

DESTINATION ♦ BALI



Cool water down my rash shirt wakes me up as I launch on to a sleek Firewire board and paddle out at Old Man's Beach. Beside me, Tropic Surf coach CJ Kimell is explaining the shape of the reef that sits beneath us and instructing me into position to catch my first wave of the day. I pop up on a baby break and cruise towards the shore, the arched rooflines of the penthouses at the new COMO Uma Canggu looking back at me like hooded eyes.

Bali is still waking up; the air is crisp and clean above the dark-sand beach. To the north, the black ijuk crowns of the Batu Mejan temple shimmer in the morning light and to the south, the next planeload of travellers is touching down on the island of the gods.

The beach break south of us looks like Times Square – a riot of multi-coloured boards and rash shirts. "That's Tugu," CJ tells me. "It looks crazy but it's so chilled out there... it's like catching up over coffee in a cafe, but in the surf. You sit a while and chat, you might catch a wave, but it's more about the socialising."

It's this morning scene – and the consistent peeling waves – that has seen Canggu, north of the fabulous but increasingly claustrophobic hustle of Seminyak, boom.

There are seven surf breaks within walking distance of the new five-star COMO property, which is why they've teamed with Tropic Surf. The outfit offers lessons and surf trips from some of the world's most luxurious hotels, and here, the surf shack is filled with a quiver of eco-friendly boards ready to help you find your feet.

When the swell is up, the surf at Canggu can overwhelm a beginner, but CJ says he can quickly work out where his clients sit on a scale of one to 10 and tailor the lesson to suit. For complete beginners, you can even learn to surf in the hotel's 1500m lagoon pool where you may be able to see the surf, but it can't punish you.

WORD ABOUT THE BLONDE FEMALE SURFERS HANGING OUT SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE

When CJ swapped Sweden for Bali six years ago, he says, "Canggu was off the radar". Hipster Aussies and mad-ken surfers may be credited with the migration north from Seminyak, but CJ reckons it was Scandinavians who really put it on the map. While working for a local surf camp, CJ says word about the gaggle of blonde female surfers hanging out every Friday at Old Man's Bar, post-surf, spread like wildfire across the island.

Once co-working spaces like Dojo started sprouting up among the rice paddies, Canggu was then cemented

on the digital nomad map. I see them in the morning, huddled around laptops and acai bowls from Nalu Bowls, the cafe adjoining the space which sits a few steps from the front entrance of Uma Canggu. A spray of flip flops is at the door.

"Back then people would ask, 'do you know a place to stay in Canggu without roosters next door?'," CJ says. "Now they're asking, 'do you know a place to stay without a construction site next door?'"

"Canggu is such a trendy area, it was only a matter of time until it blossomed," Eugene Feklistov, COMO regional director of sales, tells me over 30-day whisky-aged beef in the Beach Club later that day. "I've only been here 18 months and it's already changed so much in that time."

Next door, a construction project by Intercontinental is taking shape, while last year saw the opening of the 12-room boutique bar-meets-hotel, The Slow, by ex-Ksubi boys, George Gorrow and Gareth Moody on nearby Jalan Batu Bolong.

But opening a 119-room hotel just metres from what was a once-sleepy beach where people had been

accustomed to fresh coconuts on the sand and uncrowded waves is not without its challenges.

"We wanted to bring something new, but on the other hand we want to blend in," Eugene explains.

Aesthetically, the hotel can't be missed – it screams new on a modest section of street with a few market-style stalls and surf shops. Stretched across a 0.8ha beach frontage, it's a modern, five-storey Balinese-inspired design crowned with 12 penthouse apartments, each with its own rooftop pool.

My favourite part is the punchy surf shack-style decor and interior design of the Beach Club where we sit next to a 25m lap pool framed by swing-chairs and palm trees. The vision of Italian architect and designer, Paola Navone, tables are plastered with kaleidoscopic prints, which let the monochromatic, handpainted crockery and paint-splattered melamine dishes pop against silver tin placemats.

A turquoise tiled bar is marooned in the centre, crowned by a bamboo roof with a DJ booth where 2m-tall metal masks pop from the wall.

Smiling staff in denim aprons and newsboy caps work in the semi-open kitchen, which boasts a "monster grill" and pizza oven that can deliver the perfect Neapolitan-style beer base in 90 seconds.

Executive chef Kiwi Dwayne Cheer, who previously headed up the kitchen at Potato Head and Soori Bali, has designed a menu that walks a Mex-Call-meets-Morocco line, while the healthy COMO Shambhala dishes for which the hotel brand is famous still make an appearance. Try the green eggs and big raw salad at least once during your stay.

But for all its five-star luxury and shiny newness, COMO has easily slipped into Canggu's consciousness – with an onus on health, wellness and surf.

"Canggu is wellness," Eugene says. "You talk about the trendiest yoga, it's here. The best pilates, it's here," he says.

It makes sense then that the spa and gym occupy almost every inch of space not occupied by reception in the main building. And why daily pilates and yoga classes are offered alongside reformer, anti-gravity yoga



DESTINATION ♦ BALI



COMO's surf shack-style Beach Club has a 25m lap pool, and the menu focus is healthy; accommodation options include three-bed penthouses, each with a private pool, and suites and rooms.

PICTURES: COMO HOTELS

and CrossFit. Glow cafe will soon open up to the street for post-workout smoothies and grab-and-go salads (though it will have competition from cleverly named Debble Does Salad in the adjacent laneway).

Outside, the neighbourhood pace is picking up to meet the next wave of Canggu devotees, now there's more accommodation to choose from.

Five years ago, Deus Ex Machina's sprawling Temple of Enthusiasm cafe, bar, art gallery, custom

motorbike and surf shop sat like an island in the middle of the rice fields. Now it serves as a central landmark among the booming Canggu junction, with new cafes and boutiques sprouting faster than you can say *terima kasih* (thank you).

Expats zip by on scooters while travellers clutch their camera phones, selfie-ready, for coffees at Crate and The Loft when I wander out to explore in the roasting midday sun. The markets and boutiques are buzzing

but for all its progress, rice fields tended by farmers and tiny warungs still pop up between the day spas, boutiques and bars. For now, everything is in balance.

It's a thought echoed in my head as I watch the sunset from a pool lounge, a few surfers sitting out back waiting for a break, and toast to health, wellness and the spicy tamarind margaritas.

THE AUTHOR WAS A GUEST OF COMO HOTELS

ESCAPE ROUTE

BALI

GETTING THERE

Virgin Australia has daily direct flights to Denpasar from Brisbane, Sydney and Port Headland. virginaustralia.com.au
Echo Beach in Canggu is around one hour's drive north of Ngurah Rai International Airport. Private transfers can be arranged when booking.

STAYING THERE

Rooms and suites at COMO Uma Canggu start at \$US250 (about \$340) + tax a night, and up to \$US1500 + tax a night for a three-bedroom penthouse. comohotels.com/umacanggu

DOING THERE

Surf lessons with Tropic Surf start at \$US95 a person for coaching and gear, usually one-on-one, but never more than a student to instructor ratio of 4:1. tropicsurf.com
Top and tail your COMO Shambhala massage in the onsite spa with time in the steam room and a blissful hot towel neck compress to end.
The COMO Beach Club at Uma Canggu is open to the public with a minimum spend of 50,000 rupiah (about \$50) a person and a rotation of live music and DJs. Book ahead for a daybed or swing chair.



Cruise1st.com.au

Call today on 1300 790 763

Quote SYDNEY

Cruise1st Opening Hours: OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

Check out 1000's more offers at www.cruise1st.com.au/press-offers

FREE RETURN FLIGHTS

P&O

PACIFIC JEWEL FAREWELL VOYAGE

PACIFIC JEWEL
19 NIGHTS • 24 FEBRUARY 2019

- FREE Return flights from Sydney
- 16 night cruise from Melbourne visiting Busselton, Fremantle, Bali, Penang, Langkawi, Port Kelang (Kuala Lumpur) and Singapore
- Oceanview upgrade
- All meals and entertainment onboard
- Gratuities onboard the cruise are included in the price
- 2 night stay in Singapore

Exclusive Oceanview price from **\$1,949pp**

Web Cruise Ref: **POJW2402**

Holland America Line

HIGHLIGHTS OF CHINA & JAPAN

QUANTUM OF THE SEAS
15 NIGHTS • 14 MARCH 2019

- Return flights from Sydney
- 7 night tour of China including hotel stays in Beijing, Suzhou, Hangzhou and Shanghai
- Highlights include Tiananmen Square and The Forbidden City, Great Wall of China, High Speed bullet train experience, Lingering Garden, Meijiawu Tea village, a boat ride on the West Lake and more!
- 7 night cruise from Shanghai (Baoshan) visiting Kyoto (Osaka), Kobe, Tokyo (Yokohama) and Shanghai (Baoshan)
- All meals and entertainment onboard
- Gratuities onboard the cruise are included in the price

Exclusive price from **\$1,999pp**

Web Cruise Ref: **RCIQN1403**

Holland America Line

HONG KONG & JAPAN DISCOVERY

ms WESTERDAM
19 NIGHTS • 15 MARCH 2019

- Return flights from Sydney
- 2 night stay in Hong Kong
- 14 night cruise from Hong Kong visiting Shanghai (2 days/1 night), Qingdao, Beijing (Tianjin, 2 days/1 night), Nagasaki, Kagoshima and Tokyo (Yokohama)
- All meals and entertainment onboard
- 2 night stay in Tokyo

Oceanview upgrade from **\$169pp**

Exclusive price from **\$2,899pp**

Web Cruise Ref: **HALWS1503**

Celebrity Cruises

HAWAII, ALASKA, DENALI & LAS VEGAS

CELEBRITY SOLISTICE & ROYAL PRINCESS
28 NIGHTS • 28 APRIL 2019

- Return flights from Sydney
- 2 night stay in Honolulu
- 10 night cruise onboard Celebrity Solstice (gratuities included) from Honolulu (Oahu) visiting Hilo, Kailua Kona, Maui (Lahaina, 2 days/1 night) and Vancouver
- 7 night cruise onboard Royal Princess from Vancouver visiting Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway, scenic cruising Glacier Bay National Park, College Fjord and Anchorage
- All meals and entertainment onboard both cruises
- 3 night tour from Seward to Denali, Mt McKinley and Anchorage
- Highlights include Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, Talkeetna, Wilderness Express from Denali to Anchorage plus so much more!
- Flight from Anchorage to Las Vegas
- 3 night stay in Las Vegas

Exclusive price from **\$5,499pp**

Web Cruise Ref: **CELPRI2804**

Celebrity Cruises

GRAND VOYAGE SINGAPORE TO ROME

CELEBRITY CONSTELLATION
35 NIGHTS • 16 MARCH 2020

- Return flights from Sydney
- 1 night stay in Singapore
- 30 night* cruise from Singapore visiting Phuket, Colombo, Cochin, Goa (Mormugao), Bombay (Mumbai, 2 days/1 night), Muscat, Dubai (2.5 days/2 nights), Muscat, Aqaba, transit Suez Canal, Athens, Katakolon and Rome (Civitavecchia)
- All meals and entertainment onboard
- Gratuities onboard the cruise are included in the price
- 3 night stay in Rome

Exclusive price from **\$5,999pp**

Web Cruise Ref: **CELC1603**

CUNARD

BALTIC, NORWAY & NEW YORK CITY

QUEEN VICTORIA & QUEEN MARY 2
34 NIGHTS • 12 MAY 2020

- Return flights from Sydney
- 2 night stay in London
- 19 night* cruise onboard Queen Victoria from Southampton visiting Bornholm, Gdynia, Klaipeda, St Petersburg (2 days/1 night), Riga, Warnemunde, Copenhagen, Gothenburg, Southampton
- Stavanger, Nordfjord, Geiranger, cruise-by Geirangerfjord/Sunnfjord/Storefjord, Bergen and Southampton
- 7 night cruise onboard Queen Mary 2 from Southampton to New York
- All meals and entertainment onboard all cruises
- Up to **US\$560 FREE onboard spend per stateroom**
- 3 night stay in New York

Exclusive price from **\$10,999pp**

Web Cruise Ref: **CUN201205**

All prices are from prices and are per person, based on a twin share and were correct at time of going to print, are valid for new bookings only and are subject to change. Prices are inclusive of taxes and port charges. Transfers and gratuities may not be included in the price, check at time of booking. Visas are required for certain destinations, and are the responsibility of the customer. Cruise1st recommends all travellers purchase travel insurance at time of booking. Itineraries, including hotels, airfares and advised prices are subject to availability and subject to change/omission at any time. Airlines are based on economy flights. Combination cruises may not be allocated the same stateroom. Onboard credit is up to, per cabin and dependent on cabin category chosen. Fees apply based against the cruise lines cabin only prices.