



**PLACE OF**  
*Angels*

◆  
**A HEAVENLY RESORT IN  
THE MOUNTAINS OF BALI**





If you can get away for only a week's holiday and want a completely different landscape to refresh body and soul, head for Amandari. Bali's alluring new abode of "peaceful angels" is just that – a tiny, seductive resort of traditional Balinese pavilions, with never more than 60 guests, that floats high on a hillside above a rushing river.

Set in the Ayung River gorge in the Ubud region of central Bali, Amandari gives you the feeling that you are suddenly, unexpectedly, far away. And you are: there are no beaches, no day trippers, just an immensity of green rice terraces. It's the only escape where you can lie down by the pool and listen to the silence. And all by design.

The concept: to offer guests the greatest luxury in an authentic Balinese setting – but not too authentic to exclude air-conditioning if you want it (nobody does). Tradition reigns, but it's also luxury a-go-go. Sibling of Thailand's Amanpuri at Phuket, it too is the personal creation of Indonesian entrepreneur, Adrian Zecha, who believes resort development must be smaller and more personalised.

Time passes differently here. There's no television, no news, no noise, no dress requirement, not even a hairdresser. Days are spent doing nothing very much at all. You swim, walk, gaze, sleep, then wake up and start all over again. It seems much better than a health farm to help you to relax.



The suites are stunning: a house, often larger than the guests' own homes, is a private open-air pavilion by day, a cool enclosed haven by night. Modelled by Baliphile, Australian architect Peter Muller on a traditional village, the 27 pavilions and central *wantilan* (meeting place) are laid out according to a complex cosmological order and integrated with the adjacent rice-terraced village, Kedewatan. Built by local builders using traditional materials and techniques, each of the rooms resembles a Balinese compound house – private garden, Javanese marble floors, high thatched roof, coconut wood pillars, outdoor sunken bath – with sensitive decoration by Neville Marsh.



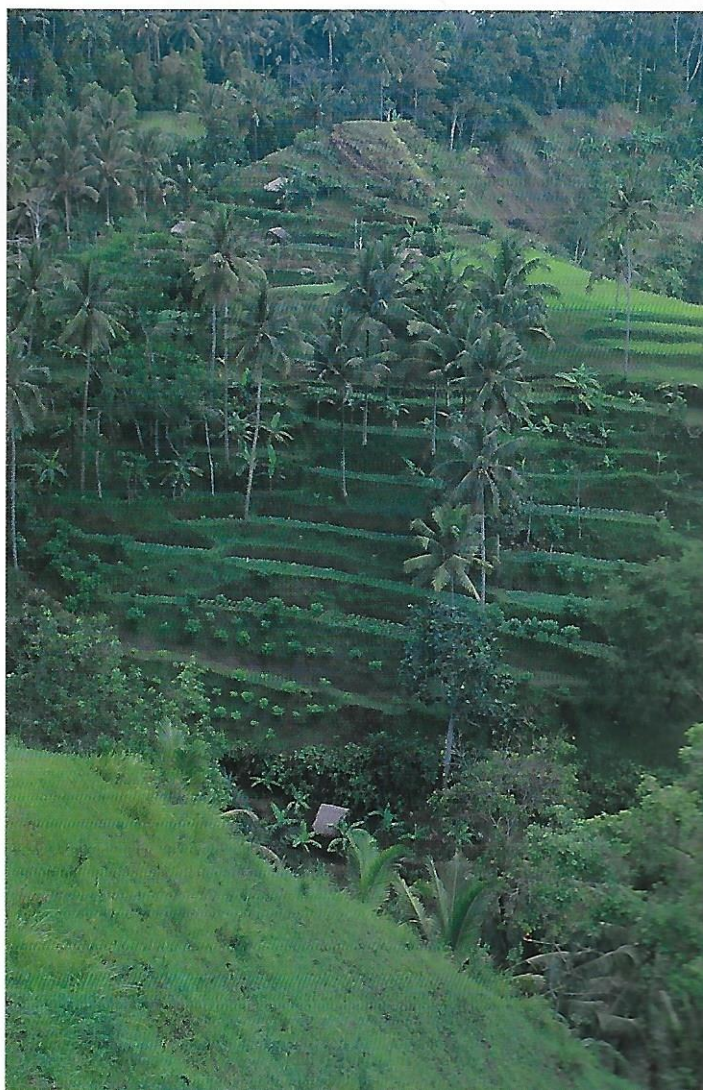
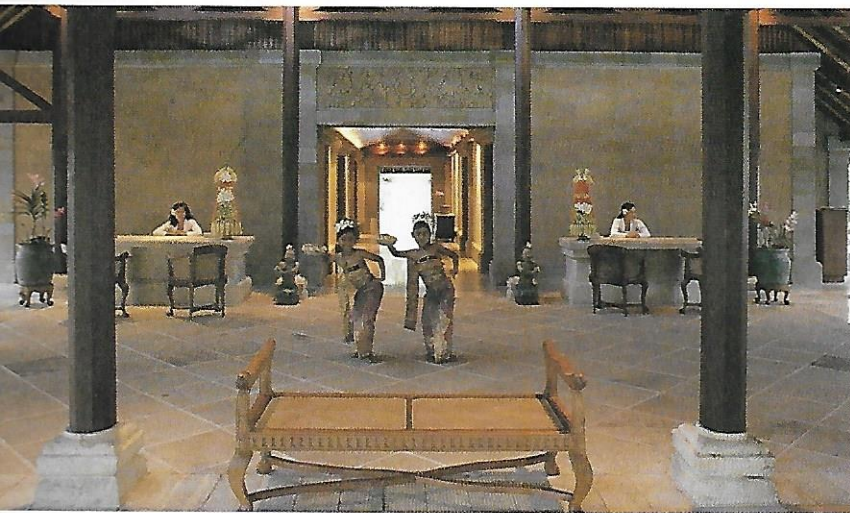


PHOTOGRAPHY: GEOFF LUNG PRODUCED BY MELISSA WALKER-SMITH



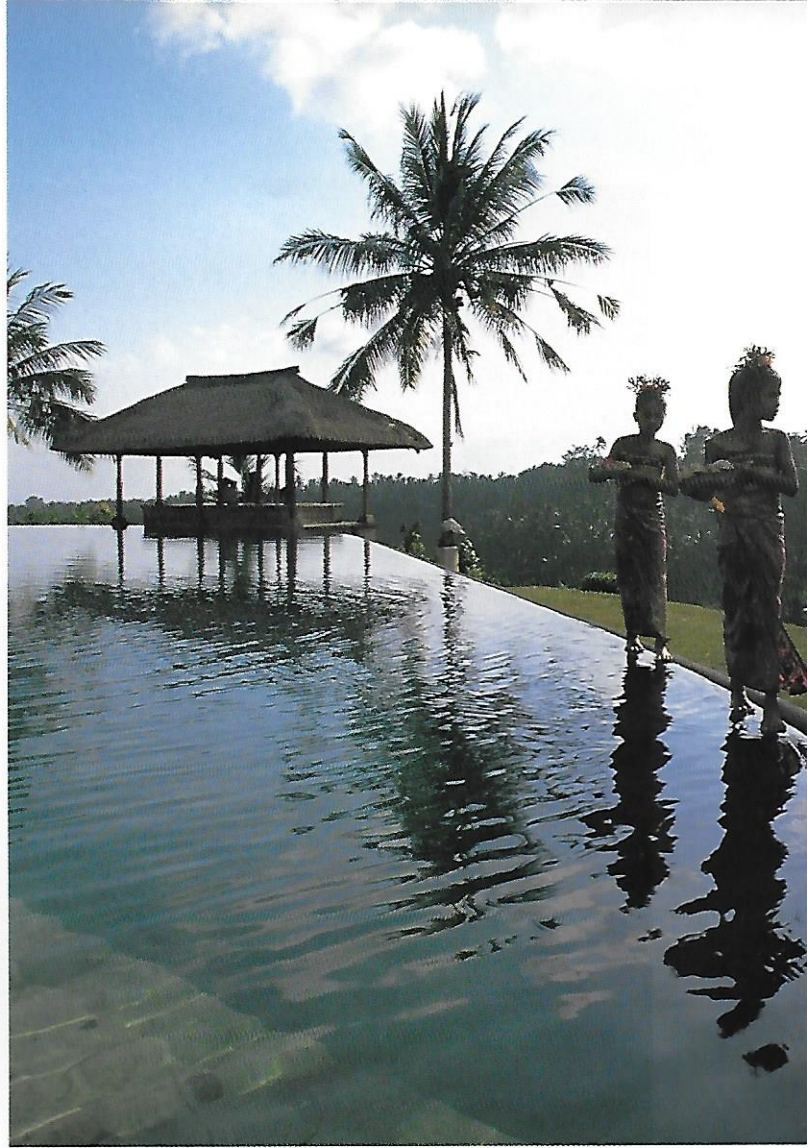
*At this bewitching resort an open pavilion, where a gamelan orchestra plays every evening, is set at the edge of the contoured pool, [previous page](#). Each suite at Amandari is an individual building, [these pages](#), where a leisurely breakfast, [opposite, top left](#), starts a totally stress-free day. The Balinese prefer to reserve colour for religious architecture, so the decoration by Neville Marsh is spare and serene, with whites and creams predominating. Sliding glass panels open onto a private garden, [opposite, below](#); marble floors and high thatched roof, [top](#), provide cool luxury. One of the staff accompanies the village priest, [left](#), who visits daily to place offerings at shrines around the hotel.*





*Social life at Amandari centres on its bars and the restaurant, **top**, overlooking the 29-metre pool, and the rice terraces, **right**. The reception area, **above**, with its conspicuous lack of computers and rows of keys on racks, is a refreshing change in the field of international hotel design. Local artists have created carvings in paras – a Balinese soapstone – and coconut wood columns soar into the high roof. Young girls, **opposite, below right and far right**, dressed in traditional costumes, come from the neighbouring village to greet hotel guests. In the gardens designed by Australian Michael White, a lily pond in a stone urn, **opposite, below left**, is a tranquil place to pause.*





There are two menus to choose from - one Indonesian and the other following western style. You eat whatever is brought in fresh that day, and you can eat anywhere - on your verandah, by the pool, or in the open-air restaurant. There are nice little touches everywhere: your name gilded onto a frangipani leaf at the dining table, a beautiful sarong provided to get you in the swing of paradise, evening treats such as a bottle of Moët & Chandon left in your suite, and tropical fruits arranged daily on palm leaves. But the clairvoyant housemaids pleased me most - they instinctively knew when to visit my pavilion to neatly line up every object I owned.

The staff (four to each guest) are delightful, smiling and friendly. They are all local villagers, happy to share with visitors the delights of the district that they have had all their lives - peace and quiet. Most have no previous experience - "no bad habits either" - and are trained in-house. "The idea," says manager Chris Teo, "is for them to welcome guests as if into their own home. We encourage them to make friends."

A local tracker will take guests across the river to undiscovered little villages, and Siti, the cultural liaisons manager (a famous sixth generation dancer), will take you to her home or to watch local ceremonies such as weddings and little festivals. There are drivers to transport you to special places in the east and north of the island for a picnic or to see the sun rise over a favourite spot, but they are under instructions to avoid main roads, large shops and the crowded south.

The temptation to 'do' Bali, to see the sights, ought to be resisted, for the essence of Amandari is not so easily discovered. Amandari is a place in which to linger and to listen and to learn. There are endless traditions. Go to do nothing and you will come back with more than you expected. □

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