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## bali dreaming

*There's a lot of magic in Bali, but perhaps nowhere more so than at the new Regent Bali Canggu. STEPHENIE GEE checks in to the upper luxury brand's first property in Indonesia and discovers pure island bliss*

CANGGU HUMS WITH a unique energy. Nestled along the southwestern coast of the Indonesian island of Bali, its streets are a lively mix of yoga studios, bustling cafes, trendy boutiques and beachside hangouts, drawing a vibrant community from all corners of the globe. Yet, even amidst its rapid evolution, Canggu manages to hold on to its charm, with lush rice fields and quieter pockets waiting to be discovered. The new Regent Bali Canggu embodies this balance. Tucked away from the bustling beach-bound roads, this coastal haven stands in perfect equilibrium – a sanctuary of serenity and stimulation.

Since its inception in 1970, IHG's upper luxury hotel and resort brand has stood for timeless modernity, understated luxury and intuitive service. The majority

of its current locations sprawl across Asia, and it has a curious history in Bali dating back decades ago when Regent founders Robert H. Burns, Georg Rafael and Adrian Zecha – who later founded Aman – built the world's first large-scale, all-villa resort. Of course, the then-pioneering move has become ubiquitous in tropical locales in particular, but Regent didn't get credit for it – they sold the property before it bowed, and it opened in 1993 as Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay.

Newly opened this November, the Regent Bali Canggu marks a full-circle return for the brand. Conceived as a living, breathing tribute to Bali's natural and cultural rhythm, the resort's design is deeply symbolic, woven with layers of meaning that honour Balinese heritage in every form and finish. Perhaps the





most striking is the monumental, five-tonne Javanese paras sandstone carving at the arrival pavilion. Hand-chiselled over 30 days by a handful of local artisans, the stonework speaks to the island's enduring beauty and artistic legacy, featuring a sacred lotus (or *padma* in Sanskrit) motif that evokes the spiritual purity of the *padmasana* throne, offering both a visual and philosophical anchor throughout the resort.

There are no rooms. Only suites and villas – and very nice ones at that. If you're lucky, you'll enjoy one of Regent's seven one-bedroom oceanfront villas – stunning mini-estates with expansive panoramas from the living room and bedroom, complete with infinity pool, cushy cabana, large grassy lawn and butler's pantry stocked with drinks and snacks, all steps from the sand. Otherwise, the 141 spacious suites are equally sublime, especially the ground-floor ones with direct lagoon access from the terrace. Spanning 87 sqm, my one-bedroom suite offered peaceful seclusion with a living room and balcony opening

Clockwise from top left: An aerial view of Regent Bali Canggu, the Studio Suite bedroom, arrival pavilion and spacious Penthouse living room

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on to views of the lush tropical gardens. Perched just above the shoreline, the pair of two-bedroom penthouses offer the best of both worlds, each with a 38-foot-long infinity pool that bleeds into the seascape below.

Architecturally, WATG has sensitively married Balinese hallmarks with clean, contemporary silhouettes while the interiors by Hirsch Bedner Associates draw from a palette grounded in nature – warm neutrals alongside wood and stone expressed in a variety of textures that subtly echo traditional batik, *songket* motifs and Balinese iconography – with occasional pops of colour like green Indian marble shower accent walls and golden throw pillows. All bespoke, the furniture feels comfortably residential yet refined. My favorite aspect of the design was the solid teakwood bathtub – a “personal haven” in Regent speak – carved intricately with the masked face of the mythical Barong creature. Regardless of room type, all 150 accommodations have one.

On amenities and homey touches, it’s hard to top unlimited laundry and pressing service, in-room yoga mats, a robust pillow menu and the Dyson hairdryer. Sleep came easily to me in the four-poster bed with a headboard sleekly equipped with clearly labelled buttons for everything. Moreover, there’s the Refreshment Gallery, Regent’s version of a minibar. In keeping with the brand’s spirit of generosity, the initial stock of Bali gin and Scotch whisky, beer, soft beverages such as *jamu*, a traditional Indonesian anti-inflammatory elixir made with fresh turmeric, ginger, honey and a squeeze of lemon, and locally made artisanal snacks is gratis.

Dining is positioned as a major component of the resort’s offering with six venues spanning Balinese, Asian and international cuisine. Two of the restaurants – Sazón and Cure – are led by award-winning Irish chef Andrew Walsh. The former, located a short buggy ride outside the actual resort grounds along Batu Bolong, features



Mediterranean-inspired dishes built around shared plates, seafood and fire-roasted vegetables. During our dinner, standouts included the squid-ink paella, jamón croquettes, and Spanish potato and onion tortillas with chorizo jam. And the latter, opening early next year, will draw inspiration from Walsh’s Michelin-starred Singapore restaurant, merging Asian influences with Indonesian produce. Rooted in the Latin meaning of “to take care”, Cure embodies life’s finest pleasures: exceptional food, wine, culture and tradition

Other favourites include Taru, which serves authentic Indonesian fare such as *rendang sapi* and *udang bakar pete* in a bright, airy space; and Beach House, where you can sip on artisanal cocktails and savour fresh, locally sourced coastal cuisine amidst the sounds of crashing waves and the ocean breeze.

Access to the private and quietly serene Regent Club, set at the top of the resort with an adults-only pool embracing the full panorama, is only included for villa and penthouse guests but is available as an add-on to suite



Clockwise from far right: Locally-sourced coastal cuisine at Beach House, another aerial shot of the resort, a local artisan at work on the arrival pavilion carving, inside Sazón and the solid teakwood bathtub

bookings. With its generously spaced indoor tables and deep, cushion-y outdoor setups, the Regent Club is a source of complimentary all-day fare, from mid-morning refreshments to afternoon tea, sunset cocktails and sweet evening rituals. An ever-changing lineup of special Balinese cultural experiences is also part of the private club deal. I sign up for the *lontar* engraving. A practice used for centuries as a way of recording Balinese tales, this traditional art form involves using a sharp, knife-like tool called *pengrupak* to inscribe messages using *aksara Bali*, the island's traditional script, on dried palm leaves, then rubbing charred candlenut over the engravings to give it colour.

Of course, no visit to the island would be complete without some relaxation and rejuvenation. Regent Spa & Wellness – the world's first Regent-branded spa – surely delivers on that, but also more. Sitting at the top of the cascading resort, the spa houses seven treatment rooms – including a couple's suite – plus a plunge pool and sauna. The menu of treatments is extensive, designed to still

the mind and awaken the senses by blending ancient Balinese healing with contemporary techniques like aromatherapy, crystals and light. Consider the signature Massage Revolution, which is performed on a warm bed of quartz sand – said to have anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving results – moulded to support and cocoon your body, while deep pressure and neroli essence to calm the senses and promote natural healing are applied.

From the silky robes to calming ambience and soothing scent of botanicals, the wellness experience is all excellently executed. The same goes for fitness. At the adjacent 24/7 Health Club, you can work out alone or book bespoke training or one of the complimentary morning yoga and afternoon fitness classes.

Service is white-glove, respectful and prompt – in particular from my personal Regent Experience Agent, a signature, central point of contact assigned to each guest to streamline service throughout their stay, from seamless check-ins and reservations to thoughtful touches that say “we noticed”. I never waited more than two minutes for a WhatsApp response, and they'd kindly let me know what time a buggy would be outside our door in advance of reservations. In the restaurants and by the poolside, staff knew my name and that I preferred still water. You never feel fussy, or indeed, fussed over. The endlessly obliging staff seem just as delighted to be there as you are. One evening, after a long day out, I returned to my suite to find a hot herbal bath drawn up and ready for me to dive into – before diving into my crisp white linen sheets for what could very possibly have been the best night's sleep of my life.

The next morning, I would be embarking on my journey back home, but suddenly it didn't feel like a chore; rested and refreshed, I left as if walking on air. Until I got home, that is, and realised I was back to running my own baths. #

