



# Wedding Bells in BALI

BY SARAH DOUGHERTY

*Whether you elope, have the big white wedding or choose a barefoot beach wedding with just a few friends, Bali can do it all ... and do it very well.*

For many Australian couples heading to Bali to celebrate their weddings, it's a dream come true. Where flowers fall from the trees, sunsets never fail to impress, where the sea, the stunning gardens and the mountains present a million photo opportunities, and the warm, sultry days and nights whisper sweet nothings; it is a fantasy that many have claimed as their own.

Bali never fails to make it on to lists of the

most romantic places on earth with some reports suggesting that it is second only to Las Vegas for weddings. With tropical vistas, secret beaches, luxurious resorts and a string of stunning chapels, Bali offers couples the chance to do it their way.

From the full pomp and ceremony of our own Jennifer Hawkins, complete with high-flying media trying to get the money shot; to underwater weddings; barefoot weddings; cliff

top vows; or intimate ceremonies in a private villa. Weddings are big business for Bali and there is hardly a resort worth its stars that doesn't have a wedding planner on board.

### VILLA WEDDINGS

For many Australian couples, villa weddings are their first choice. With villa properties offering accommodation, as well as a list of recommended photographers, caterers and celebrants, this can be a beautiful option. Villas, like couples come in all shapes and sizes. Among the top wedding villas are the stunningly located villas at **Semara Luxury Villa Resort**, where Jennifer Hawkins, and her husband Jake Wall, hosted 70 guests. Semara hosts more than 150 weddings each year at their collection of seven five-bedroom villas, each uniquely designed and decorated.

"Semara is perfect for weddings as couples have the choice to book out the entire resort, as Jennifer Hawkins did, or book a single villa. Because Jennifer and Jake had the entire resort we were also able to close off Finn's Beach Club to the public and the party continued there," explains General Manager Kelly Sturgeon.

**Finn's Beach Club** is a popular choice for couples but until recently the resort would rarely close it for exclusive use, as it is a popular destination for day guests. A recent extension has doubled the size of the beach club and has space for a dedicated private events area.

According to Kelly, many couples envisage getting married on the beach. It is harder than you might think, despite the fact that Bali's beaches are popular spots for wedding photographs. The newly refurbished Finn's can now offer this option as well.

Beside it, at **Karma Kandara**, weddings are also a fantasy and accommodating the wedding party and guests is also possible with a range of villas with one, two and three bedrooms.

Julia Lorenti is the Events Manager at **Karma Kandara**. With a cliff top pool that is often employed as the 'aisle', to a stunning private beach at the base of the cliff, the setting is equally spectacular and personalised service is a bonus for many of the brides who choose a Karma wedding.

"At Karma, we can cater for everything from shabby-chic ceremonies accompanied by Greek small bites to five-course sit-down dinners featuring menu tastings with wine pairings. It's really up to you – because the most special day of your life should be more than just a package," explains the effervescent Julia.

Also on the cliff, wedding organisers favour a range of stunning private villas like **The Istana**, **Pandawa Villas** and **Latitude Bali**, stunning cliff-side villas that offer spectacular views, designer interiors and landscaped gardens where set ups are spectacular.

**Elite Havens** offers a bespoke wedding service with almost 150 wedding villas in their portfolio, and like Karma and Semara, work with some of the larger Australian-based wedding organisers like **Global Weddings** and **Libby Doherty**, to produce beautiful ceremonies designed to suit the budgets and the taste of their brides and grooms.

### RESORT WEDDINGS

Having a five-star wedding takes a lot of the planning headaches away and it is a popular option for many. Top of the range five star resorts like **St. Regis**, **The Ritz-Carlton**, **Four Seasons**, **W Retreat**, **The Legian**, **Sofitel** and **The Conrad** offer bespoke wedding services and everything can be handled in-house. They'll also help with the legalities or put you in

#### THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

**Below:** A beautiful beachside set up at the exclusive St. Regis Bali Resort on Nusa Dua Beach

**Opening image:** Model and fashion blogger, Nikki Phillips marries her man, musician Dane Rumble at an exclusive cliff-top villa at Semara Luxury Villa Resort



#### A TASTE OF TROPICAL LUXURY ON THE MAGICAL ISLAND OF BALI

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touch with the right people. Many of them feature beautiful chapels as well as alternative beach locations.

For those who prefer things a little cooler, head up to Ubud where properties like **The Viceroy** and **Hanging Gardens Ubud** are among the most photographed resorts in Bali. The new **Mandapa Resort**, a Ritz-Carlton boutique resort, is sure to make the list of dream wedding venues.

Bali resorts are well versed in both small and large weddings. For those who don't fancy a fuss, or have run away from home to tie the knot, many resorts will even organise a dress and a suit and bundle up the required witnesses. Small and large, Bali caters to all shapes, sizes and budgets.

Weddings are so popular that **AYANA Resort**, above Jimbaran, has a total of nine wedding venues, including a glass chapel, an amazing aisle that perches over the lip of a dramatic cliff face and a romantic jetty with a beautiful barefoot venue on the private beach.

### DEDICATED WEDDING VENUES

**Tirtha Bali** was among the first to create a dedicated wedding venue, along with its much imitated glass chapel, designed by an Australian architect with an incredible view from a dramatic cliff top. They have since opened a second venue, also located on the Uluwatu coast. With a dedicated team, weddings here are both memorable and spectacular for many couples, while an in-house wedding service allows brides and grooms to express their personalities with a range of options.

### THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

There are those who take a more adventurous route and this

can include anything from mountain climbing, getting married on an elephant or even underwater.

**Pulau Luxury Charters** has a fleet of luxurious cruising options that sparkle with romantic options and photo opportunities. From proposals, to buck's and hen's parties, to island weddings, sunset cruises and honeymoons, organiser Diana Shearin has filled all kinds of requests.

"Our luxury yacht *Burjuman* is the pride of the fleet and we've been asked to cater for everything from blessing ceremonies to intimate weddings, bridal showers and sunset cruises for the wedding parties. She can also be a romantic live-aboard option for couples that want to enjoy sailing in style," she explains.

Also part of the fleet is the larger *Haruku*, which has four staterooms on board and can cater for up to 20 for day trips, and sleeps six in air-conditioned comfort.

Trips to Lombok are popular with wedding parties and some of the islands closer to Bali, Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Penida, boast clear water, white sand beaches, snorkelling, diving and fishing alongside some stunning private villas and boutique resorts, which offer incredibly romantic options for tropical weddings.

**Sandy Bay Beach Club** is a popular wedding destination, and guests can come in for the day or stay at a range of accommodation from stunning private villas to more reasonably priced hotels. Shush Ingram and her team at Sandy Bay is an experienced handler of nervous brides and their parties. Intimate, barefoot and beautiful, it won't cost the earth and the memories are forever.

### BALI-STYLE

Some couples want to celebrate the destination and there are a range of options for couples who want to incorporate Balinese elements into their ceremony. The Bali **Elephant Safari Park** offers couples the option of a Hindu ceremony along with a more traditional Western ceremony (elephants are optional).

Australian chef, Penny Williams, has set up her restaurant, **Bali Asli**, in the mountains with an incredible view of Bali's largest mountain, Agung. There couples can get married in a natural setting with a Balinese banquet to follow, featuring local produce. Working together with **Alila Manggis** and private villas along the Candi Dasa coast, ceremonies here are as simple as you like and capture the beauty of the Balinese countryside.

Also on the East Coast of Bali, on the romantic black sands near one of Bali's most famous surf breaks, **Hotel Kommune** is a resort that celebrates the surf lifestyle. Offering stylish stays, a landscaped pool, great food and an experienced team, the celebrations never end. Check their packages on the website.

### DOWN SOUTH

Seminyak's beaches are filled with couples being photographed along the shore, all day, every day it often seems. A number of the resorts along this coast offer wedding services, including the **W Retreat**, **The Legian** and further up the coast the sister Alila property, **Alila Soori**. In Seminyak, Alila is close to completing their Seminyak resort, which will also feature a wedding chapel and a penthouse with sweeping views for the reception.

Discreetly located in the quiet part of Seminyak, **Santi Chapel** offers a unique blend of Balinese water terraces with a



THE TIES THAT BIND

Above: Celebrating romance at Karma Kandara



Villa The Sanctuary Bali is a ten bedroom private luxury villa in Canggu specialised in accommodating large groups, family holidays, weddings and events.

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Located along a beautiful river in the middle of the jungle this villa is ideally located 5 minutes from Canggu Beach.

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Perched high on limestone Cliffs overlooking the Indian Ocean at Bali's most southern tip, Semara Luxury Resort Uluwatu is a piece of heaven on earth.

Dramatic in all dimensions, Semara Luxury Resort offers complete facilities for an A-listers' retreat; Body Temple Spa, 2 Tennis Courts, Gym, Putting Green and the world famous Finn's Beach Club, nestled on its own private white sandy beach.

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ALL WHITE

Above: Happiness is being married at the Viceroy

glass wedding chapel where weddings can be tailored to suit the couple. With **Kunja Villas** beside it, the entire party can be accommodated and guests can enjoy the local nightlife and great restaurants.

The **Villas Seminyak** is another venue that has been welcoming brides and grooms for over a decade. With private weddings held in their villas and a range of options for hen's parties and buck's nights on the doorstep, including the celebrated Prana Spa, it's the perfect venue for smaller weddings.

Intimate wedding ceremonies are perfectly placed at **Cocoon Beach Club** where a private venue upstairs is now being completely enclosed for air-conditioned comfort. With food, flowers and wine on tap, the views over the beach are included at no extra charge. This is a popular choice for couples who want minimum fuss.

### TO DO OR NOT TO DO...IT YOURSELF

Katrina Simorangkir is a director of **Bali Weddings International**. With over 20 years experience in the wedding planning business, she is often the go-to-girl for couples trying to sort through the myriad details that a wedding entails.

According to her blog, [baliweddingsinternationalblog.com](http://baliweddingsinternationalblog.com), one of the most common questions asked by brides is can you do it yourself? The answer is yes ... but.

As she points out, "The very reason that wedding planners exist is to save brides and grooms from experiencing the challenges and stressful situations leading up to and indeed, on their wedding day.

"Before you make the decision to go down the 'DIY' road, I would strongly recommend you consider whether the savings you'll make are worth the potential difficulties, disappointments and stress you may well experience along the way."

### THE BALI BRIDE

One Australian bride, Leisa Mannion decided to document her journey on Instagram. The Bali Bride has attracted over 11,000 followers over the space of a year, during which she travelled to Bali, researched the options, sourced inspiration and shared it, right up to the big day and beyond. The wedding, held in May, went off beautifully with the wedding party booking a boutique resort in Seminyak, **Villa Coco**, as their base and employing family and friends to help organise the events surrounding the wedding.

Her large following speaks volumes about the interest in Bali weddings.

### THE FINE PRINT

Bearing in mind that Bali is in a foreign country, where bureaucracy is a nightmare at the best of times, it is advised to have a professional to deal with the paperwork if nothing else. The Australian Consulate offers some practical advice on what you will need in order to get legally married in Bali.

Being forewarned of the potential pitfalls is an important step in avoiding any hassles down the track. Some couples opt to have their ceremony in Bali and obtain their marriage licence at home, an option worth considering (as this writer did).

There are some very helpful blogs and information sources available and with the recent stories of shonky organisers, it pays to do some research. Whether you go it alone, choose a resort wedding or work with one of the many registered wedding organisers, Bali weddings are a dream come true for countless couples. A great destination to stay, play, fall in love, get married and often renew your vows, the island caters to couples with a range of budgets and tastes and has earned its reputation as one of the most romantic places on earth. •

Photography by various establishments

### travel facts

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

- Ritz-Carlton: [ritzcarlton.com/bali](http://ritzcarlton.com/bali)
- AYANA: [ayanaresort.com](http://ayanaresort.com)
- Semara Luxury Villas: [semarauluwatu.com](http://semarauluwatu.com)
- Karma Kandara: [karmakandara.com](http://karmakandara.com)
- Cocoon: [cocoon-beach.com](http://cocoon-beach.com)
- Latitude Bali: [latitudebali.com](http://latitudebali.com)
- Komune: [komunebaliweddings.com](http://komunebaliweddings.com)
- Libby Doherty: [libbydoherty.com](http://libbydoherty.com)
- Bali Weddings International: [baliweddingsinternational.com](http://baliweddingsinternational.com)
- Villa The Sanctuary Bali: [villathesanctuarybali.com](http://villathesanctuarybali.com)



5 Bedroom Grand Residence, Karma Kandara Resort, Bali, Indonesia



4 Bedroom Valley View Pool Villa, Karma Jimbaran Resort, Bali, Indonesia



1 Bedroom Lumbung Villa, Karma Reef Resort, Lombok, Indonesia

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Karma Experiences is a unique service offered exclusively to Karma's guests and owners, from cutting-edge healing retreats to hedonistic wine tastings. Karma believes that life is a celebration and this cultivated lifestyle is recognized by the industry's top accolades, including CNN's "World's Best Beach Bars", Best Restaurant in Bali by Tatler and Best Spa in Bali by The Yak.

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