



THE ART of Giving

DEBORAH ISKANDAR DISCOVERS A
NEW TYPE OF ART AT NIHIWATU

Art can take many forms: painting, sculpture, contemporary art, installation, etc. But after my trip to Nihiwatu, a luxury resort on the island of Sumba, I realised there is also an art to the way we approach life and business.

Nihiwatu is a surfer's paradise founded by an adventurous American named Claude Graves in 1988. Known for its "left hand wave," Nihiwatu has a cult status among surfers around the world. In 2013, it was acquired by Chris Burch and James McBride, who have created an enchanting island escape reminiscent of the Maldives. There are many types of art to be found on the island, but not in the traditional sense.

Sumba is not a prosperous island, in fact, it's one of the poorest in Indonesia. But, as we were greeted at the airport and whisked on



From Above:
BLUE WATERFALL.jpg, HORSERIDING_WATERPOLO.jpg, MENARA
BUFFALO HORNS_ENTRANCE.tiff

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THE SUMBA FOUNDATION AIMS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS. FOUNDED IN 2001, THE GOAL OF THE SUMBA FOUNDATION IS TO DEVELOP VILLAGE-BASED PROJECTS FOR HEALTH, WATER AND EDUCATION. ”

a two-hour journey to Nihiwatu, the landscape started to change. The first "art" we encountered was the postcard perfect panorama. In the south, we call it "God's country." Reminiscent of Hawaii in the 1950s, Sumba has this wild, untamed terrain. Sumba is a limestone-based island, not volcanic like Java, so it has a different topography. As you approach the resort, there is a sign "Welcome to the edge of Wildness" which is a hint that Nihiwatu will be a different experience from the usual five-star resort offerings.

The service at Nihiwatu is the art of luxury. Upon entering the hotel, you can feel there is a different type of energy. The senior staff, including the chef, are lined up to welcome you. Each villa is assigned a personal butler who caters to your every whim. The butlers are so attentive, you feel as if they can almost read your mind.

Nihiwatu is not just about relaxing in a remote hideaway and never leaving the villa. It attracts a different type of clientele with a more adventurous spirit. Nihiwatu occupies 438 acres of pristine beaches and rugged cliffs, which ensure the exclusivity of the resort. It also boasts spectacular waterfalls and exploring opportunities. Going on a safari adventure, we hopped on a specially-made Range Rover to take us to the Matayangu waterfall. Hiking for two hours, we finally reached the clearing where the "blue waterfall" emerged. The waterfall is actually a combination of three openings, spewing water with maximum force built up during the rainy season. The Nihiwatu staff hiked with us, cutting limbs



Sumba Foundation.jpg

to clear our path, providing cold, scented face towels for the heat, and transporting a picnic lunch, which was a decadent experience. Returning to Nihiwatu, we hit the beach and played water polo at sunset. This is the luxury of the wild.

A morning walk took us through a traditional Sumba village. This is where you see the darker side of Sumba as many villages have no electricity or running water. Entering the house of the village chief, the front entrance is covered with the skulls of sacrificial pigs and buffalos, a sign of wealth. Food is cooked on an open fire and along with other valuables is still stored in the spindle roof. Watching this daily ritual, I felt like I was transported back to the 19th century. It is this side of Sumba, where the grace of the Sumba Foundation supported entirely by Nihiwatu becomes important.

The Sumba Foundation aims to make a difference in the lives of others. Founded in 2001, the goal of the Sumba Foundation is to develop village-based projects for health, water and education. Claus Bogh, a Danish doctor is one of the world's foremost experts in Malaria. Based in Sumba for over 10 years, he moves from village

to village to treat malaria and oversee the Sumba Foundation's health clinics. I asked him how he can stay in such a remote location for 10 years, and he answered, "to do what you love and help others is the greatest joy in life."

Nihiwatu employs over 300 people, making it the largest employer on the island. They distribute the service charges with the staff, so our butler told us she could make almost Rp. 8,000,000 per month. Such high wages allows her to stay on the island with her family, rather than seek opportunities in Bali or Jakarta. The resort also showcases the work of the Sumba Foundation to the guests, who usually make a donation during their stay.

It is Nihiwatu's approach and philosophy of employment and serving others, which inspired me to write the "art of giving." The vision to build a super luxury resort on a remote island most people have never heard of, is perhaps not the most profitable venture. But to see the difference Nihiwatu is making in the lives of the inhabitants of Sumba, while showering their guests in luxury on the edge of the wildness is a true art.