



Left: Maria, who received an FHT Award in 2011, enjoyed exploring the colourful and spiritual side of Bali



I attended a course in Balinese massage run by a great lady called Penny Ellis, who owns and runs the Bali Bisa, a training school in Sanur, which offers CIBTAC courses that are recognised by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture. All the ladies working at the school are Balinese, with a complete understanding of the traditional treatments they are teaching, with most of them having lived on the island their entire life.

Each day, school starts with a yoga meditation class, to get you in the right frame of mind for learning. The ladies then teach on a one-to-one basis, which couldn't be better – they are patient and able to answer any question you may have, as they are eager for you to understand exactly why and how the treatment works.

Balinese massage takes some of its influences from India, China and other Asian countries. Starting with a foot cleansing ritual, it moves on to a massage that uses deep tissue techniques. With pressure applied over a batik (Indonesian textile), you are massaged from your toes to your scalp. A traditional body scrub is then applied using pastes, powders, herbs and plants. A flower bath and the application of a beautiful frangipani flower lotion completes the two-hour treatment.

You definitely get a feeling for the spiritual side of this amazing massage and the respect the Indonesian therapists have for their clients when performing the treatment. They start the therapy with a few minutes of meditation and breathing techniques, to relax you both and create the right energy. It's important that we too remember, in our own UK practices, that our energy is just as important as our clients'.

If experiencing a Balinese massage in Bali, you can expect to pay anything from £5 to £80 for a two-hour treatment, depending on your chosen location (beach, street or spa).

The Bali Spa and Wellness Association organised a world record massage day in May, 2014. The event was held on Sanur Beach, with hundreds of therapists all dressed in matching purple and blue, massaging 1,000 people for 15 minutes each. A new world record was set, which is a testament to the number of talented and dedicated therapists living on the island.

When I asked why the Balinese people are so very happy, the answer was simply because they value their beautiful island and all that they have – something they convey in their wonderful treatments.

● **Maria won one of the very first FHT Excellence in Practice Awards in 2011. To learn more about her, and her beauty salon My Beauty Time, visit www.fht.org.uk/best-in-beauty and www.fht.org.uk/FHTawards2011**

A Balinese adventure

Maria Mason, MFHT, talks about her recent trip to Bali to deepen her knowledge about its people and their treatments



Last year, I was fortunate to spend a whole month in Bali, researching the deeply spiritual beliefs of its people, as part of my ongoing interest in traditional Balinese massage and other body therapies.

Bali is a province of Indonesia and often called The Island of God. It's a beautiful place where you can readily find inner stillness, as well as gods and healers, to help you on your spiritual journey.

One of the most breathtaking beaches I visited had a statue of the elephant-headed Ganesha – perhaps the most worshipped deity of Hindu religion – to which the locals would regularly come to pay their respect, bringing gifts of flowers and incense.

Everyone and everything is blessed in Bali, from the buildings to the people and animals. Women sit by the roadside and on the beach, plaiting palm leaves to make beautiful little baskets, which they fill with flowers and petals; part of a daily ritual, to please the Balinese gods. These offerings – along with incense, food and coins – can be seen everywhere you go, especially on paths, steps, statues and temples.

Massage is also widely available in Bali and is the second most sought-after



occupation on the island, only second to tourism in the larger hotels.

Many of the girls on the beaches and street salons have learned their craft from generations of family masseurs. The Balinese people's ability to retain their inner healthy glow and radiant skin is a time-honoured practice of using natural ingredients and techniques, passed down from the royal families of Java and the Spice Islands. But today things are changing and training schools are being set up to offer proper certification, allowing the ladies on the island more choice of where they can work and to earn better salaries.