

DNA

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Where The Boys Are

**20 TOP TRAVEL
SPOTS FOR 2017
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BACKPACKING
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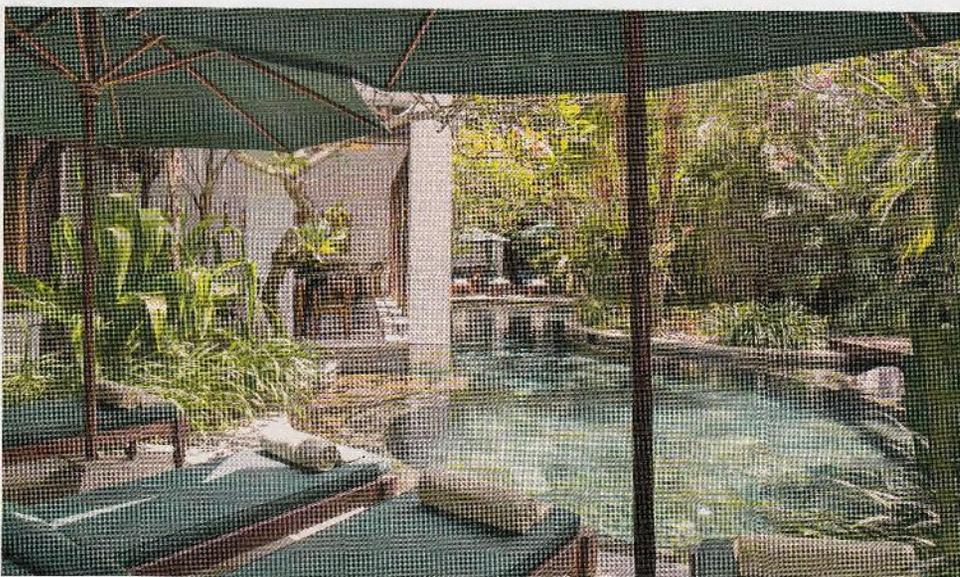
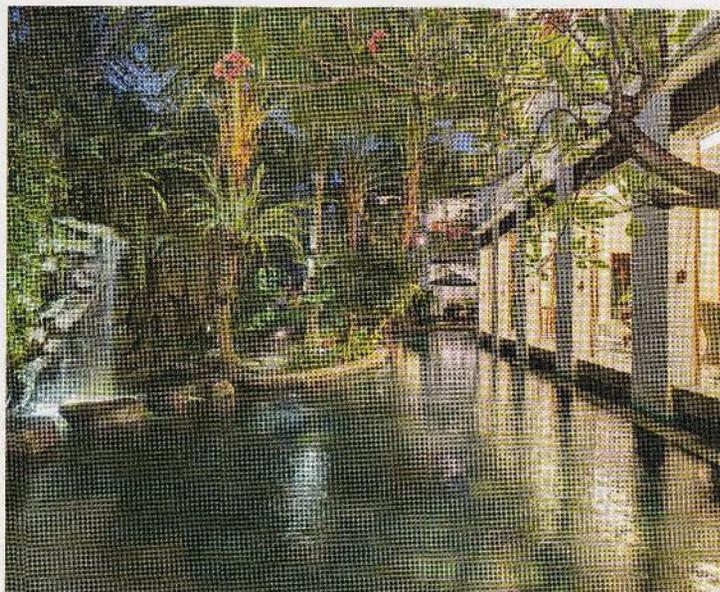
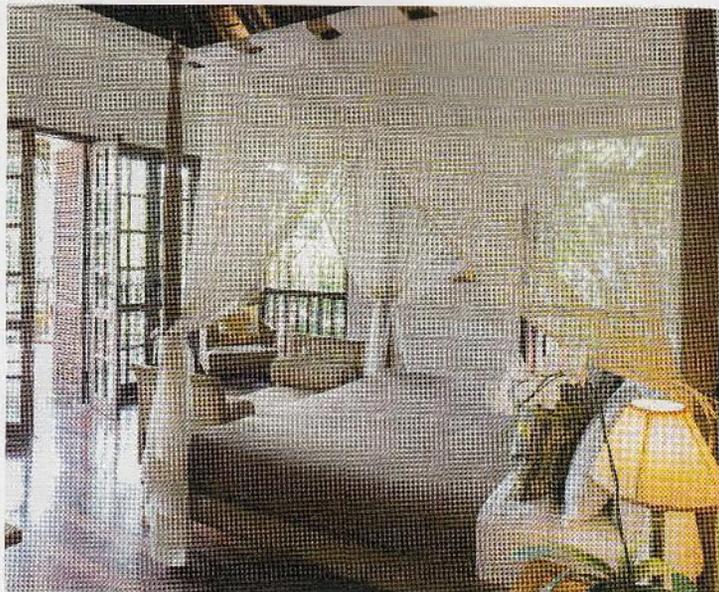
**THE EVIL GAY
WHO MADE
DONALD TRUMP**

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#204





VILLA BATAVIA, LAKSMANA

Created by a former Swiss pharmacist and his partner, the five-bedroom Villa Batavia has a Colonial feel. Think The Raffles: afternoon tea in heirloom teacups, sundown cocktails in the open-sided bar, and gourmet silver service dining. The villa is in the Laksmana Estate, minutes from Petitenget Beach, Ku De Ta and the bright lights of Seminyak.

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Forget the hotel room – take the whole hotel or villa or castle! “Togethering” is the latest travel trend, which sees groups of friends book out a whole location. And the gays love it, says Andy Grant a villa manager in Bali.

DNA: Togethering is the new buzz word in travel. Are you seeing that in your properties?

Andy Grant: Yes, often. It’s a great option for groups of friends or a large family holiday. Nothing compares to a villa holiday. Once you’ve experienced it there’s no going back!

Is it the luxury of it that appeals?

Yes, and the privacy. The whole place is exclusively yours.

No nasty squabbles about who gets the best seat by the pool, then?

Right! You don’t have to race out to the pool lounge and 5am and put your towel on it! Plus, you have your own team of staff on-hand to take care of your every whim. Most villas have chefs available at all times, full butler service, 24-hour security, and a full-time manager who can organise drivers and bookings at the best spots in town.

Surely one of the other advantages is cost?

Booking as a group makes it an extremely cost effective way to holiday in absolute luxury.

When you split the nightly rate up among your group it generally means you can enjoy five-star luxury at an affordable price. Your day-to-day expenses such as meals come at a fraction of the cost as you’re only charged for the groceries that are purchased with a minimal service charge in comparison to a resort holiday, which can be very expensive for wining and dining.

Do you think gay travellers have been togethering for some time?

Yes. This is something groups of gay friends often do. They can enjoy their holiday with those who are special to them, and not with all the other guests in a main common area of a resort. Exclusivity and privacy.

Australians love south-east Asian destinations.

What are the current hot spots?

You obviously can’t go past Bali. Phuket is fantastic – incredible beaches, people, and who doesn’t love Thai food? Singapore is a great stop-over on route to Bali or Phuket, great for a couple of days shopping and dining. The Philippines and Vietnam are also on the hot list.

We keep hearing about sea levels rising and islands like the Maldives disappearing. Should

we be booking the Maldives sooner rather than later?

Not disappearing in the near future, however, it’s an amazing location and a must-see.

Bali has a patchy reputation. How can travellers make sure they have a safe, relaxing, stylish holiday there?

I have never felt un-safe in Bali. It is a safe place to travel. Like anywhere in the world you have to be aware of yourself and surroundings when you’re out and about and be respectful.

As a seasoned traveller yourself, what are your hot travel tips?

Always have the local currency of wherever you’re headed. Make sure the toiletries bag is full of essentials – any lotions or potions, special medicines you may not be able to get at your destination. Always a good lip balm. My husband and I are in love with tropical Asian holidays. We are lucky enough to call Bali home, but we love Phuket, too. It’s the amazing people and cultures and affordable luxury you can enjoy along with the tropical climate.

MORE: Andy Grant is Villa Manager for Elite Havens. Go to outandabouttravel.com.au