

FIRE WATER

A sleekly modern property set within lush nature, Bukit Naga – dragon's hill – in Bali lures the world-weary for a week or two of total relaxation and private indulgence. *Lucy Valdon* reports.



Main house at Bukit Naga

What? **Villa Bukit Naga** is an intimate estate in scenic central Bali. Originally built as a private holiday home, it is now available for bookings and can comfortably accommodate a large family or party of 12.

Who? It is the dream retreat of Hong Kong-based financier **John Duffield**. The well-travelled Briton escapes city living here with his family two or three times a year.

Where? A 15-minute drive from the artistic enclave of **Ubud**, the villa is perched on a hill (*bukit naga* means dragon hill) below the confluence of two rivers – which means it is blessed in local lore. Duffield terms it “a very elegant building in a wild setting”. The mist rises over the 50-foot infinity pool in the morning and the peaks of five volcanoes can be spied above the tree line. The airport and the beach at **Seminyak** are each about an hour away – Bukit Naga has two seven-seat vehicles with drivers at guests’ disposal.

Design Having bought the land in 2002, Duffield commissioned **Nymoman Miyoga**, a student of the renowned Bali-based Australian architect **Michael White** (a.k.a. Made Wijaya) to build “a sumptuous

property with a sense of grandeur”. The inspiration is traditional Balinese but with modern sensibilities and first-class materials such as Javanese marble, teak and glazed roof tiles. The spectacular main house has an expansive master suite upstairs and two ground-floor bedrooms, each with indoor-outdoor bath and garden. It forms a cluster with a two-bedroom villa with its own pool, and a romantic one-bedroom suite with landscaped bathroom and jacuzzi. Other buildings serve as quarters for the staff of 12, including villa manager and chef. The interiors, entrusted to Bebek Bengil (Dirty Duck) restaurateur turned designer **Mande Sudarta**, again beautifully combine local and international tastes. The mood is sleek and contemporary, brightened by Asian art and Chinese antiques.

Recreation The two-bedroom villa boasts a gym. A yoga coach and masseurs will come on request. A more comprehensive wellness programme will soon be available to guests, including instruction in the art of spa therapy. Cooking classes can be enjoyed in Ubud – Duffield promotes nearby French restaurant

Mozaic as “the finest dining I’ve ever had in Asia outside the cities”. The nearest beach is **Candi Dasa** (where the Amankila is situated), which is unspoiled with excellent snorkelling.

Service The owner lays claim to his villa staff – 10 of whom have been with him from the outset – as the best in Bali. Indeed, he was told so by the owner of a local rental management company with 30 properties on its books. All bedrooms are made up, even if there is only a party of four in situ, so guests can choose where to rest their heads on any given night.

What else? Villa Bukit Naga is an idyllic combination of contemporary comfort and elegance and natural beauty. “The heavens often open at 5pm, which just adds to the romance of the place; the downpour is best viewed from the upstairs balcony,” says the proud owner whose rental philosophy is that “people should be wowed from the time they arrive to the time they leave”.

To rent Call + 62 361 941118 or email info@villabukitnaga.com

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