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# MAGAZINE

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## Through The Keyhole: The Anandita

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## Through The Keyhole: The Anandita

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**By : Elite Havens**



The entrance to this elegant villa cleverly fuels an overall sense of anticipation and excitement for the first-time visitor. Visual delights unfold at each step across the white stone steps traversing the Koi pond, through majestic wooden double doors into a quiet and reassuringly cool foyer dominated by an intricately carved sandstone screen. This commanding piece offers snippets of the truly spectacular garden that stretches beyond the entertainment deck, sparkling pool complete with a cosy grotto, through the expansive coconut grove, over a private beach right to the water's

edge. All you hear is the sound of water gurgling in the Koi ponds, waves gently rolling onto the beach, the wind rustling coconut palms and the occasional calls of tropical birds. Welcome to The Anandita, your new ‘happy place’.

This villa is located in Lombok, a destination that is often described as the Bali of twenty years past, before urban sprawl pervaded the serenity of rainforest, rice paddies and clear ocean views. With far less traffic on the wide-open roads tracking through verdant green landscapes, Lombok feels more open, peaceful and fresh. A feeling that is encapsulated in The Anandita.

Designed by Australian architect John Lincoln, renowned for his work on the Four Seasons resort Hotel Jimbaran, the Westin Hotel Nusa Dua, and other five star venues in Bali. The priority in this space are nature’s offerings and comforts. Anandita sits on 1.5 acres of ocean front. Its owner Francois Vandenheste built the villa as a haven from the outside world, a retreat to be one with the land and the beach.

Anandita is located in Sira, a piece of of land bordered by a beach with magnificent views of the coastline, the mountains and the neighbouring Gili Islands.



**Can you tell us a bit about yourself?**

My wife and I are entrepreneurs living in Hong Kong. My wife, of Indian origin, came to Hong Kong from Burma when she was six, while I left France and made Hong Kong my home 30 years ago. We both love Asia, and in particular Indonesia, where we spend a lot of our holidays with our three kids and friends.

**Why did you build The Anandita?**

The Anandita was designed as a family retreat from the hustle and bustle of Hong Kong, the city where we live. We wanted our children to connect with nature, and to experience the simple feelings of walking barefoot on the grass, watching the sparrows hunt for insects in the late afternoon, and sleep with the sounds of the waves on the beach and the wind in the coconut trees. Each pavillion of the villa offers views to the gardens, the trees, the flowers, and the beach.



Life at the villa is effortless. You simply slide the doors open and walk on the grass to the beach. It's a very quiet beach, where the locals come to collect squid at low tide and to fish at high tide

and at night. The Gilis are only a kilometre or so away, for those who want some entertainment, but we actually seldom go there. The coral reef just in front of the villa teems with tropical fish and you only need to grab a sea kayak to explore the reef and the bay.

The food is amazing and we often buy our fish fresh from the fishermen when they return from their night at sea.

### **How long did it take to build The Anandita?**

It took two long years to build the villa. The architect understood our needs and paid a lot of attention to details. For instance, the swimming pool tiles were imported from India, as we wanted a specific shade of blue that gives a natural feeling to the water.

The villa is rather classic, using a lot of natural materials, such as wooden tiles, wooden floors, palimanan stones [and other materials].



**What's your philosophy in life?**

We believe that the earth is flat, in the sense that cultural differences have been so flattened in the past decades with globalisation, that it has become extremely easy to travel and stay in different places. At the same time, cultural identities are dying and it is a pity, as they are cornerstone to maintaining a stable and liveable society. We love travelling and meeting other people, and we always enjoy visiting a new place where culture remains unique and vibrant.



**What is your favorite space on Lombok?**

We love the Sira peninsula, where the villa is located, because it is sheltered. It is far off the main road, and the sea is usually calm. We enjoy a micro-climate with a lot of sunshine and little wind, even during the rainy season.



**What is your favorite thing to do on Lombok?**

There is so much to do on Lombok for those who love nature. Kayaking in the bay, sailing to the Gilis, snorkelling or diving, but also hiking up the Rinjani volcanoes are some of the highlights. The trek to the Rinjani summit is an amazing adventure. It usually takes 3 days, with stunning views of the caldeira, the lake, and splendid walks in the fields and jungle.



**Tell us a bit about your Earthquake relief efforts recently.**

The August 2018 earthquake inflicted terrible loss and trauma to the people in our area. The amount of destruction is hard to describe. Houses did not merely crumble but actually exploded under the incredible force of the tremors, leaving only piles of rubble. The electricity, phone and water also went off instantly. We immediately arranged for our general manager to bring over essential supplies, in particular water, rice and blankets, by truck.

He had to drive at night for his own safety as people, in despair, soon turned to pillaging for survival, until the government aid started to kick in a few days later. We arranged another truckload of supplies, in particular tents, a week or so after, and we opened a GoFundMe page to collect donations from the friends and relatives who had previously stayed at the villa and who wanted to help, that collected over US\$6,000 in two weeks. That money was pulled together with more funds and contributed to the building of half a hundred basic wooden houses for the employees of the 3 villas managed by the agent in the Sira area.

**Have you learned anything new since living in Lombok?**

We are only passing guests in Lombok and in Indonesia, but the friendliness of the Indonesian people cannot be overstated. Our team members are now like family to us.





### **Guest Reviews**

“What an amazing place and what a lovely people! Mr. Adi, Mr. Arya and Gusti were incredible. Chef Bagus is a five-star chef. We can’t find appropriate words to say how happy we are spending this week in Lombok. Thanks to everybody.”

-Amine S, Indonesia

### **How To Get There**

Air Asia will be creating a hub out of Lombok flying to Kuala Lumpur and Perth from 9th June. SilkAir flies direct from Singapore and there are over 20 domestic flights making the 25 minute hop from Bali each day.

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