



Between Sea and Sky

These two back-to-nature getaway spots near Padang are accessible but far from the bustle of the city, says Wendy Bone



PARADISO VILLAGE CUBADAK

VILLA AIR MANIS

Roughly 90 minutes from the city – not including the 10-minute boat ride to Cubadak island – this secluded seaside getaway spot is framed by a coral reef and jungle.

The two-storey cottages here are an elegant blend of practicality and rustic local style – built on stilts from a local variety of teak. Yacht-inspired design elements include perforated teak bathroom floors.

Feast your eyes on red hibiscus flowers, palm-fringed beach and tranquil sea set against the green hills of the West Sumatran highlands.

A place to get away from it all, the village tends to attract businesspeople, honeymooners and surfers heading for the Mentawais.

Paradiso is home to 12 cottages, each of which can accommodate up to six guests. Mornings are bliss as each cottage boasts a veranda overlooking the lagoon.

The fusion cuisine is created by a talented local chef. Fresh lobster pasta and *ayam gulai* (Minangkabau chicken curry) are among the highlights.

Considering that the island is largely uninhabited, there's a lot to do, from snorkelling and scuba diving (PADI courses available) to jungle trekking and spa therapy.

From US\$110
www.cubadak-paradisovillage.com

An outstanding place to stay thanks in large part to its natural beauty, utter serenity and excellent cuisine.

THE LOCATION

About 15 minutes from the city centre and 220m up a forested hill, this place is within easy reach of Air Manis (Sweet Water) beach and other outdoor attractions.

THE DESIGN

Architect Rick Cameron and his wife Jane came up with a circular design for Villa Air Manis. The shape of the place – which features a spiral roof – combines with its louvred windows to deliver stellar views.

THE VIEW

Enjoy an eagle-eye vantage point on the city and seascape, including Air Manis beach and the islands of Pisang Besar and Pisang Keci.

THE VIBE

The panoramic view and eye-catching décor combine to create an unforgettable atmosphere for pool parties, gatherings for sundowners or family activities.

THE ROOMS

The villa has two bedrooms, each with en suite. The bungalow – set amid landscaped gardens and with a kitchen, dining room and balcony – sleeps five or more.

THE FOOD & DRINKS

Chef Ibu is a master at preparing Minangkabau specialities. Her *rendang* (beef stewed in coconut milk and spices) and seafood curries are especially popular.

OTHER FACILITIES

There's a pool and also a textile studio for the creatively inclined. Surfers can head to Air Manis beach, while excursions to Lake Maninjau can also be arranged.

THE DETAILS

From A\$150
www.airmanis.com

THE VERDICT

An architectural marvel, complete with all the comforts of home, steeped in nature and offering unparalleled views.