

Learn to be a Masseur in Bali on Your Gap Year

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Is there anywhere better to master the skill?

When most people think of Bali, they picture dancing on Kuta beach with a drink in their hand. When I think of Bali, I think of emerald rice paddies, geckos, temples and spa treatments.

When I first arrived in Indonesia for a two-month stay, I was bowled over by how cheap it was to get a traditional Balinese massage. Something that would normally cost between £30-60 back in the UK, is about as expensive as a good latte in Bali. After receiving the best Reflexology massage I'd ever had, this became a beautiful weekly habit of mine.

The Balinese take pride in this work. They are gentle and smile wide and they take natural health and wellbeing seriously. When they set to work on your tight calf muscles and achy shoulders, they are doing it with both intuition and expertise. It goes back centuries to the old kings who sought balance and beauty inside and out; it's as much a part of their culture as Hinduism and dance is.

The thirst for learning new things is innate in us travellers. We want to get so close to a new experience that we almost wish we could mentally absorb the history of it, as if its existence were our own memory, embodying it as part of our own core. So when I went back to Bali to live in Sanur for six months, I was looking for a portion of natural Indonesian life. I stumbled upon Bali Bisa Massage and Spa training school who offer courses varying from one week to three months. I was excited by the fact that I could study something while on the island and take it back to London, ready and equipped for a career change. I was ready to learn to be a masseuse in Bali.



A good way to make money on the move

When you suffer from wanderlust, it can be hard to further your career while all you're thinking about is when your next trip will be. The ideal solution to a

balanced life of work and travel is to be able to have self-employed freedom. Being a massage or spa therapist can be very lucrative, people are always happy to nurture their wellbeing; there is always a demand for therapists.

'Bisa' in Bahasa means 'can do' and that was certainly the positive mantra that was running through my mind when I enrolled on a week intensive aromatherapy massage course for about £300. You can even do the full spa treatment package, including management training for setting up your own business.

Learn from the masters of massage and spa

Penny Ellis, the British founder of Bali Bisa who lives on the island, set up this training school where people from all over the world could come and learn skills from Indonesian people. It has created a great environment for experiencing cultural exchange.

The day begins at 9am at Bali Bisa with a group meditation and yoga session to help you relax and ease into the day. The student groups on each course are usually quite small, giving good quality interaction and practice time between the teachers and the students. I was the only student to enrol on the aromatherapy course that week so I was lucky to have my teacher all to myself. After our half an hour of zen, we got stuck into the theory and knowledge. To complete the course and receive your qualification, you must pass your written and practical exam at the end of your training. The course is a great balance of book study and practical performance. I was also very grateful to practice all the extras that a spa therapist must know, such as greeting a client and how to give a consultation.



Immerse yourself in Balinese culture

During your stay you can enjoy low cost living if you're on a budget. A plate of Nasi Goreng, their tasty traditional rice dish costs 20,000 rupiah (about £1) and accommodation in a guesthouse (sometimes with a swimming pool) can be as cheap as £20 per night.

And when you're not learning how to give a peppermint and sea salt foot bath, you can spend your free time exploring the island by hiking up Mount Batur Volcano, visiting a temple or seeing a Legong dance show in Ubud.

A world recognised certificate

Not only did this get me work when I needed the extra income when I came home, spa owners were impressed that I had gained my qualification in Bali. [Bali Bisa](#) is CIBTAC accredited (Confederation of International Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology) which means that you can take your certificate anywhere and practice professionally. I brought my certificate home with me, set up my practitioner insurance and landed a part-time position as a massage therapist at a holistic centre in London.