

OODLES OF COLONIAL CHARM

UNEXPECTED ELEGANCE AND RAFFLES-STYLE NOSTALGIA

IN THE HEART OF PETITENGET

BY KATIE TRUMAN PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER LEGGETT

It all happens round the villa's centre-stage pool.



BALI, AND ESPECIALLY GREATER SEMINYAK, POSITIVELY HEAVES WITH VILLAS, AND ALTHOUGH MOST ARE INDULGENTLY LOVELY, MANY CAN BLUR TOGETHER WITH THEIR GENERIC YET CHARMING TRADITIONAL BALINESE VILLA FORMULAS.

I suspect I'm on to something different though pulling up at Villa Windu Asri, part of an exclusive two-villa garden enclave deep within Petitenget's gated Villa Lumbung complex. Firstly, the palatial, all-white, six-bedroom mansion stands out like a fine thumb along the compound's leafy laneway and by the time I enter the inner courtyard and elegant reception area, where I am welcomed by the villa team with a frangipani garland, Windu Asri already screams, "colonial magnificence." Launched in 2014, Asri unashamedly self-proclaims itself as "Raffles Style" luxury and with its evocative Far East bygone ambience and design, and certainly breaks the mould from most other island villas.

The villa has been designed and decorated with exceptional care, from small decorative details to overall architectural style, to successfully evoke a uniquely classic colonial feel. Once through the reception in the double-storey main building, I enter out to a long, rectangular, centre-stage pool, tightly framed by three single-storey white wings. Edged with white stone colonnades (illuminated night-time by coach lanterns), landscaped coconut palms and verandas filled with potted golden cane palms and white rattan lounge chairs, it's as if I have fallen into time-warp circa Singapore in the 1930s.



Afternoon tea? I'd swear I was back at the Raffles Singapore!

The outdoor living pavilion makes an uber-classy gathering spot.





Utterly refined dining for special guests and special occasions.

A vintage-era scene is set as soon as you're past the front gate.



Equally splendid interiors are designed with timbered floors, polished marble floors and warm, nut-brown woods. Six generous sized, bedroom suites – four in the main wing and two in a separate accommodation wing poolside – again recreate vintage-era residence style, from deep pile rugs to four-poster beds headed-up with old travellers trunks. Impossibly elegant bathrooms feature stained-glass windows and art deco mirrors – and I get the suite with the villa's sole claw-foot bath tub. In suites and throughout, ubiquitous touches like blue and white Ming urns and exquisite art deco lamps and other carefully sourced items further accentuate the nostalgia; surprisingly, much of the decor and furniture originating in Bali, custom-made to specific orders.

All I need now is my cocktail at sunset, preferably served by a butler, which to my surprise, Villa Windu Asri duly delivers (and damn fine cocktails too) at the glamorous Outdoor Living Pavilion. Overlooking the pool, this, the villa's social hub, presents Balinese contemporary design, opened with a vaulted, timbered high ceiling, but is refinement personified, with striking art works, plantation chair and ottoman seating and hand-picked antique objets. There's also a built-in bar, from where one of several butlers assemble cocktails and home-made tapas. I feel obliged to dress-up, especially when dinner is served, a rather formal affair, indulged by waiting staff at a lengthy dining table, its sleek wood polished to oblivion and overhung the entire length with a spectacular lantern.

Dinners, plus hearty breakfasts and light lunches, come from the villa's restaurant-style menus, cooked by the accomplished in-house chef – anything from Indian feasts to seafood barbecues grilled in the adjoining garden. Guests can also dine in the opulent air-conditioned dining room in

the main wing, or more casual, open-air daybed pavilion beside the 13-metre pool.

Windu Asri may pay homage to the early 20th century, but comes equipped with thoroughly modern appliances, such as SONOS sound system, Wi-Fi-enabled baby monitors and broad TV screens. Facilities run to a contemporary-style family media room, stainless

steel kitchen and glass-encased gym. As a 1,600-square metre, six-bedroom property and fully staffed – impeccably trained but endearingly friendly – the villa makes for a lavish, spacious bolt-hole for extended families and groups of friends, booking the villa for their own exclusive-use, be it island get-togethers, or for celebratory anniversaries, wedding parties and small-scale events.

Larger groups can snap-up the interconnecting property next door, four-bedroom Villa Windu Sari, recently refurbished and contrasting in its teakwood luxe rusticity – accommodating twenty in total.

Windu Asri may scream Raffles-style refinement, but finely balancing the comfort and ambience of a private

home with luxury boutique hotel service', it welcomes as a remarkably homely and ultra-comfortable residence. So much so, I almost forget there's a world-class surf beach and happening Petitenget just beyond the gates. **FRV**

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The suites are both elegant and outrageously comfortable.

