

# THROUGH THE KEYHOLE

## Conversations with our villa owners



Elite Havens' villas come in many shapes and sizes. That they are all luxurious homes in some of Asia's most prized locations, brimming with first-class facilities and tended to by a caring team of staff, goes without saying, but beyond that, each and every villa has its own distinctive character. Many are the fulfilment of their owners' dreams and have interesting stories attached to their creation. 'Through the Keyhole' takes a peek behind the scenes and chats with some of our villa owners to find out how the dream became a reality.

In this issue the owners of [Villa Iman](#) tell us how they came to design and build their brand new luxury villa in Canggu.

### **So, Why Bali?**

We came to Bali more than 10 years ago and instantly fell in love with the island's breathtaking beauty, cultural complexity, but most of all the warmth and hospitality of the Balinese. When you think of building your dream home you want a dream location and Bali perfectly fits that mould for us.

### **What made you decide to hire architect Gary Fell and go for a custom designed villa instead of just buying something already built?**

The pre-existing villas we saw in Bali did not match our needs in terms of location, style, or size so we had no choice but go down the far harder route of buying the land and then building the villa ourselves. It has not been easy, but given what we've accomplished we certainly don't regret it.

In 2008 we stayed at Villa Niloufar, one of Gary Fell's first villa projects in Bali. We loved the design and hunted Gary down to see if he would design our villa for us, which he thankfully agreed to. Once we met Gary we clicked instantly, and being a fellow Brit made it that much

easier. We coupled Gary with our close friend, Rima Bokhari, who herself is an amazing architect, to create a powerful tag team.

### **How did the environment, neighbourhood and culture affect your design brief?**

Our goal was to leverage on the natural beauty of our Canggu surroundings, so, for example, we orientated the covered area to the right-hand-side of the land to allow for stunning sunset views over the paddy fields.

We believe in honouring tradition, and invited the local Mangku (priest) to advise us where to position our house temples. We then held an all-day blessing ceremony, for which the local community prepared incredible hand-made offerings.

### **What is unique about Villa Iman's location?**

We are uniquely located in a part of Canggu that allows guests to have the flexibility to align their holiday to their own needs. If they want to relax in the villa's swimming pool and TV room all day they can. If they want to go surfing and then enjoy an evening barbecue they can head down to Echo Beach. If they want to take the kids for a day out at the Canggu Club, it's only 10 minutes down the road. If they want to shop till they drop, Seminyak's boutiques are close at hand, and if they are avid golfers, the amazing Nirwana Golf Club is just 20 minutes away.

### **What risks and challenges were involved in building on this location?**

Our neighbours are the local rice farmers so our primary concern during the entire building process was to ensure that we did not affect their livelihood. We employed someone to liaise with the local community and alleviate any concerns, and held our contractor to strict guidelines to ensure that the local water supply was not affected by any chemicals or waste. We have purposefully invested in the best water filtration tanks to ensure we are seen as a responsible neighbour.

### **What is the best piece of advice you would give a person building their first villa in Bali?**

Don't! But seriously, make sure you do thorough due diligence when selecting your contractor, and re-write the penalty clauses for late completion or sub-standard work. We initially selected an MEP (mechanical, engineering and plumbing) contractor who was just not experienced enough to handle the complexity of our design. It was a painful and expensive lesson.

### **Tell us a little bit about the interiors and art Villa Iman?**

The villa's interiors are designed using luxurious materials, including beautiful teak wood, to create a warm soothing space. The art is all local Balinese as we pay homage to their incredible handicraft skills and blend this with our modern and minimalist villa design.

### **Do you have some favourite interior and art sources you would like to share?**

Clare Mulholland has helped us find and select the majority of our locally produced interiors. A real favourite amongst the many local sources we've found is De-Lighting, which has a very creative team and excellent imported light fittings.

### **What authentic local experiences will guests have access to?**

Guests don't need to go far for incredible local experiences. Our chef offers Indonesian and Balinese cooking classes for adults and kids in the villa kitchen. We can easily organise a relaxing massage, and we have an amazing tarot card reader available for private sessions. If you still feel an urge to venture out, we can arrange a car to take you sightseeing – perhaps to the stunning Tanah Lot sea temple, which is only 15 minutes away.

### **How would you describe Villa Iman's staffing, cuisine and atmosphere?**

The atmosphere at The Iman is all about comfort and relaxation – whether lounging by the pool, watching a movie on the 60-inch TV screen, or having a massage in the sunken lounge.

Our staff do a great job. They have been professionally trained by Elite Havens to cater to the needs of every guest and we have set up an incentive scheme where they get additional benefits based on positive guest feedback, so it is all about the guest experience.

We handpicked our chef based on his incredible culinary skills. He used to work on a Royal Caribbean cruise liner so he is able to cook a wide variety of international cuisine. He's a barbecue master and we have given him a professional pizza oven to play with too. One of our staff used to be professional bartender and can make any drink on request. So there's really no need go anywhere else to eat or drink at all!

Visit us at [www.theimanvilla.com](http://www.theimanvilla.com) to find out more.