

# Como Shambhala Estate at Begawan Giri

*A Bali retreat engages you in exploring alternative aspects of holistic health.*



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AS IT HAS for aeons, the Ayung River rushes over boulders at the bottom of the gorge that is now part of Como Shambhala Estate at Begawan Giri. The estate is set among jungles and rice terraces near Ubud, Bali's cultural center. The flowing water and exotic birdsongs compose a soothing sound track in the hillside, open-air pavilion, where my therapist Yoga gently strokes and kneads my limbs with long flowing movements. His intent is to drain my lymphatic system and promote circulation, as recommended by my wellness consultant, Carla Halford, a specialist in iridology, who had studied my eye irises for signs of ill health.

After the initial consultation, Deepak Deginal, the staff Ayurvedic doctor, offered a lesson in the ancient

## *Como Shambhala Estate at Begawan Giri*

*Deep Ocean Spa Bora Bora  
Four Seasons Beverly Wilshire  
Mayflower Inn & Spa  
Peninsula Spa by ESPA  
Qua Baths & Spa \* Sea Island*

Indian medical discipline, which specifies therapies, practices, and nutritional guidelines to complement your constitution; Ayurveda holds that each person has a spiritual/physical makeup that is based on the elements of Pitta (water and fire), Vata (air and space), and Kapha (water and earth).

"As a wellness retreat, our goal is for people to become actively involved in the wellness process and engage in a

variety of activities that will lead to betterment of their health," says Harry Apostolides, the estate's general manager, who previously managed Como's Parrot Cay property in Turks and Caicos. "It's very different from going to a spa, which tends to imply pampering. You have your treatment and feel good [at spas], but the effects are not long-lasting."

One of the retreat's most exhilarating activities is the Kintamani Freewheel, a mountain bike ride down from the crater rim of nearby Mount Batur. As my guide, Putuh, and I passed through remote villages, scores of children called out "Hallo!" in cheery, singsongy voices. In times of stress, I still can recall their uplifting greetings for a soul-soothing effect

that has lasted longer than that of any massage I have ever had.

"We take our guests on a journey," explains estate manager Monica Barter, a former physical education teacher who also previously worked at Parrot Cay. "We say, 'Try this.' Then ask, 'How do you feel?' Then we may add some things based on your response. If you wish, we can do more of a boot camp approach to achieve specific goals, but we always consult and take feedback. This is a place to feel well and to get well. That is the target."

Yoga and stress management programs are among several goal-oriented packages offered at the Begawan Giri estate, which Como acquired in 2004 and reopened as a health retreat on the eve of 2006. Como expanded the resort by constructing a new spa facility with a yoga studio and fitness center, a Pilates pavilion, a gourmet restaurant, and five villas near the spa.

Last fall, the staff trained in the Vitality Pool, which taps water from a spring on the 23-acre estate that is revered as a holy source by the local villagers. The pool's circulation system heats the spring water, which is naturally pH-balanced, and infuses it with concentrated ions so the body can more easily absorb it. Barter says that during a session your skin will absorb as much as 500 milliliters of the water, which, she claims, can calm the nervous system and relieve skin conditions, joint pain, and arthritis.

The water is so sacred to the deeply spiritual Balinese that the property's original developers, Bradley and Debbie Gardner, had to grant passage rights so locals could access the source. "Balinese life is directed by religion rather than political, social, or economic systems, so the Balinese focal point is on the spirit," explains general manager Apostolides. "That very strong cultural element really energizes this place." —LAURIE KAHLE

*Como Shambhala Estate at Begawan Giri,*  
+62.361.978.888, [www.como.bz](http://www.como.bz)



Deep Ocean Spa Bora Bora

**T**HE HEALING POWER of mineral-rich deep-sea water is harnessed at Algoterm's **Deep Ocean Spa Bora Bora** ([www.boraboraspa.interconti.com](http://www.boraboraspa.interconti.com)) in the new Inter-Continental resort that opened last year in the French Polynesian islands. The property, built on a narrow, sandy *motu* (little island) separating Bora Bora's turquoise lagoon from the deep blue South Pacific, uses frigid seawater pumped from more than a half mile beneath the surface to cool its environmentally friendly air-conditioning system. The Pacific also provides the key ingredients for the spa, which specializes in thalassotherapy. These treatments include the Algospa marine scrub and wrap, during which the therapist covers your body in seaweed paste, wraps you in plastic sheets, and then lowers the table on which you

are lying into a bath of seawater that has been heated to body temperature. Floating in the dark in the warm water feels like returning to the womb. Outdoor pools, which are equipped with powerful hydromassage jets, are intended to promote circulation, and therapists use oils infused with marine minerals for massages that can be performed in the spa's overwater bungalows. Transparent panels in the floor beneath the massage tables provide windows on Bora Bora's abundant marine life. —L.K.

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The Roman Emperor Nero, who ruled in the first century, reportedly sent slaves to gather snow from the mountains to make a crude form of ice cream. **Qua Baths & Spa** (866.782.0655, [www.harrahs.com/qua](http://www.harrahs.com/qua)), which opened at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas