile, Bali-born enfant terrible Kai Suteja, the Aussie Instagrammer of @urmumsyadad, is

wooing wild hearts with the launch of Gypsy Land (gypsy.land) music and art festivals, a new Bali-based events company with plenty of out-there parties in the pipeline. Having recently transformed an abandoned Seminyak kindergarten into a haunted house, complete with themed rooms and underground US rappers flown in from the US, Gypsy Land is proof that Bali can boogie with the best.

STAY AND PLAY

With its themed luxury tents, surreal decor and copper bathtubs, the Bill Bensley-designed Capella Ubud (capellahotels.com) was without a doubt Bali's most talked-about hotel opening of 2018. But next year, that crown will be handed onto Seminyak's Potato Head Hotel (ptthead.com), due to open in the summer of 2019.

Designed by renowned Dutch architecture firm OMA, the luxury beachfront stay will float on stilts over water and its 175 rooms showcase the brand's recycling ethos, with interiors made from ocean and landfill plastics.

Under the same umbrella, Katamama (katamama.com) will open its second location, and the first luxury hotel, in sleepy Tabanan, where its 15 beachside cabins will operate off-grid.

Also slated for 2019 are two Nusa Dua stays, including the IHG's

Kimpton Hotel (ihg.com), an all-villa property and the brand's first in Southeast Asia, as well as the Shangri-La Resort & Spa (shangri-la.com).

Entrepreneurs are carving out a niche in the private villa market, too, with the opening of a handful of glamorous new design-led holiday residences oozing rockstar appeal. The team behind Ulu Cliffhouse is expanding its premium villa brand Mandala, with two new ultra-luxe five- and six-bedroom holiday rentals in Uluwatu and Berawa, respectively, and a third to open in Nusa Lembongan in January 2019. Each has its own art collection and a vetted list of wellness, fitness and surf instructors on call.

In Seminyak, award-winning Sydney interior designer Alex Zabotto-Bentley has applied his magic touch to Noku Beach House (nokubeachhouse.com), a six-bedroom sanctuary with two pools, a tennis court and exotic greenery.

EAT AND DRINK

Less is more on Bali's hottest tables for 2019, with wood-fired, smoked and sustainable concepts dominating food trends for the new year. The Sarong Group (sarongbali.com) restaurateur Will Meyrick and chef Tim Bartholomew will unearth Native in Canggu in late 2018, a modern

bistro showcasing local produce and ancient cooking techniques, including sun-drying and smoking.

Over at Potato Head Beach Club, a Michelin-trained chef is at the helm of new eatery Ijen (ptthead.com/bali/ijen/), which has a 98 per cent no-waste philosophy and serves sustainable seafood cooked over an open fire. Bali-based Brett Hospitality group has followed up the success of sustainable grill Fishbone Local (fishbonelocal.com) in Canggu with Mason (masonbali.com) on the same street. The group's pared-back ethos to cooking continues in this elegant space and courtyard, with Mediteranean-inspired share plates such as taramasalata dip and slow-cooked lamb shoulder.

SEE AND DO

Get a drone's eye view of Ubud's magical tapestry of rice fields, river and jungle with the island's first hot air balloon adventure at The Chedi Club Tanah Gajah Ubud (ghmhotels.com/en/tanah-gajah/). Offered seasonally between June and November, the tethered balloon soars 50m into the sky three times a day, including at dawn and after sunset. Rides last between five and seven minutes and cost from \$212.

Infinity Lifestyle Adventures (infinitymountainbiking.com), in partnership with restaurateur Will Meyrick, is now hosting all-day Ubud street food tours with stops at local warungs, markets and temples.

SHOP AND DROP

Gail and Joe Elliott, the Aussie designer duo behind women's clothing label Little Joe Woman by Gail Elliott (littlejoewoman.com), are opening their first store in Bali in early 2019. The boutique will join 19 luxe suites, a rooftop pool and brasserie-style restaurant as the retail component of beachside Berawa hotel concept, The Brawa (thebrawa.com).

And Goldust Spa, famous for its 24-carat gold facials, is opening its second location in Canggu next year.

CARE AND CONSERVE

Some of Bali's best known hotels are leading a crackdown on Instagram-driven over-tourism and the use of plastics. Ayana Bali (ayana.com/id) has banned phones, cameras and electronics at its River Pool from 9am-5pm to encourage guests to be present and engage with each other. Desa Potato Head in Seminyak has banned single-use plastics.

LOCAL AND LESS-TRAVELLED

Many travellers are snubbing the tourist hubs for Bali's more authentic and rural areas. According to Booking.com, the fastest growing locations for bookings in Bali in 2017 included Tabanan and Bedugul beyond Canggu, and Singaraja in the north. Looks like 2019 will be the year of responsible travel in Bali.

