

Finding Health and Happiness in Bali

By Ashleigh Mills



Stretching in her airy studio in Uluwatu—on the southwestern top of the Bukit Peninsula in Bali—Nadine is the picture of health and happiness. The wooden pavilion provides the perfect backdrop for yoga, high on a cliff overlooking the Bali Sea.

The Bukit Peninsula is famous for its limestone cliffs, hidden beaches and world-class surfing. With a laidback vibe, the area is popular with surfers who come to ride the big waves. The pace of life is slow, in comparison with other areas of Bali and the hustle of Sydney, Nadine's home town.

In 2012, Nadine's life began to change for the better when she found solace from her divorce in yoga and meditation. Life in Sydney was comfortable, but Nadine didn't feel challenged. "I was paid really well working in PR and marketing, I was in a good position, but I felt like something was missing," she says.

Since then, Nadine has given up the corporate world and trained as a yoga teacher. She is now the founder of her own transformative retreat, Bali Bliss Retreats (Baliblissretreats.com) in Uluwatu.

It was at a retreat in Australia where she dreamed up the idea of sharing the benefits of yoga with others. It exposed Nadine to jobs she'd never heard of, giving her the final push. "I met a personal chef—someone who cooks and shops for private clients—and I'd never heard of such a thing. This opened my eyes to professions that might not be on the regular list", she says.

Nadine had been to Bali several times and the "Island of the Gods" has always held a piece of her heart. "The smell, the people... It's magic," she says. "I remember sitting in Bali, on one of my trips, watching the sunset and thinking, how can I make this my life?"

With a background in marketing and a passion for health, hosting wellness retreats was a perfect match. "This lifestyle allows me to travel while doing business and do something that I can do anywhere

in the world," she says.

Bali is already a popular destination for wellness seekers from around the globe, so it was the ideal place to start.

Indonesia has a number of visa options that allow foreigners to stay in the country for extended periods of time. For those staying longer than six months, Nadine says that the KITAS visa, which she holds, is the best option, and allows people to conduct business. This cost approximately \$500 and took around two months on application.

One frustration is that the eligibility rules for foreigners to work in Indonesia change frequently. Nadine's advice is to "seek help from an immigration expert, to find the best option for you."

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Nadine estimates that her total cost of living in Bali is around \$800 a month, "which includes a motorbike, internet and eating meals out," she says. For this, "you can eat like a king," says Nadine. At the Cashew Tree, one of her favourite eateries, a Nasi Goreng and a smoothie costs \$7.

Her upfront business costs include having to secure her retreat venue and pay a deposit for dates 12 months in advance. This can be risky when retreat numbers are low, however the outlay is small compared to the price of buying a Sydney studio. With budget airlines and frequent deals between Denpasar and Sydney she is able to fly back to Sydney three or four times a year to run seasonal workshops and Bali Bliss information nights.

Yoga teaching qualifications cost around \$4,000, resulting in a registration with Yoga Alliance, which is internationally recognised. With regular practice, yoga teacher training is possible for anyone. For Nadine, training in Mexico was an easy

The Bukit Peninsula is popular with surfers.

choice. "I wanted to be by the ocean, to surf and feel space, the way I wanted to run my retreats," she says.

Between retreats, Nadine spends a part of her day online, answering emails and promoting her business. In her leisure time, Nadine loves to surf and explore the island on her motorbike. "There are so many hidden beaches and gems away from the crowds. My favourite spots are Bingin, Balangan and Padang Padang," she says.

Balangan, at the bottom of a steep set of stairs, backs onto an amazing limestone cliff. "It is one of the best spots in Bali to watch the sunset," Nadine says. If you're into surfing there is always something on. The popular surf spot, Uluwatu, is often home to surf carnivals, with a series of eateries built high into the cliff, making for spectacular views. Nalu Bowls, at Single Fin, "is a great breakfast spot where you can watch the waves," Nadine says.

The availability of yoga in Bali has also allowed Nadine to complete further training between retreats. "I did my stand-up paddleboard yoga teacher training here on the island for around \$700," she says. And with the high demand for stand-up paddle boarding and yoga teachers in Sydney, Nadine plans to return to Australia in December to teach through the summer, during the retreat break.

And Bali is just the beginning. With stand-up paddle boarding being added to her suite of activities, which so far include meditation, self-reflection and acrovinayasa, Nadine hopes to spread bliss around the globe. With lots of ideas for new destinations, but no definite plans, she's open to opportunity. "I'll go with the flow, listen to the universe and see what it brings," she says.

The payoff is the huge change Nadine sees in her clients after a week. "I love when we sit together and everyone looks so happy," she says. "It is amazing how in five days you can build a close community." ■