

# REVIEW: The Ritz-Carlton Mandapa Reserve in Ubud, Bali

This was my second experience at a Ritz Reserve, with the first being at the Dorado Beach Property. If you're not familiar with the Reserve chain, it is the top tier of hotels within the Ritz-Carlton family, with only three current offerings, and a handful more in the works. The Ritz Reserve Mandapa is special, however, in that it is the first property in the Reserve line to be built entirely from scratch.

Let me start by saying, there is NOTHING average or normal about this property. One immediately notices something special is going on when they enter the 5.5 acre Reserve. It's hidden in a 300 ft long alleyway behind some nondescript businesses and a temple.



This is the hidden entrance. Go down this alleyway, and you'll be surprised what you find

Once you reach the end of the alley, you're greeted by two guards who greet you with smiles and open the gates to, what I would call, one of the most beautiful resort properties that has ever been built. The small alley opens up to a wide courtyard, and a beautiful lobby suspended over the Mandapa valley, overlooking the valley forest and Ayung river below (which the staff told me is the longest running river in Bali).



The Lobby's overflow water feature and endless views of the valley below are a sight to behold

Every Ritz-Reserve has less than 100 rooms, and this one is no exception. This means that service is at a premium beyond anything you'd normally experience at even your top 5-star resort. Upon checking in you're introduced to your butler and personal concierge. Any wish desired is taken care of immediately. The attentiveness to perfection is so beyond any expectation that it only takes a few minutes before you begin to realize just how special the property is.





The 5.5 acre property sits in the sacred Mandapa valley next to the Ayung river

Golf carts take you everywhere, and the staff are there to assist you with a ride, often anticipating where you'll go next! I believe that this is the true difference between the Ritz-Reserve properties and other resorts, the service is not just responsive, but proactive. Combine this with the kind spirit of the Balinese people, and you have some of the most top notch hospitality i've ever experienced.

The rooms are split evenly between villas on the river's edge, and large suites on the upper floors. They are all BEAUTIFULLY appointed with custom finishes, high ceiling roofs, and luxurious amenities. The devil is in the details here, the toilets are high end electronic bidets which open and close for you with the help of motion sensors, while the individual sinks are hand carved teak bowls which are re-varnished after every stay. No expense was spared in the development of this Mandapa resort, and it truly shows.





The rooms are beautifully executed, with bright airy spaces, custom local finishes, and a moveable dividing wall





The bathrooms were one of the highlights, with gorgeous soaking tubs that were delightful just to look at, and some exotic finishes all around.

I did not get a chance to visit one of the restaurants at the resort (Kubu), which happens to be the #1 ranked restaurant (at the time of this writing in March 2017), but it sits right at the river's edge. Sawah Terrace served incredibly fresh and local cuisine for breakfast and dinner, while the library served some of the most refreshing libations i've experienced in my travels.

Rounding out the experience was a multitude of experiences in and around the property, from an educational tour of the rice fields right in the middle of Mandapa, to personalized cultural events that the hotel changed on a seasonal basis.

Of the hundreds of luxury hotels that i've had the pleasure of staying at, the Ritz-Reserve in Mandapa ranks near the very top. Kudos to the chain and all the staff for making this hotel an experience to remember.

## **RATING:**

### **Hard Product:**

**-Location (How close is this to top attractions in the surrounding area?)**

Ubud is a great city if you're looking for something more low key than nearby Seminyak, and you want to experience the rainforest and lush rice fields. This resort is set right in the middle of the city, but hidden in its own valley

10/10

**-Cleanliness (Is the grout in the bathroom clean? How good is maid service here?)**



Not a single thing out of place here.

10/10

**-Upkeep (Is the hotel in need of a remodel, or is it being constantly kept up?)**

Still a relatively new property, it is being kept in tip top shape

10/10

**-Public Spaces (How unique/inventive/useful are the public spaces?)**

This hotel has so many spaces to explore and is set in such a serene and beautiful setting that it doesn't get much better

10/10

**Soft Product:**

**-Service (How good is the service here?)**

From in-room check in to personalized greetings for every guest, along with very well trained local staff, I couldn't have asked for more

10/10

**-Restaurants On-Site (Are the restaurants on site somewhere even the locals would go to?)**

The food was incredible, but the menu could have offered just a little more variety at the pool area. However, it was still well above and beyond.

8/10

**-Concierge (Specifically, how effective is the Concierge at**



## **helping you with a new locale?)**

The concierge service was stunning here, all Reserves assign a butler to each guest, and they really do look after you. For example, the minute I was done with breakfast, they knew I needed to get to the lobby to take a car into the city, and had everything from the golf cart to the driver arranged without my even asking.

10/10

**TOTAL: 68/70**

(35/70 is average)

### **PROS:**

- The setting is surreal its so beautiful
- The service at a Reserve is beyond reproach
- The rooms are absolutely stunning in build quality

### **CONS:**

- Only recommendation would be a revamp of the menu at the pool, or the addition of a few more items

### **SECRETS:**

- Do take the time to make a reservation ahead of time with the concierge before you arrive, so that you can eat at Kubu, and so that you can plan for some of the local cultural events held by the hotel

### **THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:**

Check out the Ubud guide!