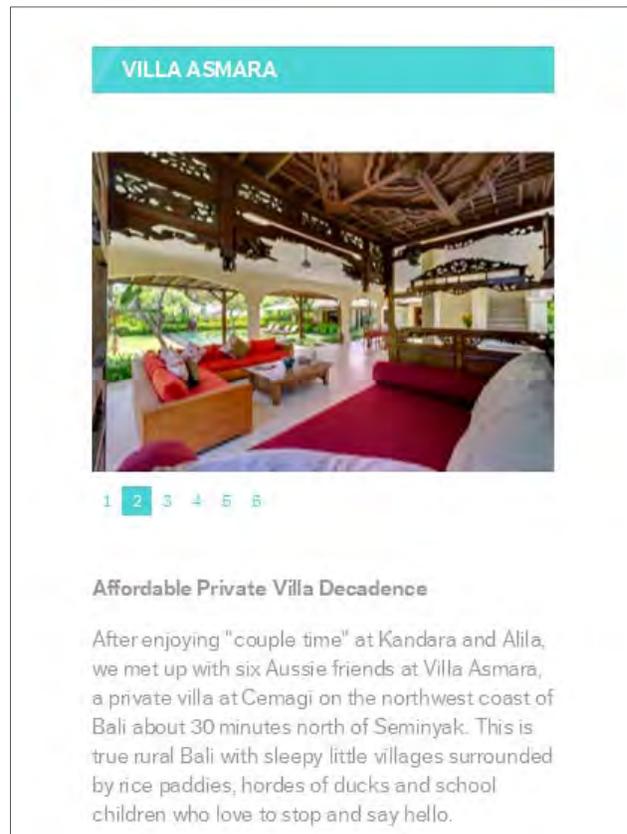
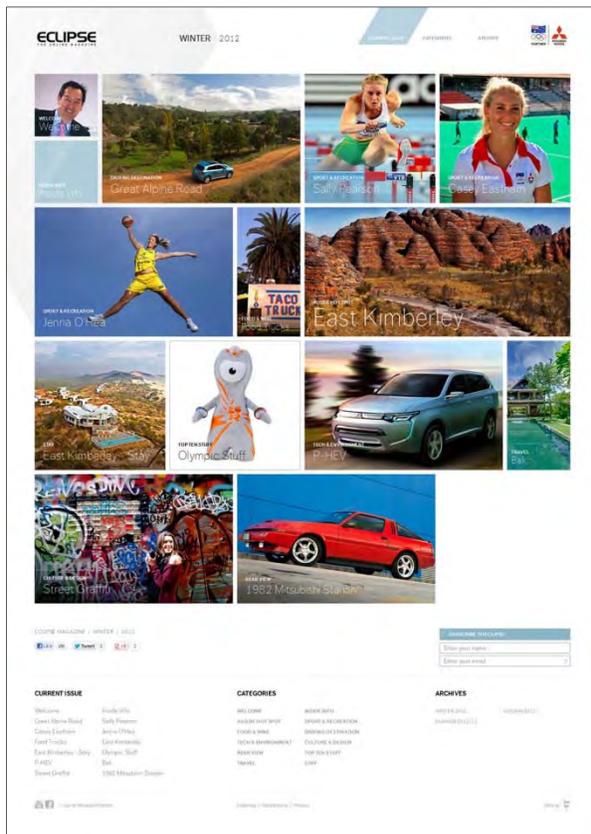


ECLIPSE THE ONLINE MAGAZINE – VILLA ASMARA

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Affordable Private Villa Decadence

After enjoying "couple time" at Kandara and Alila, we met up with six Aussie friends at Villa Asmara, a private villa at Cemagi on the northwest coast of Bali about 30 minutes north of Seminyak. This is true rural Bali with sleepy little villages surrounded by rice paddies, hordes of ducks and school children who love to stop and say hello.

Asmara is named after the ancient Sanskrit word for love and we were immediately seduced by the sheer enchantment of the villa. The heat of the day melted away as we entered the discreet door in the wall to discover a cooling lily pond, leading to the open-air living area and the spectacular four-edge infinity pool beyond complete with a lei-draped Buddha at one end. Ocean glimpses and the sound of surf pounding on the beach below completed the "how lucky are we?" feeling.

The experience at Villa Asmara is one of a private enclave mimicking the style of traditional Balinese houses in the most luxurious way. The grounds are enormous, the gardens lush and each of the four air-conditioned bedrooms has an ensuite (three of which are indulgently outdoors). There's even a billiard room, media room and a shared tennis court.

But the real luxury of Villa Asmara is the staff. We not only fell in love with the villa, but we could not believe how helpful and obliging our bunch of helpers were.

When I asked our villa manager Nyoman if we could buy some fresh coconuts for a poolside drink, he sent Agus the gardener, shinnying up our own trees and within 10 minutes we were all sipping fresh coconut juice. Want to go to nearby Seminyak to visit the trendy bars of Ku Te Da and Potato Head (must dos)? Just ask and the villa car and driver will take you there. Want a Balinese feast or Western multi-course dinner one night? Just let the chef know in time and she will go to the market and buy everything needed. Want to join the chef at the morning market? An expedition was arranged with us guests riding pillion on the back of the staff's scooters. Running out of beer? Nyoman headed out on his scooter and came back with a carton precariously balanced on his motorbike.

I asked Nyoman to recommend somewhere for massages. He was quickly on the phone and within half an hour local masseuses arrived for poolside treatments at the ridiculous price of about \$15 per hour.

Talking of which, the entire villa is incredibly affordable. From around \$500 a night (for the entire four bedroom villa in low season, including staff and car), this is one indulgent experience up to eight friends and family can easily afford.

Our Villa Asmara experience included some friends who had never been to Bali before. By the end of our stay, we were all left wanting only one thing ... to return.

www.villaasmara.com