



# Stone House

Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

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9/10

Telegraph expert rating

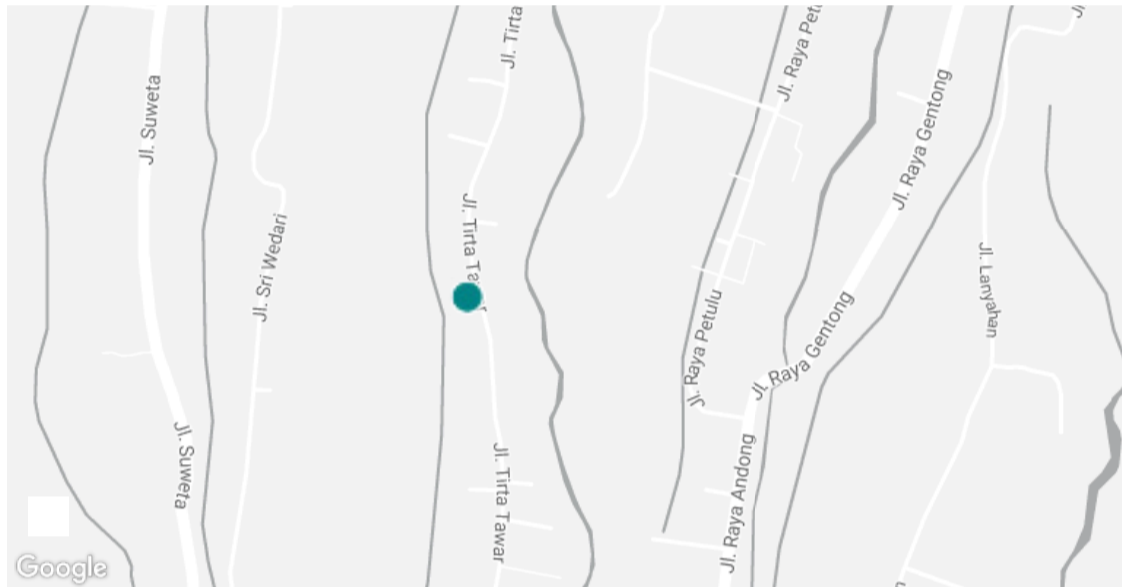
" Outside a manic melting pot of artists, expats and tourists in Ubud is the Stone House, a concealed sanctuary for tropic escapism boasting salvaged wooden textures – all with fascinating backgrounds – and manicured blooms, with enough home comfort to tempt you to linger here for good. "

By **Benjamin Parker**,  
TRAVEL WRITER

## Location

9/10

Ubud, just over an hour from Denpasar airport, is the cultural heart of Bali: Yogis searching for balance, workshops of island's best artisans, well-preserved temples. The Stone House is 1.5 miles (2.4km) north of the town, along a narrow road bordered by rice fields and the occasional building. Silence is punctured only by geckos, running water and call of birds. Eat, Pray, Love – the 2010 film starring Julia Roberts – may have introduced audiences to Ubud's colourful Hindu culture. Less expected are streets thronged with tourists and mopeds speeding the wrong way. Peace can be found; bike tours starting in a forest near Kintamani take guests downhill through the backroads of 'old Bali'. You can walk to town, where attractions include the monkey forest, kecak dances and gamelan performances, but taxis are cheap; one-way should cost no more than IDR 50,000 (£3).



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## Style & character

9/10

With only a limestone wall along the road the Stone House stays relatively anonymous, exactly the effect American owners Walker Zabriskie and Wendy Kassel were keen on. Until they took their first booking they debated whether to keep it a tropical hideaway for themselves; now it's a contemporary b&b with a casual luxe edge. Personal touches abound – furniture or ornaments appear during your stay if the owners discover something. Walker's passion for creating furniture from sustainable Indonesian wood is clear: a canopied bed crafted from ironwood salvaged from Sulawesi (distressed after a century underwater), or an outdoor sectional made from reclaimed railroad ties, among others. Petals scattered over paths and the calm surrounds leave you with a romantic tucked-away vibe (Wendy admits she prefers to have only one suite booked at any time, so you may have this hidden gem all to yourself).



## Service & facilities

8/10

Walker and Wendy, with daughter Kyan and two affectionate dogs, treat you as their house guest, chatting through your plans with genuine interest. They're adept at reading moods, so a stay can be as quiet or social as you wish. A warm pool made of hand-cut stone from central Java. It's long enough to swim laps, and there's also a submerged sundeck and ledge overlooking rice paddies. Massage is a staple of Balinese vacations; book an in-room treatment with one of the hotel's recommended healing hands.

- Bar
- Pool
- Wi-Fi

## Rooms

9/10

Three spaces – two villas and one suite – each have their own soul. They all exude an Indonesian bent but unfurl in different directions. One blends bright white and blue, conjuring images of hillside homes on Greek islands. Another features a Javanese palace wall, the intricate antique carvings dominating a Dutch colonial theme. Abstract paintings, arts and travel books, and handwoven rugs adorn each space. The Longhouse – built completely on stilts – is a favourite: rich in dark woods, colourful Indonesian fabrics, and a porch reaching out over a mini jungle valley. Bathrooms vary, with hand-hewn onyx sinks mounted on twisted teak and a square wooden tub in the Longhouse and semi-outdoor showers in the others.

## Food & drink

8/10

Breakfast, which normally starts with chilled coconut water, is eaten in the open-sided lodge. Spicy eggs, with spring onion and red chilli, are a house specialty. There's no formal restaurant but chef Kadek cooks to order, whether you're after Indonesian classics – nasi campur, beef rendang – or something more international. At sunset the lodge becomes a place to sample gins with candlelight.

## Value for money

9/10

Double rooms from IDR 2,489,173 (£144.50). Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi.

## Access for guests with disabilities?

Not really, with uneven stone steps throughout and no special facilities.

## Family-friendly?

Yes. Cots, toys and a hand-made bamboo highchair are available, with woggles, balls and goggles provided for the pool. Wendy is a great resource for children-friendly activities in Ubud.

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