

# TRAVELLER

## Bali bootcamp

Toni Krasicki ditches the beaches, bars and bogans and gets fit at a bootcamp in the Balinese highlands.



Grabbing my watch and realising its only 2.30am, I curse the village rooster and his lack of time-keeping skills. I'm up before dawn anyway, ready for my first workout session that begins with a run and sprint intervals along the road and ends with boxing drills back in the workout arena. At 1000m altitude and slightly muggy conditions, the run is harder than expected, and our group of nine are well and truly awake by the time most sane people in Australia are stirring.

This is Bootcamp Bali style. No fuss, just honest workouts designed to refresh your fitness, especially if you've hit a plateau or have let your training fall by the wayside. I am staying at "Ayung Sari Indah", which translates to "sweet nectar of the Ayung River", and is the property owned by Australian expat Karen Willis and Indonesian partner Wayan, about a 40 minute drive northwest of popular Ubud. It's an authentic slice of

Balinese village life far away from the tourist crowds.

What started as "a village escape" for Karen and Wayan soon grew to be a business offering fitness retreats called Sharing Bali. "People would come up and stay and love the tranquility of it; going for walks, and being active, and because I like being active, I just grew that side of it," says Karen. "We just wanted it to be for fitness, outdoor activities, exercise, good food, plenty of sleep and a few laughs and good living."

Don't expect five-star villas, pools, Wi-Fi, or glitzy bars, but instead you'll feel as though you've stepped across the threshold of somewhere extraordinary. The bungalows themselves are simple yet comfortable, constructed from recycled teak shipped in from other Indonesian islands. Each bungalow is named after a Balinese god or goddess, and commands views of rice paddies, distant mountains or well-tended gardens littered with Wayans artistic



creations and sculptures.

ProSports Health and Fitness ([www.prosport.net.au](http://www.prosport.net.au)), a Personal Training outfit in Melbourne, is running the Bootcamp retreat. It's trainer Kari Deane's second retreat so she's well rehearsed on the terrain and equipment she has to work with. I notice she comments on the new kettlebells, which are made by the property's staff from giant bamboo and filled with volcanic soil, with a hose for a handle. They work a treat, along with the sandbags, coconuts and the bamboo bars created as obstacles or stations (very much like the ones found in some parks in Australia) adding to the "you don't need much to have a great workout" ethos.



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Sharing Bali also runs yoga, meditation, and a good cross section of fitness retreats, including women-only retreats. Prices (excluding airfare) start at \$1,095 pp for a 5 night/6 day stay, including most meals and all activities. Activities vary depending on retreats. For more information visit [www.sharingbali.com](http://www.sharingbali.com)

Kari hands out brand new boxing gloves for us to keep. There are also pads, skipping ropes, yoga mats, and a TRX also materialises. We have a couple of Kundalini style yoga practices with a Bali-based instructor, Gabi, which is a welcome respite (even for those who have never done yoga) from the intense workout sessions.

It's not the best place if you want to start exercising, as the retreats are designed for those with some general fitness, what with the jungle trek up and down rice paddies and the village cycle thrown in to the program to add variety. "It may not be a start point but more of a refresh - to hit the restart button. Generally people have a bit of fitness behind them, and it gives them that extra push so that they can continue when they get home,"

says Kari.

The highlight of the week is the volcano trek up to Mt. Batur to see the sunrise. The walk isn't particularly tough; anyone who's reasonably fit can do it, especially with the help of the guides and a walking stick. Unfortunately we don't see the sun rise, but the clouds do part later for us to see the view of Lake Batur and the other volcanoes.

Karen says some people still want to lounge around a pool when in Bali, and she encourages that, as it's the perfect combination and a way to iron out any aches and pains before heading home. ■