



Nº.2

HONOURING HEALING CULTURES

DEC '23

# A HAVEN FOR RELAXATION & REJUVENATION

Spa Village Cameron Highlands features healing therapies based on produce from the surrounding jungles and ancient tea rituals combined with knowledge drawn from the Orang Asli or 'original people' who have a deep understanding of plants, herbs and flowers that have the power to heal.



# A WELCOME MESSAGE

FROM CHIK LAI PING



Dear guests,

I hope this second issue finds you well and eager for the New Year and all its coming joys. When reflecting upon the last few years, the eventual realisation is that the pandemic has represented a pit stop in life. The pauses in travel and movement were scarcely imaginable before, but it would take the better part of two years before some normalcy resumed.

Now that it has, we see friends and our guests making up for lost time with their families, and taking the opportunity to travel, never again taking it for granted. This change in mindset

brought on by the pandemic also means that we are able to pause, reset and re-assess our lives. Changing directions to make our lives better – and perhaps slower – has become more imperative than ever. With all this comes a renewed focus on wellness and that is a most welcome development.

The experiences crafted by YTL's Spa Villages around the world has always been guided by our ethos in which wellness revolves around the whole being – the health and also happiness which you enjoy in your life. Our recent accolade from SpaChina magazine for Best Wellness Concept at Spa Village Pangkor Laut Resort attests to this unchanging philosophy where happiness and health is one. And in this, Spa Village continues to maintain its unique and market-leading recognition. Our DNA of incorporating spa design and experiences is to marry the idea of leaning on local healing cultures that is inextricably tied to the happiness of its people. It's undeniable that we are constantly inspired and greatly endowed by the age-old traditions of the locales in which our Spa Villages are situated.

Our collaboration with Ninie Ahmad, the founder of Upward Yoga, at Spa Village Tanjung Jara Resort has been very popular with guests seeking a holistic holiday and looking to enhance their wellness through breathing and movement practices. Soul-searching guests may also enjoy the upcoming Mother's Day Retreat led by Ninie in Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali, where you will be surrounded by the endless expanse of natural landscapes, from the majestic mountains to the velvet blue Bali Sea.

In this festive season, my wish is for gratitude, compassion and joy to all around us, and for the re-prioritisation of our physical and mental compass to endure. We are ready to welcome you to our Spa Villages around the globe.

May the warmth of the season fill our hearts and homes.

Yours sincerely,

Chik Lai Ping  
Senior Vice President,  
Spa Division, YTL Hotels



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## SECRETS OF THE FOREST

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*Therapies based on the healing know-how of the indigenous Orang Asli.*

The forest apothecary has been utilised for centuries for the traditional healing therapies of the *Orang Asli*. Indigenous to the Malay Peninsula as well as the rain forests of Borneo, the *Orang Asli* peoples have been acutely aware of the bounty of nature – the fruits, berries, roots, bark, leaves and flowers found in South-east Asian forests make up their pharmacopeia. Spa Village Cameron Highlands Resort have designed their therapies based on what they have learned directly from the healing encyclopaedia of our indigenous peoples, in particular the Semai.

The Semai are one of 18 ethnic subgroups of *Orang Asli* of the Peninsular Malaysia who commonly live in the Cameron Highlands area. Many continue to live in the forest as subsistence farmers relying on the land for their food, medicine and fuel. It was serendipitous that a Spa Village therapist and healer, Sairani Ahmad, struck up a friendship with an assistant *tok batin* or chief of an extended Semai family. Over a period of time, Sairani learnt a lot about Semai herbal healing from this *tok batin*, Rahman also known as







Bahtuin, and his mother. This insight into Semai wellness recipes has been the basis of some of the treatments at Spa Village Cameron Highlands Resort.

The Semai Scrub, perfumed by the apothecary of the jungle penetrates deeply into the skin to cleanse and firm it, promoting new cell growth. It is made with nutmeg, clove, galangal, turmeric, and a host of lesser-known barks, roots and rhizomes. Many of the Semai folk remedies remain undocumented and there is a real risk of losing their knowledge. This makes the relationship between Rahman, his family and the Spa Village practitioners in Cameron Highlands all the more precious and vital in preserving their age-old formulations.

Two other spa rituals, the **Tok Batin Mystical Tradition for Him** and the **Jungle Secrets of Anti-Aging for Her**, are based on ancient Semai health remedies. The two rituals use aromatic *rambutan* wood, henna, tea and betel leaves, ginger, cumin seeds and kaffir lime for rejuvenation and healing. Madi the resident naturalist at Cameron Highlands Resort likes to remind us that we have a lot to learn from our natural heritage, 'The forest holds many secrets,' he wisely quips.







## WELLNESS FROM MALAYSIA'S BELLE EPOQUE

*The world's only spa to base its therapies on the healing heritage of the Peranakan culture.*

The beautifully restored 1920s mansion of a prominent merchant in Malacca conceals a wonderful secret. It is now the Majestic Malacca Hotel and houses the only spa in the world to base its therapies around the healing culture of the Baba-Nyonya culture – a marvellously exotic fusion of Chinese and Malay heritage.

According to the Malay Annals or *Sejarah Melayu*, a romanticised account of the origins of the maritime empire of the Malacca Sultanate, an imperial Chinese Princess Hang Li Po was sent by the Emperor of China to forge a marriage alliance with Sultan Mansur Shah of Malacca in the 15th century. The story of her legend makes her a precursor of Baba-Nyonya culture when members of her Chinese entourage inter-married with the local Malays of Malacca.

Today the gentle driving force behind the Spa Village Malacca's Baba-Nyonya treatments is traditional Chinese medicine herbalist Lee Jok-Keng. The Malacca-born Lee grew up enamoured by a close family friend who was an elder Taoist shaman. When Lee was 15, he had become this traditional doctor's full apprentice.

By western standards it was an unusual apprenticeship. In addition to harvesting herbs for his teacher in nearby woods and speaking to his Indian and Malay herbal sources, Lee also tutored the doctor's children in English and cleaned his brushes and ink-tray. 'In traditional medicine you become involve with the whole family as well as your field of study – it was a process of observation and immersion,' Lee explains.







The Spa Village Malacca's treatments are custom-designed for the individual spa guest. This is because the Chinese believe that true wellbeing is predicated upon a healthy balance of *yin* and *yang* (dark and light, hot and cold). Before you start your treatment you will complete a spa questionnaire which revolves around your digestion, sleep patterns, and body temperature – all of which gives the therapist an insight into whether a warm or cooling experience is right for you. The *yin/yang* philosophy is practiced at the Majestic Malacca using the many foods found in a typical Baba-Nyonya kitchen cupboard including coconut milk, rice, galangal, candlenuts, pandan leaves, tamarind juice and lemongrass.

This has resulted in some delightfully named treatments like the **Suam-Suam Panas Experience** and the **Shiok-Shiok Sejuk Experience**. When roughly translated they may raise a smile – 'Tepidly Hot Experience' and 'Enjoyably Cool Experience', nevertheless they each involve a very unusual sequence of therapies inspired by Baba-Nyonya and traditional Chinese medicine.

A cool person is recommended a Malacca palm sugar and honey scrub, a pandan leaf and coconut milk hair masque and a beauty facial that uses a jade roller and fermented tapioca. The warm energy person would be directed to balance the body with a scrub made from yogurt, chopped guava leaves, followed by a calamansi lime and yoghurt hair mask and a beauty masque using star fruit, highly prized by Baba-Nyonya culture for its vitamin-rich qualities.







## MEET THE HEALER

*A discourse with those who make spirituality their every day.*

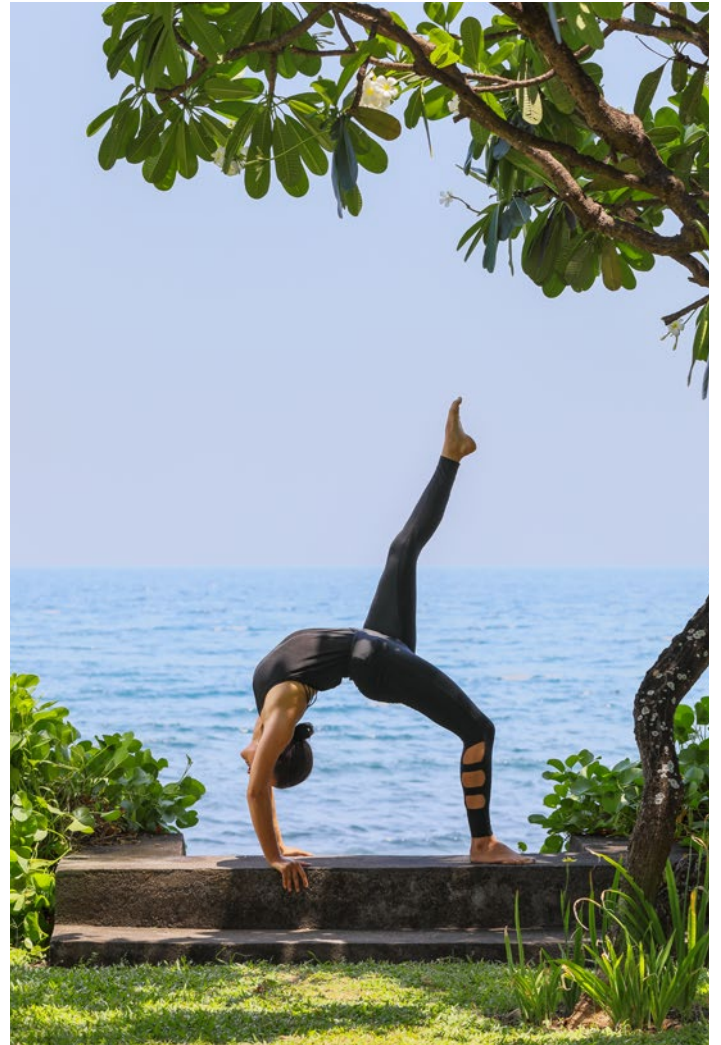


To the Balinese, spirituality is as vital as breathing itself. It is the merging of Hinduism with the ancient belief in the spirits of the natural world. These animistic beliefs are brought to life by the physical landscape itself. Mount Agung, the awe-inspiring 3,142 meter high (10,300 feet) sacred volcanic mountain is located in east Bali. It is the abode of the gods; while the surrounding island is the home of the Balinese people; and the sea is full of demons, distrusted and feared.

To maintain the delicate balance of this tri-partite structure of beliefs, the gods need to be worshipped and the demons need to be placated. Fortunately Tembok Bali is graced by the presence and healing powers of a *balian* who is a traditional shaman blessed by spiritual powers and the ability to enter the mystical world to commune with spirits. There are many types of *balian* - some are healers, others spirit mediums, some can cast spells while others interpret phenomena. Each village in Bali would have at least one *balian*.

At Tembok Bali, the late Kak Nyoman Tis was a healer with the skills of a masseur; he was not a shaman. As a boy he observed his grandfather giving massages but Kak Tis himself did not start healing with his hands until he was about 70 years old. When asked about this while he was still alive, he said he suddenly felt the calling to do so and discovered he had inherited the powers of his ancestors.





All of the massage treatments of Kak Tis were very vigorous and dynamic in true Balinese tradition. A therapeutic session with him as he worked on areas with lymph nodes or energise the meridians in the body was uplifting rather than relaxing, Today at Tembok Bali a relative of Kak Tis by the name of Pak Jero has taken over as the resident balian at Spa Village and carries on the ancestral family tradition of spiritual healing.

The experiences at Spa Village Tembok Bali follow one of four paths to wellness – Balance, Creativity, Vigour and the Cultural Academy. Whichever path you take, the spa’s emphasis is on seclusion and reflection for you to commune with the island’s ancient healing therapies.

The Balance Programme includes yoga, beach walking, and star-gazing while floating in the pool at night. The Creativity Programme includes wood carving, painting and weaving as well as outings to attend a Balinese dance or musical performance. The Vigour Programme tends to your physical side with lessons in the martial arts of *pencak silat*, swimming, snorkelling and diving. When you participate in the Cultural Academy you will really immerse yourself into the island’s traditions and heal through learning Balinese massage, traditional Balinese dancing and gamelan music.

With 27 rooms, two suites and two stand-alone villas your search for seclusion and rejuvenation is already tailor made by Tembok Bali’s layout and sensitive architectural design.







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## WELCOME TO SPA VILLAGE PANGKOR LAUT

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*A delightful Bath House experience awaits you.*

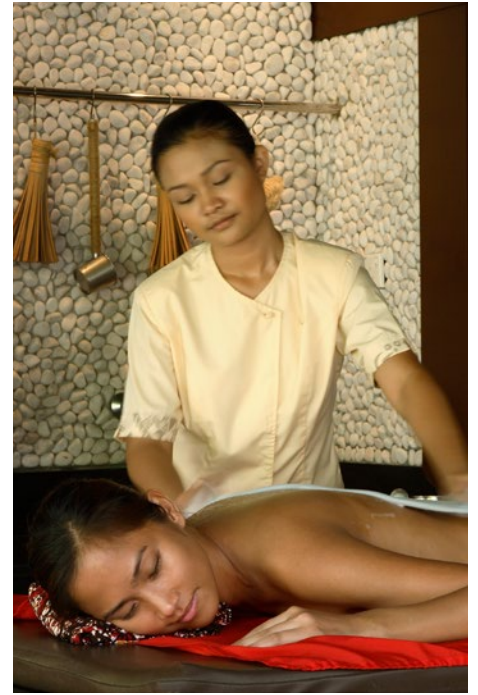
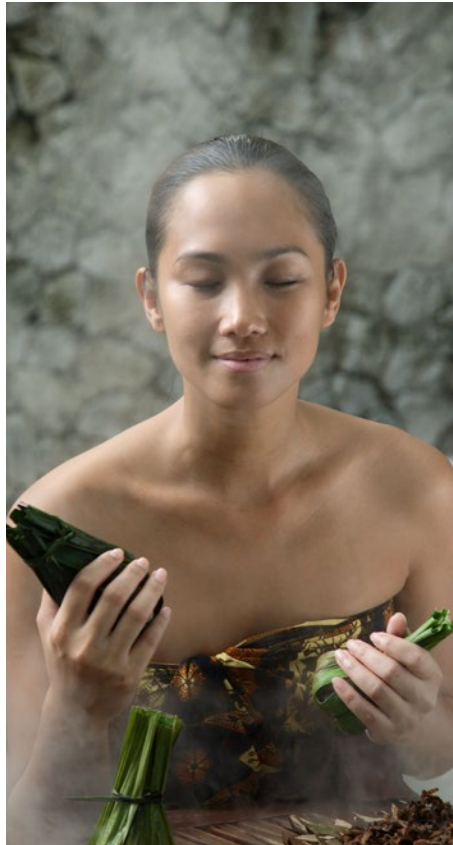


At the one island, one resort paradise that is Pangkor Laut Resort, water is the wellspring to our Spa Village rituals. It is the elixir of life for cleansing, steaming, bathing and relaxing. So central is water to our ethos that every therapy you choose starts with a complimentary 45-minute Bath House Experience at Spa Village Pangkor Laut.

Bathing traditions abound in the Asian tropics. Hindus have viewed bathing as a holy purification rite for centuries. Muslims use water rituals for healing and purification. The Japanese have understood the health benefits of hot springs or *onsen* since the Shinto period. In fact, the mention of bathing practices has been discovered in Buddhist inscriptions in Borobodur dating back to 824 AD.

Here in Pangkor Laut Resort, the Bath House ritual embraces the multi-cultural ethos of the spa and starts with a Chinese-inspired floral foot-bath whose origins date back to the time of concubines in the Imperial Court. Your feet are softened in the bath and then tapped briskly with a wooden mallet to open the meridian channels. Once you have changed into a traditional batik sarong, next up is the cool 'circulating' Malay bath which is a recreation of a bathing experience in a *kampung* or village beneath a waterfall. The aqua pressure on your neck and shoulder muscles is tension-relieving.





Once you step out of the Malay bath, you are treated to inhalation therapy – a wonderfully aromatic experience where you breathe deeply over steam boxes containing pouches of herbs wrapped in pandan leaves. Guests with respiratory issues or even a simple cough find this immensely comforting. After that you enter the *shoji*-screened Japan Bath House where you start with a Japanese-style cleansing with a *goshi-goshi* cloth before you dip in in a warm rockpool known as a *rotenburo*. While you enjoy this dip in nature you'll be served ginger tea.

The wonderful Shanghai Scrub is a fitting finale to your Bath House ritual where a therapist gently exfoliates the skin as you lie on a cool marble bed in the private scrub-house. In olden days in China this privilege was reserved for male bathers only. At the end of a gentle meander through secluded pools, pavilions and a lush garden setting, you are set up in mind and body for your chosen therapy or treatment. Now, just go with the flow.





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# YTL HOTELS

Treasured Places, Treasured Moments

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The Spa Village - Honouring Healing Cultures aims to share the latest Spa Village news from our collection of spa destinations worldwide. Coupling age-old practices together with modern approaches to health and well-being results in a tailored one-of-a-kind experience, delivering award-winning results to our guests. Each Spa Village offers a consistently unique and uplifting opportunity for rejuvenation.

## SEASON OF GIFTING

If you wish to pamper a family member or a friend with the gift of a spa experience, please email [spareception.ritzkl@ytlhotels.com](mailto:spareception.ritzkl@ytlhotels.com) or call +60 18 340 9034.



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