

A paradise Mads couldn't leave

Kim Nightingale
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While working at a publisher of Asian studies, I often heard the name Mads Lange. As history tells us, the Danes got around, and Mads was no exception. He did his job of 19th century mediating between the Rajas and the Dutch so thoroughly that he earned the title 'King of Bali.'

This Danish trader and peacemaker pleads guilty to another exploit Scandinavian explorers have been accused of: stealing local woman. Judging from his photo, he must have had his pick of the ladies right? He fathered children with two women and still found time to add Bali's rice and spices to the trade route. His grave is South of Ubud, close to where I am headed.

To get there, I don't navigate the seas like Mads, but rather arrive in a big bird with wine onboard. After an hour's drive through villages and rice fields, I am ecstatic to hear that the first treatment on the scheduled retreat starts in 15 minutes – a Balinese Boreh. Fatigue and vertigo prevent me from asking what that is, but the smell of incense and the sound of the rushing Ayung River convince me it will be glorious. Birds chirp and a lizard scurries by, as the practitioner dips my toes into a footbath accompanied by a cucumber-infused glass of water.

Next, the perfect amount of pressure works out tensions during a deep tissue massage, and the coffee and cinnamon body scrub afterwards makes my skin glow. The finale is a warm bath in a large stone tub (there is one in each private room facing the river) filled with tropical flowers that cling to the skin as if to say 'please don't go!' First impressions? I can't count how many times I think, 'This couldn't be any better.'



Surrounded by jungle, Fivlements covers over 2009sqm of attentively designed landscape based on the ancient Balinese science of construction called 'Mandala Nawa Sanga.' Put simply, the focus is on directional alignments and how constructions blend into nature using eco-conscious principles. The seven high-ceilinged, straw-roofed suites encompass a rustic open-air concept.

Sliding doors and a bamboo wall separate the room from an outdoor

shower and toilet. Sacred sites such as the healing village, the mandala spaces for yoga, martial arts,

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and dance as well as the pools, remind guests to nurture mind, body and spirit. This expounds on two traditional Balinese philosophies: Tri Hita Karana, honouring people, nature and God and Tri Kaya Parisudha, pure thoughts, speech and actions (the latter being the name of the 5 day detox transformation I am on, so I'll try to keep it clean).'

Of the different retreats is also Panca Mahabhuta for replenishment and 'Finding Centre' to explore pottery and yoga. A key part of these retreats is that due to purifying treatments and the beneficial 'living food' concept, emotional and physical shifts are almost inevitable. Some are subtle; however, according to the guests' comments, it is life-changing for many.



This centre is filled with highly skilled professionals who offer nurturing specialization. A consultation with the program organizer allows revisions to the health form (sent long before arrival) as it seems, while you unclutter your mind, a myriad of highs and lows appear.

During my stay, I experience fits of ecstasy, waves of nausea, a few tears and a lot of laughs – this is not on the brochure!

Among the recent wave of unconventional spas springing up

around the world, Fivelements stands out for its authenticity. One noteworthy ritual held at the centre's temple is the water blessing ceremony.

They warn me it will be cold, but I am warmed by Sanskrit chanting and the ringing of a small bell. That does not last – it is cold, yet walking back to my room in my sopping wet sarong, I feel energized, renewed and ready for whatever comes next. What comes next is a handsome, young, yoga instructor with the posture of a marine who takes me through a flowing sequence.

The private session ends with him guiding my limbs through a Tai Chi-style stretch that throws me into bliss, so of course I laugh when he says, 'Now time for relaxation.' A short closing meditation and I'm off to a breakfast of yogurt and goji berries.



The week flies by filled with bodywork, massage, colonic hydrotherapy, Somatic (dialogue and movement) and water healing (please try this – it will move you in more ways than one), and oh yeah, did I mention the award-winning food?

Ultimately, the remote location enables you to take time for yourself, a partner or creative work - without diversions. "This is why we don't have televisions in the rooms" says one of the owners Chicco Tatriele. "We have enough

screen time; the focus is on reconnecting with your authentic self." No matter which direction you look in, everything is alive - in turn, you become more alive and peaceful.

So if you happen to be in Bali, Fivelements invites you to be a peacemaker by currently offering a deal of (pay for 2 nights at a 50% discount and stay one free and any retreat of 3/5/7/10/14/21 nights at a 10% discount.

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