

Blissful Bali

Karma Kandara offers an unforgettable holiday experience where parents are sure to feel as indulged and relaxed as their children. **JOANNA TOVIA** lives it up in a Balinese villa designed with families and fun in mind.

When I step off the plane and take the 40-minute car ride to Karma Kandara, what I find is a home away from home in one of the most scenic spots in Bali. Perched high on the cliff edge overlooking the Indian Ocean, this family-friendly all-villa resort manages to be utterly gorgeous without being in the least bit pretentious. Its location on the Bukit Peninsula near Uluwatu means it's far from the hustle and bustle of Kuta and a completely peaceful slice of paradise.

I'm greeted at reception with a cool towel and warm smiles before being whisked down a bougainvillea- and frangipani-lined stone pathway to the bright yellow doors leading to my villa. Inside, it's built for bare feet: padding around on the cool stone tiles is a delight for toes used to being cooped up in winter shoes. The air-conditioned three-bedroom villa is spacious and smart, with high bamboo-lined ceilings and Balinese-style decor.

I take advantage of the private infinity pool immediately. It's big enough for the kids to keep themselves amused all day long, all within view of the master bedroom and living room. If you have children too young to swim on their own, pool fences are available to give you peace of mind.

Room to relax

The open-plan living/dining/kitchen has been designed with families in mind, and there's no danger of kids breaking anything if they come barreling down the hallway from their bedrooms at speed. The main lounge room has room enough for everyone, and the dining table seats six comfortably.



01 The wide ocean view from di Mare restaurant 02 Cultural joy for kids 03 Space to spread out in your villa 04 Beachside picnic bliss

Each villa (two-, three- or four-bedroom) is completely private and surrounded by lush gardens, and so lovely that you're likely to spend much of your holiday right here. Just when I think it can't get any better, my jaw drops open – I've spotted the master bathroom complete with giant outdoor stone tub and rainforest shower.

I catch up with resort owner, John Spence, over cocktails at the colourful rooftop Temple Lounge & Bar that night and ask what makes Karma Kandara different from any other resort experience... there are so many to choose from, after all.

Five-star hippie

"I call it five-star hippie," he tells me, explaining that he aims to create for guests a bespoke, boutique experience rather than just a pretty resort lacking in atmosphere. For the adults, the resort is designed to recreate the relaxed vibe they are likely to remember from travelling in their youth, and for kids, it's somewhere they can have fun and feel comfortable.



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05 Welcoming villa interiors 06 A bright welcome home 07 Colourful seafood feast



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Hot Tip

On Monday nights, the beach becomes an outdoor cinema. Grab a bean bag and settle in.



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Spence's company, Karma Royal Group, has a portfolio of 21 privately owned resorts located from Bali to France. For families, Karma Kandara is among the best of the bunch.

Spence's five-star hippie philosophy is probably best seen down at the beach bar, accessible via the funicular that descends the cliff-face. The thatch-roofed bar and restaurant pavilion has a laidback vibe but still manages to be super chic. Beer comes in bottles nestled into ice buckets, cocktails are served in jars, and the food ranges from pizza and chips brought to you on the beach to romantic fine dining in a private cabana.

By day the beach is hopping with good music and activities. Snorkelling, kayaking and stand-up paddle boarding are all on offer directly off the calm and protected beach.

Back up on the clifftop, food is offered from 7am until late at di Mare restaurant, which overlooks an infinity pool 85 metres above the beach below. It's perfectly safe for children of all ages, despite its lofty location.

Although Karma Kandara does have plenty of great activities for young guests, it strikes a balance between being all about the kids and all about the parents. You won't find more than 20 to 30 children here at any one time, so it never feels over-run or noisy, and there's more than enough going on for the atmosphere to feel vibrant and fun. Staff members light up when they see children, and are quick to make them feel at home.

Rooms Division manager Geoff Drake says, "It's all about family in the Balinese culture. It's just natural for them to appreciate children."

The Three Monkeys kids' club is for ages two to 11 (the under-tuos have to be accompanied by a babysitter or parent) and is sure to keep all ages entertained between the hours of 9am and 6pm. Activities range from kite making to traditional Javanese dance lessons.

Mother-daughter and father-son treatments are also available at the spa (the ice-cream plus foot massage session is sure to appeal). Older kids (12 plus) will also love getting in on the action in a fun-filled Balinese cooking class with mum or dad. It includes a visit to the market before cooking up lunch – delicious! *



BALI REPORT CARD

Stay

www.karmakandara.com

Getting there

Garuda flies from Sydney and Melbourne direct to Denpasar daily. Karma Kandara offers private transfers from the airport to the hotel. www.garuda-indonesia.com

Do

If you do feel the need to leave the resort – unlikely – don't miss the Bali Safari and Marine Park, Waterbom Bali water park and horse riding on the beach. www.balisafarimarinepark.com www.waterbom-bali.com

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Prof. Dr. Ida Bagus Mantra, Km. 19,8 Gianyar 80551, Bali - Indonesia
+62 361 950 000 | info@balisafarimarinepark.com | www.balisafarimarinepark.com

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balidynastyresort @BaliDynasty | Jl. Kartika, Tuban, South Kuta, Bali - Indonesia | t +62 361 752 403 | www.balidynasty.com