



SARINBUANA: AN ECO LODGE ON “THE COCONUT SHELL ROCK”



SAMANTHA CHALKER x DECEMBER 28, 2014 x ACCOMMODATION x WHAT'S HOT

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Just outside the retreat's restaurant, a woman from Slovakia is sprawled out on her back on a mosey bench, staring at the stars. Without shifting her whimsical gaze, she pronounces her declaration of love: “I dreamt about being here for two years before I made it. And it's been better than I could have ever imagined.”

Such is the spellbinding optimism induced by **Sarinbuana Eco Lodge**.

Nestled in an untapped valley that tumbles off **Mount Batukaru** is a playground for those who relish in the overused mantras of the intrepid traveller; off the beaten track where jungle lovers can blaze their own path, roam wild and free and seek adventure.

The valley of Mount Batukaru

Mount Batukara, Indonesian for “the coconut shell rock”, stands at 2200 metres above sea level, making it **the second highest mountain in Bali**. Its ecosystem is an undocumented collection of rumours involving free roaming **leopard cats** and hidden fresh water rock pools.

Back in 1990, before the pioneers of the Sarinbuana's Eco Lodge descended on the valley, Mount Batukaru was a fragment of what it is today. In a rare example of development positively impacting its natural surrounds, the presence of the van't Hoff family has seen the sprawls of Sarinbuana flourish thanks to their proficient knowledge of permaculture and sustainability.



The proof sits in a book found in the retreat's communal dining area that details over 100 medicinal and edible plants now found in the retreat's backyard and on its restaurant menu. The likes of moringa tree, noni, aloe vera and ginseng have come together with the delights of coffee, cacao, coconut and vanilla, inspiring thousands of new butterflies, birds and insects to call the mountain home.

Although 18 square kilometres of the **Batukaru Rainforest** have been dedicated to the [preservation of nature](#), much of it is still left unprotected, making the work of the van't Hoff's not just beneficial, but critical.

Staying at Sarinbuana Eco-Lodge



Down a garden path and into the valley, the 5 coconut wood and bamboo bungalows of Sarinbuana wait perched in all their natural beauty. Each one is individually decorated in pastel patchwork [batiks](#) and **traditional artisan ornaments**, giving a new meaning to the word homely.

Sunken lounge rooms look out over the jungle, offering the perfect place to watch an afternoon downpour; the kind that taps the bougainvillea and hibiscus from their branches; the kind that doesn't stop the **Bali Black Eagles** and the Collared Kingfishers from darting down the valley; and the kind that leaves the palms and the ginger flowers shining like plastic.

In the hours that aren't spent meditating on the daily phases of the forests, a stream of culturally immersive activities are on offer. Between the **traditional calligraphy**, the wood carving course and the cooking class, the massage by the turtle pond almost seems boring.

Along with the appeal of Sarinbuana's setting is the lure of fresh mountain air, drinkable tap water straight from the valley and a pole-frame hut fit for classes and ceremonies. Like the accommodation itself, the Sarinbuana guest doesn't fit a stereotype. Neighbouring country city dwellers, groups of yoga teachers in the making and intimate wedding parties have all been welcomed by the van't Hoff family.



Taking “eco-retreat” to the next level

The term “eco-retreat” gets thrown around pretty casually now that it's synonymous with **chic tree houses** and kimono photoshoots. But Sarinbuana goes over and above the reminder to reuse your towel sign and a couple of organic soaps.

There are no TVs, no air-conditioning units and no insect coils or repellants. If you're afraid of an 8-legged critter in your room or bothered by a trail of insects, they will be safely relocated back into the garden. As the guest book educates, spiders are for eating mosquitoes, **geckos** are for scaring off mice and ants are for breaking down compost. The magic of the valley is left to its own devices with the knowledge that **everything has a purpose**.



Guests can also choose to ramp up the environmental consciousness of their stay by picking the “**eco-meals**” on the menu. For lunch, this might mean a salad of shredded coconut, Lombok chili and wild harvested fiddlehead fern tips; for dinner, this could be young coconut soup and a Sumatran curry followed by raw chocolate mousse. No one said **eating environmentally** had to mean compromise.

Following on in the theme of empowering guests to be eco, visitors to Sarinbuana are given the option to offset the carbon emissions of their **flights to Bali**. A dollar figure is calculated based on their original destination and the number of trees it will take to square off their gallivants with the planet. Those traipsing in from South America can expect 16 habitat-forming trees to be planted in their honour at a cost of \$65, where as those hailing from Australia will only need to fork out \$20 for 5 new forest additions. A small price to pay to feel even better about your holiday.



If you're not one for tree hugging, there is the option to donate to the myriad of Sarinbuana's sponsored projects, including **weekly English classes for locals from the village**, maintenance for the local school, student university scholarships and rubbish clean ups.

Some might like to romanticize the idea of the mountain before electricity and the occupancy of a few foreigners, but there is no denying the **remarkably positive impact of the Sarinbuana Eco Lodge**. It's calling all travellers who shudder at the thought of checking-in to a chain hotel and spending their holiday in a shopping mall.

Nota Bene: If you consider yourself a budding David Attenborough, they happen to be on the hunt for a nighttime photographer to document unrecorded wildlife species of the mountain. Send an e-mail to the address below for more info.

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