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By Ed on July 1st, 2008 - Credibility Check - Photos

If you want to experience the 'real Bali' look past the beaches, clubs and chaos of Kuta and the flash restaurants of Seminyak and take the 40 minute drive north to Ubud. And if you REALLY want to get away from it all you'll want to stay at Bambu Indah villas, the inspiration of world-renowned jewelry designer, philanthropist and environmentalist John Hardy. There are only 4 villas and they all have magnificent views of the Ayung river valley and the rice fields below. From the outside the all-wood villas reminded me of summer cottages in Canada - very simple. The interiors although minimalist are comfortable with premium beds, air con, rustic furniture (ours had an awesome copper tub!), high quality bathroom fittings including a toilet with more functions than the space shuttle - and best of all the wireless internet was fast and free (I have panic attacks if I cant get online at a hotel...). The highlight of our stay was an invite from the squire himself, John Hardy, to a dinner party down by the river. We were joined by a travel writer, an art director from New York who were also staying at Bambu Indah as well as some of John's friends from Bali and Bangkok. All the food is organic and raised on his extensive properties adjacent to the villas including the freshwater shrimp that John pulled live from a pond - at the conclusion of the meal we tossed the disposable plates into the jungle (they were banana tree leaves...). A truly memorable night - the only negative was that we only had one night because we had already paid our hotel in Seminyak - however we are planning a longer stay when we head back to Bali in August.

Follow up - we are, as promised, back for another stay at Bambu Indah, this time for a full week. Enjoying the peace and tranquility and the awesome August weather. This trip we are getting a chance to try the cooking of Kadek, the Hardy family's chef of nearly 10 years - you place your order in advance and she and her team will custom cook whatever you desire (or you can leave it to her to come up with one of her many specialities). Our favourite dishes are the barbequed chicken (for those familiar with Fernando's in Macau, their signature dish BBQ chicken has met its match...) and the duck simmered in spices for 10 hours in clay in the earth.