

# YTL *life*

TREASURED PLACES, TREASURED MOMENTS

## ASPEN OF THE EAST

The best of food,  
retail and entertainment  
are all in Niseko-yo

## THRILLS & SPILLS

Cameron Highlands Resort  
hosts a weekend of  
style and romance

## PASSION PERSONIFIED

The Chapman's Challenge  
returns to Pangkor Laut Resort







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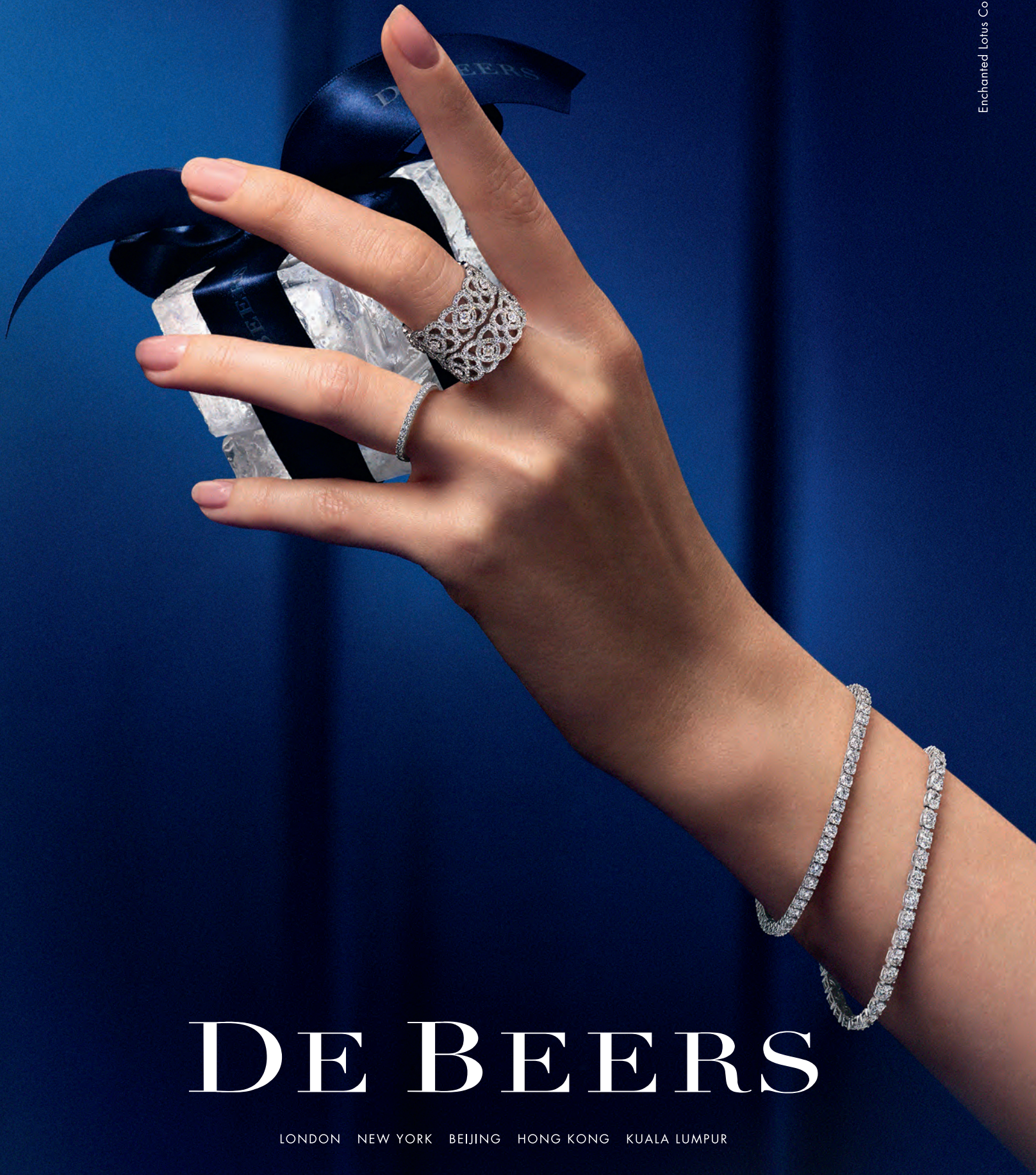
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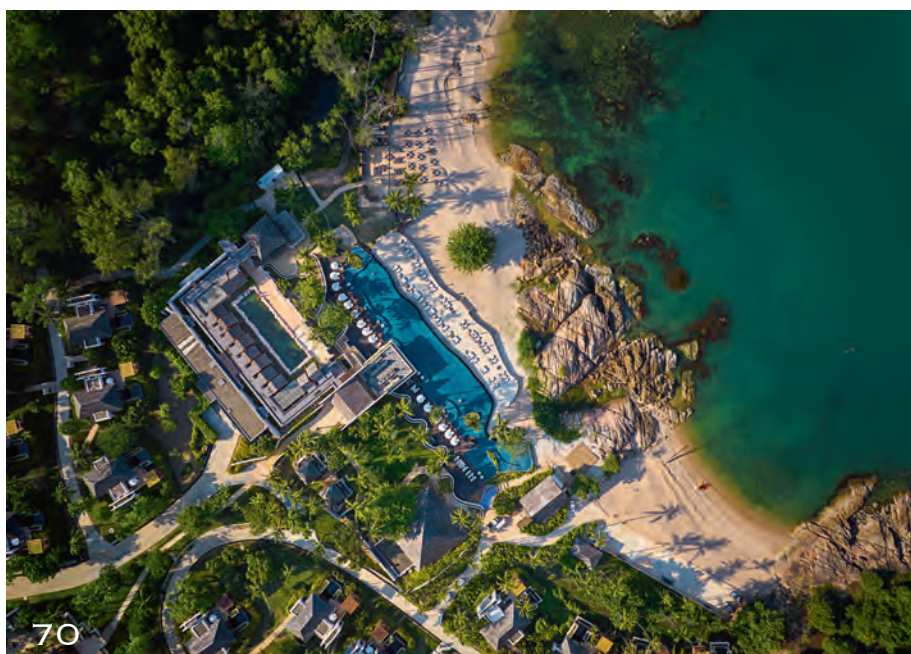
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A full-page advertisement for TUMI. Professional footballer Son Heung-min is the central figure, standing on a white, geometric, angular platform. He is dressed in a black double-breasted suit jacket over a white t-shirt, black trousers, and black leather shoes. He holds the handle of a silver, ribbed TUMI suitcase. The background consists of large, white, angular architectural structures that create a sense of depth and modernity. The lighting is bright and even, highlighting the textures of the clothing and the suitcase. The TUMI logo is prominently displayed in the center, overlaid on the image.

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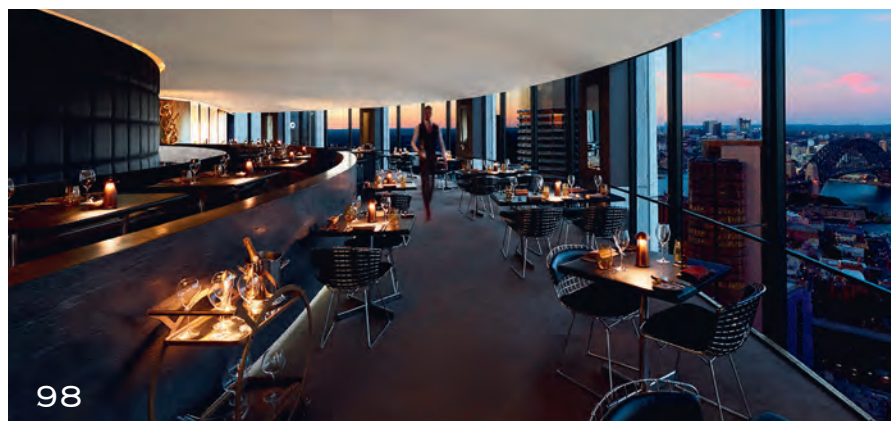
Our top tip: Marriott Brisbane is the best place to enjoy everything Australians love about The Sunshine State.



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## PRODUCED BY

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B-7-13A, Gateway Kiaramas  
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**A**s we start the year anew, let us at YTL Hotels present your year-round guide to the choicest places where your leisure time turns to treasured moments. We start with Niseko-yo, the new heart of Niseko Village. Here, you can enjoy powder snow slopes and a whole lot more, from sipping delicious après-ski cocktails at Chuya to dancing the night away at Mandala Club Niseko.

Back in Malaysia and in the cool climate of Cameron Highlands, we invite you to revisit the quaint charm of a five-star resort birthed from a colonial-era hill station getaway for British gentry. Across the pages, see how modern-day glamour and period outfits look perfectly in sync in a location where the sense of time is exactly what you make of it.

Among the many highlights last year was the return of The Chapman's Challenge at Pangkor Laut Resort, a living tribute to the extreme bravery of Frederick Spencer Chapman. He had spent three and a half years in wartime Malaya behind enemy lines, training insurgents and carrying out guerilla activities. The keen naturalist also took detailed notes on local birdlife, pressed plants and dried countless seeds before making his escape via Emerald Bay. It is most heartening that we were able to welcome the late Freddie's youngest son Christopher, as well as Chris's son Stephen and daughter Hazel, to the recent iteration of The Chapman's Challenge.

On the topic of birdwatching, there is no doubt that Freddie Chapman and, indeed, any budding birder would be pleased to get their hands on our latest in-house publication, *Wildlife Wonders at Gaya Island Resort*. A year in the making, this book is an essential guide for guests of our Bornean island sanctuary, helping you identify the rich diversity of feathered friends on the island with notes on conservation.

All these, and many more, from city hotels to the bucolic countryside properties of Monkey Island Estate and The Gainsborough Bath Spa, await your visit. It is our fervent desire and calm conviction that you should find your own slice of magic at all these properties—treasured places that are special in their history, setting, charm, cuisine and, indeed, the people who make up YTL Hotels.





# A CHANCE AT SAVING THE WILD MALAYAN TIGER

LUXURY AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CONVERGED  
AT THE LAUNCH OF EYE ON THE TIGER,  
THE WORLD'S LARGEST TIGER PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION  
AT THE STARHILL IN KUALA LUMPUR.

Words by MUNA NOOR





Brought to life by the UK-based conservation initiative Save Wild Tigers and supported by YTL Group, the world's largest tiger photography exhibition made its Malaysia debut in October 2023 in the opulent Atrium of The Starhill in Kuala Lumpur, following a triumphant showcase at London's iconic Royal Albert Hall.

Celebrating the majesty of the tiger while sounding an alarm for its precarious existence, more than 60 striking images captured by more than 30 award-winning photojournalists and photographers were featured. Among them were works by luminaries such as Steve Winter, Paul Hilton and Toshiji Fukuda, whose iconic images have appeared in the pages of *National Geographic* and *Newsweek*.

In her opening speech, Ruth Yeoh, the Executive Director of YTL Group, expressed her hope to raise awareness of the plight of wild tigers through the event. With the global population of wild tigers dwindling to approximately 5,000, and fewer than 100 Malayan tigers remaining in the wild, *Eye On The Tiger* underscored the urgent need to protect these threatened creatures. The exhibition was part of a long and fruitful collaboration stretching back to 2014 between YTL Group and Saving Wild Tigers.

Sadly, Malaysia will lose more than its national symbol of strength and courage should the Malayan tiger perish. As apex predators, the tiger plays a critical role in maintaining the delicate balance of our ecosystem with catastrophic consequences for biodiversity and humanity alike.

Yeoh, who is also the driving force behind YTL Group's ESG initiatives, emphasised the wider positive impact of tiger conservation efforts. "In India and other tiger ranges, the protection and restoration of tiger populations resulted not only in the preservation of ecosystems but also in the regeneration and recovery of the forests and the carbon stock when tigers live," she shared.

The Malayan tiger was poignantly represented by Malaysian photographers Sanjitpaal Singh and SC Shekhar. Shekhar's evocative image, taken 35 years ago in the now-vanished forest of Jerantut in Pahang, proved to be the exhibition's piece de resistance.



The Starhill hosted the world's largest wild tiger photographic exhibition in October 2023, drawing global and local attention to the plight of the endangered Malayan tigers, with as few as 100 remaining in the Malaysian wilderness.

"The tiger comes up time and time again as the world's number one species in terms of popularity", Simon Clinton, founder of Save Wild Tigers, related in his speech at the exhibition's unveiling. "If you can't save the world's number one most popular species, what hope is there for the rest of animal-kind?"

Held throughout The Starhill in October 2023, striking tiger images were also displayed at Eslite Spectrum Bookstore and in the windows of the Roberto Cavalli boutique. For art aficionados and wildlife enthusiasts, the *Eye On The Tiger* exhibition offered a unique opportunity to make a tangible difference. All exhibited images were up for sale, with proceeds set to benefit Save Wild Tigers and its Malaysian conservation partners, The Habitat Foundation and RIMAU, which are working on wildlife protection in Pahang's Al-Sultan Abdullah Royal Tiger Reserve and Royal Belum State Park in Perak, respectively.

His Royal Highness, The Regent of Pahang Tengku Hassanal Ibrahim Alam Shah, attended a private viewing of the photographic exhibition. The *Eye On The Tiger* photography exhibition was also supported by a series of talks helmed by a number of conservationists working in the field.



# WELCOME TO NISEKO-YO

AMIDST HOKKAIDO'S PRISTINE ENVIRONMENT,  
NISEKO-YO ELEVATES THE REGION'S OFFERINGS  
WITH ENRICHED LIFESTYLE EXPERIENCES INCLUDING  
INNOVATIVE CULINARY SPOTS, RETAIL OFFERINGS,  
LUXE LODGINGS, AND A VIBRANT NIGHTLIFE.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT







**D**ubbed the Aspen of the East, Niseko has become renowned the world over for its champagne powder snow, 18-metre annual snowfall and picturesque landscape. Niseko Village, the most exclusive and prestigious of the four connected resorts at the Niseko United ski area, will be given a luxurious transformation with the introduction of Niseko-yo in December 2023.

Niseko-yo will breathe new life into Niseko Village with the addition of a diverse restaurant scene, liquid libations crafted by some of Asia's best bartenders, curated stores for the ultimate winter wardrobe, and activities for winter enthusiasts of every level to explore. "It is a reimagining of Niseko Village for travellers seeking unique, luxury lifestyle experiences," says Pei Tsen Yeoh, Director in the Architecture & Design team of YTL Construction, who led the team overseeing the development of Niseko-yo. "Translated directly, Niseko-yo means Niseko World, and it comprises an array of international F&B, retail, entertainment and nightlife pursuits."

The Village will also present Mandala Club, Asia Pacific's most dynamic private membership club community, from now until 31 March 2024, which will undoubtedly see it becoming the culture and activities hub.

#### ARTISTIC TRIBUTES TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Woven into the fabric of Niseko-yo are its artistic elements, with illustrious artists commissioned to create pieces inspired by the beauty of its landscape and folklore. Hong Kong artist Frank Woo created three immense and vibrant

sculptures to guide visitors through the pathways: *Hokkaido Brown Bear*, *Hokkaido Red Fox* and *Hokkaido Long-tailed Tit*. He extended his creative vision to Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, with striking artworks such as a 2.4-metre piece of a skier gazing at the splendour of Mount Yotei.

Over at The Green Leaf Niseko Village, Hokkaido native Emi Shiratori masterfully adorned the spaces with intricate depictions of the region's wildlife and its natural surroundings. Finally, The Nightly Kaleidoscope quite literally lights up Niseko with cutting-edge projections of lights and colours, which beckon visitors along illuminated routes as tales unfold.

#### SOUL-WARMING GASTRONOMIC SPOTS

Exploring Hokkaido through your taste buds is a journey in itself and, naturally, a significant part of Niseko-yo's offerings comprises its cuisine. Hokkaido's seafood is held in high regard because of its cool climate and nutrient-rich waters, which result in succulent catches. These are transported to your plate with creations such as sashimi *moriawase* at Gogyo by Ippudo, an *izakaya* by night. In the daytime, it transforms into Ippudo, a cosy spot to enjoy one of the most famous *tonkotsu* ramen in the country. Yang Shu Ten also offers the very best of the waters around Hokkaido with authentic sushi, sashimi, tempura and *teppanyaki* dishes, where diners can revel in the scenic views of Mount Yotei.

If you've had your fill of seafood, step into Hokkai-en Yakiniiku where premium cuts of meat sizzle on the grill to release smoky aromas. Over at Moka, the worlds of Italian and Japanese cuisine collide, and its duality extends to its







This page, clockwise from above: *Hokkaido Brown Bear* by Frank Woo; Tomioka White at The Green Leaf Niseko Village; Sichuan hot pot.

evolution from a casual dining spot in the daytime to an indulgent and refined setting in the evening.

Crosta Pizza, the winner of the World Pizza of the Year 2023 award from 50 Top Pizza, infuses international flavours into Niseko with its latest extension and the region's first Roman-style pizza, Baby Crosta. Just upstairs, Pizza Bianca unveils another novel dining concept with the first pizza *omakase* experience in Niseko, helmed by the country's number one *pizzaiolo*, Chef Yuichi Ito.

Tantalising dim sum creations such as *xiao long bao* and delicate steamed shrimp dumplings by a Shanghai native chef-owner await at Long Tang, or Dragon Hall. Next, Chuan's spicy hotpots, which capture the centuries-old traditions of Sichuan cuisine, make for the perfect communal culinary convergence to warm visitors up.

### RAISING THE BAR OF COCKTAILS

Participating in a traditional tea ceremony is something of a rite of passage in Japan, and there is no better place to partake in this than at Chuya Teahouse by Higashiyama, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve. By day, it is a serene hideaway to discover new tea flavours and blends or to sample meticulously crafted pastries such as Choux au Craquelin with Hojicha custard.

The spot comes alive at night as it transitions into Chuya Bar, where you can unwind after a day on the slopes or trekking in nature with top-of-the-line cocktails. Penrose from Kuala Lumpur, which is listed on Asia's 50 Best Bars in 2023 list, will be anchoring the bar during the winter 2023/24 season along with six other top cocktail bars in Asia for an opulent Taste of Asia experience.





Savour traditional delights such as Japanese tea at Chuya Teahouse.

Below: the lobby of Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve.







This page, clockwise from above: The Holiday Project; a guest room at Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve; a bedroom at Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse; The Green Leaf Niseko Village.

### PINNACLE OF WINTER LUXURY SHOPPING

Bundling up from the frosty weather doesn't mean you need to compromise on style. Two glamorous retail offerings elevate Niseko into a haven for visitors to show off chic winter ensembles on the slopes.

At The Holiday Project, Asia's first and only one-stop destination for refined holiday wardrobe, pieces have been curated to ensure smooth transitions from the mountains to cosy and elegant indoor settings. Alternatively, Village Sports boasts endless options of skis, snowboards and winter apparel including a world-class custom boot fitting service.

### SERENE STAYS AMID THE SNOW

After experiencing all the unique offerings of Niseko-yo, you'll want to book a stay at an opulent accommodation such as Higashiyama Niseko Village, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, the first in Japan. You'll enjoy unimpeded views of Mount Yotei here. Otherwise, Hilton Niseko Village, a three-time winner of the Best Ski Resort Hotel in Japan by the World Ski Awards is an equally worthy choice.

The Green Leaf Niseko Village, at the base of Mount Niseko Annupuri, and Hinode Hills, with stunning views of Mount Yotei, offer unrivalled ski-in, ski-out experiences. For a tranquil retreat, Kasara Niseko Village Townhouses puts a contemporary spin on classic Japanese heritage abodes, each with its own heated ski storage and garage.

With a multitude of offerings, Niseko-yo gives a new reason to be excited for the season.

For more information, visit  
[www.niseko-village.com/niseko-yo](http://www.niseko-village.com/niseko-yo)









An aerial photograph of a vast, snow-covered mountain range. In the foreground, a ski resort is visible with several ski lifts, small buildings, and a few skiers. The middle ground shows rolling hills and valleys covered in snow, with some evergreen trees scattered throughout. The background features more distant, snow-capped peaks under a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.

# PERFECTION IS A SNOWBALL AWAY

EXPERIENCE WHAT POWDER ENTHUSIASTS  
RAVE ABOUT AND DISCOVER WHY NISEKO  
IS ON EVERY SERIOUS SKIER'S LIST.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



**T**he northern hemisphere's most reliable powder snow falls on the slopes of Niseko without fail every year. It was this news on the skiing community grapevine that brought skiers from Australia to this sleepy small town back in the 1980s that eventually launched Niseko's global reputation. Every winter, the coastline of the Sea of Japan receives a continental mass of cold air from Siberia, which turns into heavy snow in Niseko. The icy Siberian air mass crosses Hokkaido island to bring snow to the ski resorts in the south. This geographic and meteorological quirk is good news to skiers and snowboarders, who are drawn to these resorts created from the slopes of Mount Annupuri.

Since the late 1980s, skiers and snowboarders have been gravitating to Niseko, but not for the awesome couloirs, the steepest mountain slopes or the narrowest tree runs. They have come for Niseko's one ephemeral ingredient, powder snow, and lots of it. Ask any dedicated ski enthusiast or professional—it's probably the deepest snow you'll find on Earth.

For the winter sport dilettante, the evocative term 'powder snow' refers to a type of snow that offers soft, cloud-like powder pillows and tree runs, and is considered to be ideal for skiing and snowboarding. It is fresh snow that is dry and airy, and is as comfortable as a feather duvet to fall into. The Japanese call it Japow, or amazing Japanese powder snow.

It's safe to say every powder snow enthusiast will want to ski on the Niseko ski slopes at least once. There are four main ski areas in Niseko (five if you include Niseko Moiwa) where you can enjoy both groomed and comfortable ski slopes, and off-piste back country skiing in high-quality, fresh

powder snow. The ski and snowboard season in Niseko starts in December and peters off in mid-March. The good news is that Niseko can enjoy six-and-a-half metres of snowfall in December and still be assured of six metres of powder snow in January every year.

Powder pioneers started coming to Niseko in the late 1980s, attracted by the talk on the snow-vine of light dry snow pistes and moguls for skiers, and endless snow-covered fields and forest for snowboarders to claim as their own. Self-confessed snow bums who visited eventually moved to Niseko permanently. But it wasn't until the late 1990s that Niseko was put on the winter sports map.

### SNOW CATERPILLARS

After a day of winter sports on the mountains and the sun has set, it's possible to see from your hotel window myriad shafts of lights moving like giant torches up and down the pitch-black slopes. These are the custodians of the piste, hard at work grooming the slopes on large machinery. After the resort shuts down for the day and the night-skiing lights are switched off, Niseko's fleet of snow caterpillars stealthily leave their homes at the resort bases for the slopes. As the drivers find their way with the caterpillar's front lights, they collectively look like a haze of fireflies dancing on the dark mountain slopes. These snow cat groomers work throughout the night shaping and stroking the slopes into pristine lined furrows called corduroy for a skier's first turn the next morning. Sometimes working through blizzards, each driver covers about 30 to 40 kilometres each night.

A good portion of their night's work is spent managing and moving mountains of snow from around the lifts and base



This and facing pages:  
Niseko enjoys a  
staggering 18 metres of  
snowfall annually.



LIFE ON THE COVER







This and facing pages: Niseko Village offers award-winning hotels with spa and *onsen* facilities, a dining and retail village hub, luxury residences, an international snow school and alpine activities.

stations to keep the resort operational. As there is not much smooth terrain at Niseko, it's a challenge for snow groomers to create a surface that is safe for skiers of varying skill levels. However, thanks to these masterful snow cat drivers, Niseko is the powder capital of the world's groomed runs.

### NISEKO UNITED FOREVER

Niseko United lies at the foot of Mount Annupuri and is a loose collective geographic term for the four separately owned hotel resorts: Annupuri, Niseko Village, Hanazono and Niseko Grand Hirafu. They each contribute to the diversity and variety of this canvas, offering winter sport lovers a terrain that is distinctive to each of their personalities and character. There are few mountains that offer such a wide range of skiing landscapes.

Annupuri offers the most traditionally Japanese resort experience, which explains why it remains a favourite among locals who can nip in and out of the gates to ski open groomed slopes. It's also distinctive for its bowls, which give a skier open fields and powder-filled tree runs that morph into natural half pipes. Just make sure you have backcountry safety gear and know-how before you tackle these. (A bowl is a wide mountain basin whose slopes look as if they were carved from the side of a miso soup bowl.)

Niseko Village will welcome the novice skier and boarder with open arms, but it is also known for its steep off-piste powder runs and fast groomers. There is a reason why it's being considered for future Olympic alpine events in Sapporo. The best time to take to the slopes here is before

breakfast, when the runs have been freshly groomed and a new layer of powder has dusted the slopes.

Hanazono is synonymous with ski party fun, mellow pistes and winter games for young children. The man-made natural powder park named after a Beatles song is where you can ski *Strawberry Fields* forever with your mates. Strawberry Fields Park is also awesome for boarders who like to freestyle: they can jib, rail and jump to their heart's content. And the Hanazono Bowl base area is tailor-made for those experiencing snow for the first time with tubing, tobogganing and magic carpet lifts on offer.

Niseko Grand Hirafu is the first resort to open here and has the most variety of slopes in all of Niseko United. It is distinguished by its valleys and ridges filled deep with powder. It is also the main access route to the mountain's peak. But beware, as it still uses the old-school single chair lift known as the meat hook. For night skiing, nothing beats Hirafu for the largest area opened for after-dark ski and board sports.

We need to raise a glass of apres-ski to that visiting Austrian-Hungarian military officer who taught Japanese soldiers how to ski back in 1912. The sport caught on with the Hokkaido locals, the first ski lift was installed in 1961, and here we are today.

For more information, visit  
[www.niseko-village.com/niseko-yo](http://www.niseko-village.com/niseko-yo)











# HIGHLAND MYSTERIES

AT CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT, THE SCENE IS SET  
FOR A QUINTESSENTIALLY BRITISH WEEKEND,  
A JOURNEY INSIDE AND OUT PEPPERED WITH  
INTRIGUE, ROMANCE AND STYLE.

Producer, photographer and creative direction: JEMMIE CHEW

Fashion stylist: BIRDY LEE

Lighting: HERRY CHIA EE

Lighting assistant: JOY TAN

Make-up: DIANA TANG

Hair: VV CHAN

Prop stylist: FAYE

Photographer's assistant and videographer: FION KOH

Photographer's assistant: HAILEY TAN

Models: BAY DOUCET, LUIZA/ATTITUDE MODELS  
AND KEVIN/WU MODELS





On Bay: LOBBSTER  
dress from Glamedge;  
HALCYON DAYS  
bangle; scarf and shoes,  
stylist's own

On Luiza: LOEWE dress,  
heels and puffer jacket



BALMAIN blazer  
and T-shirt; glasses  
and trousers,  
stylist's own







BALMAIN jacket  
and shorts;  
vintage necklace,  
gloves and shoes,  
stylist's own



On Bay: FENDI  
dress; hat,  
gloves, necklace  
and bracelet,  
stylist's own

On Luiza:  
BALMAIN jacket;  
vintage necklace  
and gloves,  
stylist's own

HALCYON DAYS  
tea set





On Kevin: TOM FORD  
robe, shirt and trousers;  
necklace and ring,  
stylist's own

On Luiza: BALMAIN  
jacket, vintage necklace  
and gloves, stylist's own







LOUIS VUITTON  
mermaid hem flounce  
gown, Go-14 bag  
and heels; HALCYON  
DAYS bangle





RALPH LAUREN coat,  
shirt and trousers;  
earring, socks and  
shoes, stylist's own









LOEWE dress; vintage  
earring, necklace,  
bracelet and gloves,  
stylist's own





LIFE ON THE COVER





LIFE ON THE COVER



On Kevin: LOUIS VUITTON  
jacket, shirt, trousers and  
shoes; socks, stylist's own

On Luiza:  
ANDREA LEO COUTURE  
dress from Glamedge;  
HALCYON DAYS bangle;  
vintage earring, gloves and  
shoes, stylist's own





Traditional  
Hainanese Boiled  
Beef Soup.





# SAVOURING CLASSIC DISHES FROM THE COLONIAL ERA

THE COLONIAL CAFE IN THE MAJESTIC HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR  
SERVES A GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCE  
OF COLONIAL CULINARY HERITAGE.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN Photos by LAW SOO PHYE

**C**rossing the threshold into the Colonial Cafe of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur transports you into the bygone world of British Malaya. A relaxed, genteel air suffuses the space that includes covered courtyards, dotted with potted palms and other tropical plants. Inside, timber floorboards, dark wood panelling and dark-stained wooden chairs with leather seats and rattan backs contrast strikingly with crisply starched white tablecloths and plump cushions in neutral shades and floral print upholstery.

Colonial Cafe offers an apt setting to savour authentic classical cuisine from the colonial era. A fusion of British and Hainanese culinary cultures, colonial cuisine is a legacy of British rule in Malaya. It is distinctive for its fusion of East and West, where traditional British dishes are cooked according to Asian styles and infused with local flavours.

During the British rule, many Hainanese immigrants from China ended up as cooks in the homes of British expatriates, who often requested traditional meals from their homeland. The Hainanese cooks attempted to recreate these meals that





Classic Prawn Cocktail.

were totally foreign to them using local ingredients. They also picked up Western cooking techniques and blended them with their Hainanese style.

Thanks to their ingenuity, skills and creativity, combined with their knowledge of local ingredients and a willingness to experiment, a unique culinary interpretation of British classics was born.

Here are some highlights from Colonial Cafe's menu.

#### **CLASSIC PRAWN COCKTAIL**

A popular hors d'oeuvre, the Classic Prawn Cocktail is served in a classic martini glass with a wedge of lemon on the side.

The mound of fresh, shelled prawns, firm to the bite, sits on a bed of shredded lettuce and chopped cucumber that provides a delicate clean flavour and crunch. The prawns are smothered with a tangy pink cocktail sauce and topped off with sprinkles of finely chopped hard-boiled egg and dashes of paprika.

Also known as the Marie Rose sauce, the cocktail sauce is a blend of mayonnaise, Worcestershire sauce and tomato ketchup, plus a squeeze of lemon juice.

#### **TRADITIONAL HAINANESE BOILED BEEF**

The Traditional Hainanese Boiled Beef is aromatic, rich and flavourful, the result of long hours of brewing with a variety of Asian herbs and spices.

The dish includes a mixture of beef cuts such as sirloin, brisket and back ribs, which are cooked just right for taste and bite. Chunks of white radish provide a pleasing complement to the tender pieces of meat.

The dish is served with *somen* (thin pale white noodles that are mild in flavour), finely chopped spring onions, and a specially concocted, piquant chilli sauce that enhances the taste of the beef.

#### **HAINANESE CHICKEN CHOP**

The Hainanese Chicken Chop is an authentic culinary creation of the colonial era. A fusion of Western and Chinese flavours and cooking techniques, the Hainanese chicken chop is a deboned piece of chicken leg that is coated with cracker crumbs and then deep-fried. It is served with hand-cut fries, garden peas and a generous amount of thick brown sauce, spooned liberally over the chicken chop. A sprig of parsley adds the finishing touch to the dish.

The rich brown sauce is an onion gravy seasoned with the unique umami flavour of Worcestershire sauce, a staple condiment of British expatriates in Malaya.

#### **OLD-STYLE HAINANESE CHICKEN RICE BALL**

This dish consists of tender yet firm, succulent pieces of poached chicken with skin intact, garnished with crumbs of fried garlic and delicate tendrils of spring onion. The chicken is accompanied by rice that is hand-pressed into balls. This is how the Hainanese serve their chicken rice. The fragrant rice is seasoned in chicken fat and cooked in chicken stock, with its compressed grains creating a unique texture.

Complementing the dish is a bowl of clear chicken broth and a trio of dipping sauces: ginger-garlic puree, tangy chilli sauce, and thick dark soy sauce.

#### **NASI KUNYIT**

Nasi Kunyit (Turmeric Rice), sometimes referred to as Nasi Kuning (Yellow Rice), is a traditional dish of Malay and Peranakan (Malay-Chinese heritage) origins. It is often served during special occasions or celebrations.

The glutinous rice gets its yellow hue from being soaked overnight in a mixture of ground turmeric and water, with pieces of dried tamarind skin (Asam Gelugur) added for good measure. The yellow rice is then steamed in coconut milk, with pandan leaves and pepper corns.

At Colonial Cafe, Nasi Kunyit is served with a thick, *santan* (coconut milk)-rich chicken curry that is aromatic and flavourful.

For more information, visit [www.majestickl.com](http://www.majestickl.com)





Hainanese Chicken Chop.



Nasi Kuning.



Old-Style Hainanese Chicken Rice Ball.





# HERITAGE HEALING FROM HEAD TO TOE

THE ONLY SPA IN THE WORLD DEDICATED TO THE PERANAKAN HEALING TRADITION, SPA VILLAGE MAJESTIC MALACCA OFFERS SPECIALLY CURATED PERANAKAN WELLNESS TREATMENTS USING INGREDIENTS THAT ARE UNIQUE TO THE LOCALITY.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN



A red cloth banner hangs over the doorway of Spa Village at The Majestic Malacca, bestowing good luck and blessings to those who pass beneath it. Its deep red is a stark contrast to the white double doors that open into the light-infused reception area. Its interior decor reflects the Peranakan (mixed Malay and Chinese) heritage – from the traditional Peranakan porcelain tiles on the floor to the Peranakan artefacts and curios that are neatly arranged in the display cabinets. Aromatic scents of essential oils lightly perfume the air of tranquillity that permeates the room.

The therapies here are based on Peranakan healing beliefs regarding a person's cool or warm energies, and are inspired by traditional Chinese medicine. Using indigenous ingredients and long-established methods, the remedies aim to cleanse, replenish and reinvigorate, both physically and mentally.

### THE PERANAKAN HAIR CARE RITUAL

Every guest to the Spa Village at The Majestic Malacca is treated to a soothing pre-treatment hair care ritual experience, inspired by the elaborate 12-day Peranakan wedding ceremony.

Aimed at dispelling negative energies, the Peranakan hair care ritual begins with a hair wash. Warm, lightly scented Florida Water is streamed over the head. A Malacca Fruit (also known as Indian gooseberry) shampoo is then lathered into the wet hair. The Malacca Fruit is rich with anti-viral and anti-microbial properties, and is used extensively in traditional medicinal treatments. After the shampoo is rinsed out, a relaxing scalp massage with olive oil is administered. A Malacca Fruit conditioner is then applied before it is rinsed away with a mixture of calamansi juice and flower water, infused with pieces of kaffir lime. To finish, a wooden comb is gently run through the cleansed hair.

### WARMING YOUR BODY, HEART AND SOUL

The Suam-Suam Panas Experience (Warming) takes place in one of the six private treatment rooms located on the upper level of the double-storey spa. The large room, with an en suite shower room, exudes refined luxury, with its finely detailed porcelain wall tiles, ornate silverware and intricate traditional wood carving. Two massage tables take centre stage, while a free-standing bath tub is positioned at the far end of the room.

On a marble countertop cabinet are four apothecary bottles, each containing different essential oils concocted from local ingredients. Guests are invited to select one for use during their body massage. Also on the countertop is a claypot, partially filled with uncooked rice and unshelled nutmeg, as well as a table-top burner. Next to it are three bowls of fragrant unguents: thick white coconut milk, green pandan juice and golden yellow honey.

The treatment begins with a cleansing of the body with a warm towel. This is followed by the Malacca Palm Sugar and Honey Body Scrub, where a delicious, sticky mixture of Malacca Palm Sugar grains and local honey is rubbed onto



Above: the Pandan-Coconut Hair Mask is part of the Suam-Suam Panas Experience (Warming), a Peranakan Signature Experience.

Facing page: every guest enjoys a pre-treatment experience that includes a soothing hair care ritual.

the skin. Malacca Palm Sugar is made from the concentrated sap of coconut flowers and is very rich in mineral salts and essential fatty acids. The combination of the Malacca Palm Sugar and the enzyme-rich honey creates an exceptionally good scrub. At the same time, it replenishes the vitamins and minerals needed for healthy skin.

After a shower to wash off the scrub, it is time for the Nutmeg-Rice Rolling Massage. It begins with a traditional Malay massage, using the guests' chosen essential oil. Long kneading strokes focus on the muscles, while pressure is applied to various points on the body. Then, using a traditional steam pouch, heated nutmeg and uncooked rice are pressed along the body to ease aches and reduce wind from the muscles.

As guests luxuriate in the bliss of a rejuvenated body, the Bird's Nest Facial with Fermented Tapioca Mask is administered. Considered the Caviar of the East, bird's nest is the dried saliva of a species of swifts found only in the coastal caves of Southeast Asia. This treatment replenishes facial nutrients and improves micro-circulation, leaving the skin supple and glowing. The Facial includes a massage of the face with chilled jade rollers.

The Pandan-Coconut Hair Mask and a relaxing scalp massage bring the wellness experience to a close. Traditionally believed to relieve mild headaches, juice from the fragrant pandan leaves is combined with coconut milk to moisturise the hair and massaged into the scalp.

Upon completion of the treatment, guests are invited to the Relaxation Lounge, with one wall of floor-to-ceiling windows that look out to the swimming pool. Here, they may sink back into the cushions on one of the traditional Peranakan daybeds and enjoy some rejuvenating longan tea in quiet contemplation. It is a perfect ending to a unique experience of heritage healing and wellness.

For more information, visit [www.majesticmalacca.com](http://www.majesticmalacca.com)





# CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

THE CHAPMAN'S CHALLENGE RETURNS TO  
PANGKOR LAUT RESORT ALONG WITH TWO GENERATIONS  
TO BURNISH A FAMILY LEGACY.

Words by KENNETH TAN Photos by JASONHOOI.BIRD/YTL HOTELS





Above: all smiles at the starting line.

Facing page: the 2023 winner Mathieu Al Kharfan arrives at the finish line, cheered on by his family members.

The Chapman's Challenge 2023, its fifth instalment since 2015, returned following a three-year pandemic-enforced hiatus. It also welcomed a familiar winner—42-year-old Mathieu Al Kharfan—whose time of 52 minutes and 48 seconds saw him claim top spot and the coveted luxury sports watch from official timekeeper Norqain, which was awarded to the overall winner of the event together with its official retailer Sincere Fine Watches. Al Kharfan, who had previously triumphed at The Chapman's Challenge 2018 edition, did not expect to win again but had been training for a separate triathlon and was hoping to stay competitive throughout the race.

"We used to live in Kuala Lumpur and I've become so familiar with Pangkor Laut Resort: the island, the property and the nature," Al Kharfan said following his victory. "And my wife loves the resort for its environment, the quality of service and, after several visits, we started to feel connected to the people here, like family."

Together with his young family, Al Kharfan observed the delight on the faces of his children when they spotted hornbills and monkeys on their day of arrival for The Chapman's Challenge. "As a parent, on this private island, you don't have to worry. It's the perfect environment for families."



Out of the water and towards the home stretch.





This page: The Chapman's Challenge includes a 2.4-kilometre trek through a two-million-year-old rainforest and a one-kilometre swim in the sea off Emerald Bay.



### CONTINUING THE LEGACY

Another family who was present on the island during the challenge came with a rather famous last name. Christopher Spencer Chapman, the youngest son of Colonel Frederick Spencer Chapman, is inextricably linked to the challenge that bears his family name. On his first visit to Pangkor Laut Resort, he met with the resort manager and discussed the possibility of establishing the challenge—a tribute to his father's heroic flight from the clutches of the enemy.

As the story goes, immortalised in *The Jungle Is Neutral* by Frederick Spencer DSO Chapman—the Japanese invasion forced Freddie into guerrilla warfare, during which he spent four years haranguing the occupiers by blowing up bridges, cutting lines of communication and laying mines while simultaneously escaping leeches, unfriendly tribesmen, tigers and the rainforest's dense undergrowth. "He only escaped through making radio communication and coming through this island, emerging on Emerald Bay on 13 May. Eventually, he and two fellow soldiers saw the periscope of the HSM Statesman submarine, which would evacuate them to Sri Lanka," Christopher recounts. "And it was in Colombo where he would meet my mother, who was then attached to the women's air force headquarters."

For Christopher, the resumption of The Chapman's Challenge is a living memorial to his late father. "We're delighted because, when it was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, we wondered if the idea would die. But it has come back." Among the ranks of 2023's participants was





Above, left: (from left) Christopher, Stephen and Hazel Chapman at the memorial dedicated to Colonel Frederick Spencer Chapman, whose lifetime exploits as an adventurer and naturalist spawned novels and a triathlon on Pangkor Laut Resort that bears his name. Above, right: the special edition Norqain timepiece bears a special imprint of The Chapman's Challenge and Pangkor Laut Resort logo on the caseback.

Christopher's son Stephen Chapman, participating for the fifth time in the triathlon, which comprises a 3.8-kilometre road trail followed by a 2.4-kilometre hill trek through the rainforest and finally a one-kilometre swim across Emerald Bay, with a dash to the finish line.

Stephen's best time of 53 minutes and 15 seconds is immortalised on the The Chapman's Challenge leader board. The 2023 edition saw him clinch a podium finish with third spot. "The most challenging bit is the hill ascent because it is quite steep. But my favourite part, because I like to swim, is coming out of the jungle and into the water," he says. He credits his training during his time serving in the British Parachute Regiment as keeping him fit even up till the present day. To have followed in the footsteps of his paternal grandfather and serve came naturally to Stephen. "I liked that I'm working towards being part of something bigger, and taking on the challenge of belonging in an elite regiment," he says.

#### FAMILY MATTERS

In the present day, family has come to the forefront for Stephen, particularly with the arrival of his daughter, so he concedes that he "has a new mission now", dedicating himself to family and his new job at Undo, a sustainability outfit that helps corporations achieve their net zero target via carbon removal.

Stephen's sister Hazel, who had competed in previous

editions but had to sit this particular edition out due to recovery from a motorcycle accident, was also basking in the golden hues of Emerald Bay. "The first year, I remember we raced on the exact date that my grandfather was rescued. Swimming alongside my brother in the exact same bay made me realise how special this challenge is," she recounts. "Interestingly, even though I never met my grandfather Freddie, there are lots of parallels I find we share—he was a photographer and liked to sketch, and I work creatively doing illustrations and designing film sets," she says. "And I used to ride motorbikes and go on silly adventures, and I've got strong willpower, like how he showed resilience during his lifetime."

For the present-day Chapman family, who returned to the exact spot where 78 years ago their grandfather was making his bid for freedom, the sense of delight stemmed from seeing Emerald Bay in its unspoilt condition, surrounded by the very jungle that Freddie had once sheltered in. "And it's great to see how the challenge has become an international race with participants from around the world," Christopher says. "Pangkor Laut Resort is a great mix of luxury, jungle and sea, but my favourite spot is undeniably Emerald Bay, especially given its connection to my family and imagining what it must have been like for my father to have been standing here on the day of his rescue."

For more information, visit [www.pangkorlautresort.com](http://www.pangkorlautresort.com)



LIFE FEATURE

# LA NUOVA DOLCE VITA

A WEEKEND DRIVE TO TANJONG JARA RESORT BY FERRARI OWNERS RESULTED IN A SPECTACULAR EXPERIENCE OF GASTRONOMY COURTESY OF A VISITING GUEST CHEF.

Words by KENNETH TAN Photos by KEN LIM / MOMENZ CREATION





**O**n a recent Thursday at Tanjong Jara Resort—the idyllic beachside getaway built in the style of 17th-century Malay palaces—purring V8s heralded the arrival of an 18-Ferrari convoy. Tanjong Jara Resort, situated along a crescent strip of golden sand, is a favoured destination for holiday-making thanks to its blue horizons, picture-perfect scenery and calming waves lapping at the shore. For this particular group, the drive along Karak Highway and East Coast Expressway added to the getaway's appeal, with its beautiful, meandering highways and breathtaking sights of age-old rainforests and mountain ranges along the way.

All this contributed to the encapsulation of the sweet life, or as the Italians would have it, *la dolce vita*. Only that this particular trip offered the promise of something even more—a discovery of how the original beauty and allure of Tanjong Jara Resort could be jazzed up with the excitement of the unexpected.

Enter Motokazu Yonezawa, better known as Chef Moka, born in Kumamoto, Japan. His first apprenticeship in the kitchen was at the Pasta Club restaurant in his hometown. At the age of 27, he decided to move to Italy and worked in several restaurants, including Ristorante Perseus in Florence and La Cappanna in Ischia. Along the way he also pursued a sommelier qualification and met his wife Noriko during a wine sommelier course in Italy.

When he returned to Japan, he worked as a chef and sommelier with famous Italian restaurant groups such as Aroma Freca and Al Checchiano, before fate had him moving to first Johor Bahru and latterly Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.



Above: Nelayan is Tanjong Jara Resort's signature restaurant.  
Below: a member of the Ferrari Owners Club Malaysia arrives at the resort.







Above: roast Cherry Valley duck breast with orange sauce.  
Below: fish carpaccio.







Clockwise from above: Chef Motokazu Yonezawa and his wife Noriko greet guests; Chef Moka (as he's affectionately known) prepares the meals; grilled scallops with *uni vin blanc* sauce; *torta di cioccolato* with strawberry sauce.



"The characteristics of my cuisine are rooted in harmony between ingredients, seasoning and cooking methods, all of which combine to bring out the best flavours and aftertaste," he says.

At Tanjong Jara Resort, backgrounded by swaying palm fronds and cooled by a constant sea breeze, the group of Ferrari owners discovered the heightened sensations of the new sweet life with the introduction of Chef Moka's gastronomy into their holiday programme. Lunch at the resort's signature Nelayan restaurant showcased the cerulean vista of the South China Sea.

On the table, meanwhile, the courses began with an antipasto of grilled scallops with creamy *uni vin blanc* sauce. Next was the risotto porcini, in which delicate, earthy mushrooms mingled with the moreish rice. The risotto was paired with a San Felice Chianti Classico Il Grigio Riserva, offering its typical notes of sweet violet and wild red berries in a full-bodied mouthful. A crème brûlée dessert capped a satisfying midday meal as the afternoon stretched languorously ahead, for spa sessions, refreshing dips in the pool and participating in turtle conservation with the resort's team of naturalists.

As dinnertime rolled around, Chef Moka and his team busied themselves in the kitchen, ably supported by the culinary team of Tanjong Jara Resort as they sliced and diced. A first course of fish carpaccio was tinged with citrus fruits to add to the tropical zesty character of the dish. Next came the rigatoni caprese redolent with tomatoes and basil, and paired with a Sicilian white, a Tasca D'Almerita Regaleali Bianco, offering freshness with hints of kiwi and mineral aromas.

The choice of mains—a beef stew or roast Cherry Valley duck breast with orange sauce—were both equally popular. In came the Cygnus from the same Sicilian winery, this time a fragrant red with a nose of dark berries, tobacco and chocolate balanced with a fruity taste with soft acidity. Polishing it off was the dessert of a *torta di cioccolato* with strawberry sauce, a delicious end to a most unexpected East Coast getaway, where the authentic Italian cuisine of Chef Moka added an undoubted newness to the sweet life that many have come to recognise Tanjong Jara Resort for.

For more information, visit [www.tanjongjararesort.com](http://www.tanjongjararesort.com)



# SIP AND SAVOUR

THE NEWLY OPENED RC BAR AT THE RITZ-CARLTON,  
KUALA LUMPUR WELCOMES THE AWARD-WINNING NO.3  
LONDON DRY GIN ALONG WITH AN EXCLUSIVE  
SELECTION OF SIX COCKTAIL CREATIONS.

Words by ALICIA CHOO Photos by LAW SOO PHYE







**A**t The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's first floor, guests will discover a haven of the finest spirits in its newly opened RC Bar. The sleek and polished interior beckons with an air of opulence, blending modern aesthetics with sustained glamour. Plush leather brown seats, mirrored ceilings reflecting the warm ambient glow, patterns reminiscent of the roaring twenties, and a charming view of the bar form an inviting enclave. The space is enhanced by the soulful cadence of modern-day classics with a three-piece jazz ensemble, a fitting backdrop for conversations and celebrations alike.

The crowning jewel is the award-winning No.3 London Dry Gin, conceived by London's oldest wine and spirit merchant Berry Bros. & Rudd. Since its launch in 2008, this award-winning gin has aimed to redefine the pinnacle of London dry gin, setting new standards for quality. Over two years, it has collaborated with master distillers, mixologists and the world's sole PhD holder in gin, Dr David Clutton, to create this showpiece. Adhering to exacting standards, it distills its spirits and botanicals in a century-old, brick-encased copper pot in Holland, the birthplace of gin. The result is a balanced blend of genuine London dry gin. This commitment to quality has earned No.3 the prestigious title of World's Best Gin four times at the International Spirits Challenge and secured the vote as the best gin for The Classic G&T at the People's Choice Awards in 2021.

This ultra-premium gin carries a juniper-forward character with a harmonious blend of botanicals, making it the cornerstone of the bar's exclusive cocktail creations crafted by the bar's seasoned mixologist. The cocktail line-up begins with No.3 Martini, a globally recognised classic of gin and vermouth with a garnish of lemon. Meanwhile, No.3 Negroni offers a dry gin twist with an infused juniper-forward profile, enhanced with a touch of zesty orange. For a crisp and refreshing choice, No.3 Tonic shines with a delicate accentuation of the gin's distinct characters, complemented by a garnish of pink grapefruit and rosemary. Enter No.3 St. James's Spritz, a dry and revitalising fusion of elderflower and sparkling wine with a balance of botanical elements. Topped again with pink grapefruit and rosemary, it's a visual and sensory delight. Beat the heat with No.3 Tom Collins, a grown-up twist on classic lemonade featuring fresh lemon, soda water and dry gin, crowned with a slice of lemon. Completing this exclusive selection is No.3 London Calling, a blend of gin, sherry, lemon juice and sugar syrup. Its charm lies in the redolent punch of aromatic bitters and citrus notes.

Whether you're in search of a tranquil evening or a lively venue to celebrate life's best moments, RC Bar extends an invitation to savour the art of refined living.

For more information, please visit [www.ritzcarlton.com/kualalumpur](http://www.ritzcarlton.com/kualalumpur)



# THE ART OF LAUNDRY SERVICE

JW GARMENT CARE OFFERS A BESPOKE SERVICE TAILORED  
TO MEET THE EXACTING STANDARDS OF HIGH-END GARMENTS.

Words by JUERN NG



JW Garment Care is a luxury dry cleaning and laundry service by JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur that is dedicated to cleaning and maintaining your garments with only the highest quality care by a team of professional valets.



The concept of garment care has existed since the inception of clothing, but only in recent times has the emphasis on luxury garment care as a specialised service become more prominent. The days of haute couture and luxury fashion houses only emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, adorned in their own regal tapestry of opulence. With these splendour-laden epochs, the demand for garment care services only grew, but it wasn't just any care—it was the sort of 'tender loving care' that exceeds the ordinary in order to cater to the unique needs of such lavish fabrics.

Fast forward to the later 20th century, and technological advancements continue to propel the services of luxury garment care. For instance, there are eco-friendly dry-cleaning innovations and cutting-edge equipment designed to preserve the quality of delicate fabrics and intricate designs, prolonging the longevity of each valuable piece. For the discerning custodians of fashion, these luxury services

are an investment in timelessness, as well as a sanctuary that safeguards the life of each garment, continuing to preserve the memories and craft new stories each time a piece of garment is worn.

Today, luxury garment care has evolved into a lifestyle statement, and has become artistry that continues to sustain the life within each masterpiece. As these specialised services become more than just a utility, JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur has introduced JW Garment Care, a luxury dry cleaning and laundry service situated in the heart of Bukit Bintang in The Starhill, where the essence of lavish living truly matters. Backed by a team with profound insights of the unique requirements of high-end fashion, JW Garment Care ensures its services are able to meet the exacting expectations of refined clientele.

Experiencing JW Garment Care myself, my first impression upon stepping into its interior was that of refined elegance. Its serene and upscale environment is enhanced by plush furnishings and velvet seating. The ambience is comforting and sophisticated, with its elegant and muted colour palette adding a modern touch to the overall vibe.

An appointment is easily booked by phone. A personalised consultation is provided to discern the specific needs and preferences of each client. Meanwhile, careful inspections of each delicate piece are undertaken to ensure meticulous attention to detail and compliance to the optimal measures of garment care. The process was relatively simple and it was a swift in-and-out experience.

Garments were ready to be retrieved in as little as an hour. Its valet services include pick-up and delivery options, thoughtfully designed for utmost convenience to ensure a seamless experience. Upon return, my garments were neatly pressed and well-protected. The intricate beads on my dress, which required thorough care, were exceptionally well-maintained and preserved. Any stains were expertly addressed and it's safe to say that no complications arose. However, in the rare event that an issue arises during the process, clients can expect prompt updates on the status of their garments.

It is worth noting that the overall service quality was exceptional. Garment conditions were professionally handled and the turnaround time was impeccable. The quality of care provided not only justified the cost of services but was, in fact, quite reasonable. It is also notable that the team at JW Garment Care were friendly, helpful and, most importantly, displayed complete transparency in outlining the terms and conditions—a crucial aspect that significantly contributed to my overall satisfactory experience.

In addition to external clients, JW Garment Care's luxury garment services are also integrated with its affiliated hotel, JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur, offering an extra layer of convenience for guests. This supplementary service may not be grand in scale, but its commitment to unparalleled quality elevates the experience. At the end of the day, it is the little details that make a difference.

For more information, visit [www.thestarhill.com.my](http://www.thestarhill.com.my)





# TAKING FLIGHT TO GAYA ISLAND

GAYA ISLAND OFFERS A TRUE BOUNTY OF  
NATURE'S WONDERS, INCLUDING THE CHANCE  
TO SEE SOME OF BORNEO'S ENCHANTING BIRD LIFE.

Words by CHERYL MILLER-YELL and TAN BENG HUI  
Photos by CHERYL MILLER-YELL, CHARMAIN ANG and NG SIEW HIAN



Female Brown-throated sunbird on a ginger plant.



Watch the sun rise over the picture perfect vista of Mount Kinabalu, Malaysia's highest peak. Gaze at magical cloudscapes. Slowly kayak along a mangrove forest. Potentially stumble upon one of the world's most highly trafficked animal, the Sunda/Malayan pangolin (*Manis javanica*). Be awakened to the dawn chorus of avian residents and visitors. Hear the calls of the endangered proboscis monkeys (*Nasalis larvatus*), arboreal primates who make Gaya Island's forest canopies their home. Who needs screen entertainment when you can watch the red giant flying squirrels (*Petaurista petaurista*) show their amazing aerial display of gliding from tree to tree every night like clockwork?

Gaya Island Resort offers the opportunity to partake in some deep and sustaining R&R in a beautifully crafted resort that adopts the look and feel of traditional design, along with contemporary comforts and hospitality expected of a luxury stay. Its villas are sensitively in situ fronting a lush rainforest, with beaches and jungle trails only a short walk away. Conservation and tourism are not mutually exclusive or compromised here.

#### A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF GAYA ISLAND RESORT

YTL Hotels has released a publication to introduce and highlight some of the diverse avian species guests may see during their stay at Gaya Island Resort. From the smallest to the largest, common to the endangered, garden or park, seabirds and tree birds, the stealthy to the garrulous, the brightly coloured plumage to the cleverest camouflage—all were to have a place in this book.

As a small, merry band of birders (three photographers and one writer), we happily took on this assignment to create something that shares, educates and connects others to the natural assets of the island, and which we hope guests will value and cherish.

The result—*Wildlife Wonders at Gaya Island Resort: A Guide to its Feathered Friends and Indigenous Fauna*—is a book that highlights almost 40 birds, along with a selection of some of the island's wild occupants and special plant life. Each feature comes with images and accompanying text on their main traits, behaviours, habitat and conservation status.

Now, any bird enthusiast knows of the immense enjoyment of trying to spot and watch birds, as well as the frustration, sometimes, when the bird you want to find does not make it easy for you, much less arrive 'on cue' ready for its close-up shot. Nevertheless, armed with essential local knowledge and our combined expertise, and with cameras and memory cards ready, we set out to find and photograph as many bird species as possible during our five-day stay.

Whether it's to chance upon birds or to plan to see a special bird, it frequently means being 'up with the birds'. There are no holiday sleep-ins. It's about waking up before the sun rises or walking the paths and trails way past sundown. Whether they're migratory on a short holiday stay of their own or a resident that breeds here, the more you observe and listen, the more you notice unique individual and social characteristics in the birds. Watch a little longer and you will notice their distinctive beauty and wonder, as well as the many traits and behaviours they share with us: locating safe havens, enjoying food, finding a life partner, playing or caring for their young. Connecting with and



Male Asian  
emerald dove.





Left: Brown boobook.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Male Brown-throated sunbird on a leaf, Philippine megapode, Blue-eared Kingfisher, the new book entitled *Wildlife Wonders at Gaya Island Resort*.

following the rhythms of nature can lead you to unexpected wonders. Such magical bird sights and sounds are part of experiencing island life.

To make the most of any bird outing, it is important to do some homework, whether you are a veteran or a novice. This includes consulting and compiling bird lists, looking at available images and listening to recorded bird calls, more so if you only have a short time to locate many birds. These days, with so many online resources, this task is easier, but for Gaya Island, there was not a lot of information. Instead, we relied on in-house conservation materials and the expertise of Justin Juhun, YTL Hotel's Group Conservation Director, as well as the experts on mammal, primate, avian, etymological, flora and botanical matters working at the resort's wildlife centre.

With their guidance, we found and enjoyed an afternoon observing a pair of Philippine megapodes (*Megapodius cumingii*), also known as Tabon scrubfowl, which in Malaysia, has only been recorded in Sabah. To the uninitiated, this looks like a brown chicken-like bird with a grey head, a reddish patch around its eyes and, as its name suggests, big feet. This is an extremely shy ground bird that will scurry away once it spots you. The two we saw were industriously building a nest, oblivious to our presence some 60 metres away. Unlike most birds, this 'nest' is a mound of sand created by kicking soil and decaying vegetation backwards into the centre with their strong claws.

We later learnt that, once ready, a solitary egg is placed within and left to hatch on its own about 70 days later, using

the heat generated from the mound. Many newborn chicks need the care of parents to survive, but the baby megapode is superprecocial: it hatches fully feathered and ready to start life alone. If you are lucky you may get to see these hardworking megapode parents, and many other equally fascinating feathered species.

### STOPOVER FOR SOME ISLAND LIFE

Maintaining and conserving biodiversity is especially critical for islands like Gaya that are naturally rich in flora and fauna, and which offer wonderful stopovers for us, and also for many of the migratory birds that visit. In this regard, an important and commendable point of difference is the sustained investment by YTL Hotels and Gaya Island Resort in a range of conservation initiatives, including the employment of staff to protect, advocate and share local knowledge, including educating guests on what they can see and hear during their visit. The production of *Borneo's Natural Wonders at Gaya Island Resort* reflects this commitment to conserve and promote coexistence with nature that all guests can enjoy.

Whether you are a casual observer or want a deeper immersion into nature and the beauty of birds, we hope you will enjoy the images and information displayed in this book. Perhaps, if someone asks you, "What bird is that?", you will be able to give them the answer. Or maybe it will be the spark of love needed to help save birds and habitats for generations to come. Come to Gaya Island Resort, relax and stay a while. Just don't forget to look up and watch the birds fly by.





Cheryl Miller-Yell and tan beng hui, together with Ng Siew Hian and Charmain Ang, were part of the team that put together YTL's latest publication, *Wildlife Wonders at Gaya Island Resort: A Guide to its Feathered Friends and Indigenous Fauna*. They express their immense gratitude to Justin, Bata and Scott, and staff at Gaya Island Resort, who made this an enriching and memory-making experience.

For more information, visit [www.gayaislandresort.com](http://www.gayaislandresort.com)



# EAST MEETS WEST

MR MA'S AFTERNOON TEA REDEFINES THE  
CONCEPT OF A CONVENTIONAL AFTERNOON TEA  
THROUGH A FUSION OF DIVERSE CULTURES.

Words by JUERN NG





In his satirical novel, *Mr Ma and Son*, Lao She describes the experience of a father and son from China who are trying to adjust to living in London. As Mr Ma and his son, Ma Wei, sought to adapt to the customs of the English, one, at least, was familiar to Mr Ma—tea. Although the English and Chinese ways of consuming tea were different, they shared some similarities, such as the practice of offering tea as a means to cultivate connections.

"Mr Ma, a canister in each hand, addressed the rest of the company. 'Some tea we've brought with us from Peking. One canister for the Reverend Ely, and one for Mrs Wedderburn, as small tokens of our respect'."

It is from here that Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur drew its inspiration to introduce Mr Ma's Afternoon Tea, featuring plenty of East meets West elements. Set in the historic street of Jalan Kamunting and close to the city's business hub, Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur is also surrounded by eclectic restaurants, quaint cafes, art galleries, legendary landmarks and a vibrant nightlife. Back in the 19th century, this area had been destroyed by flood and fire. As a result, buildings that were once constructed of wood and thatch were replaced with bricks and tiles under the British colonial administration to resemble London architecture and its history. So, just as Mr Ma and Son ventured to London, patrons will also be able to go on a journey reminiscent of 1920s London with Mr Ma's Afternoon Tea.

At Brasserie 25, the red brick arcades and wood flooring evoke a warm and rustic ambience. Natural earthy tones create a sense of cosyness while its mid-century copper Sputnik chandeliers enhance the atmosphere with a touch of futuristic allure. Mr Ma's Afternoon Tea is presented in a setting infused with traditional English charm, as an assortment of classic English delights is elegantly served



This and facing pages: Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur invites guests to embark on a delightful voyage of flavours, inspired by the celebrated novel *Mr Ma and Son* by Lao She, published in 1929.

on a three-tier cake stand. Start with the delicately crafted sandwiches—with cucumber, egg and smoked salmon fillings—before moving on to decadent cakes and macarons, followed by freshly baked scones accompanied by jam and clotted cream.

Chinese influences are captured through an additional set of offerings that feature traditional pastries such as egg tarts and *siew pau* (baked barbecued buns). The pastries are flaky and buttery, while the egg custard filling of the tart is delightfully silky. Those who aren't fond of sweets will be surprised to find that the pastries offer a perfect balance between sweet and savoury, which will not overwhelm the palate.

Naturally, no afternoon tea is complete without a generous serving of the beverage. Mr Ma's Afternoon Tea features a selection of jasmine and Darjeeling options. The former exudes fragrances of delicate floral notes, while the latter is a juxtaposition of rich, robust flavours. Each sip beckons you to embrace the essence of both cultures, offering you an opportunity to savour the best of both worlds.

For more information, please visit [www.stripeskl.com](http://www.stripeskl.com)



# WEEKEND SPECTACLE

ELEVATE YOUR WEEKEND DINING WITH A BUFFET  
DINNER AT THE HAPPENING WEEKEND DINNER AT SHOOK!  
EVERY FRIDAY AND SATURDAY EVENING.

Words by ALICIA CHO Photos by LAW SOO PHYE





The sleek halls of Shook! at The Starhill Dining, the lively pulse of the city, set an appetising backdrop for a weekend filled with culinary indulgence. As the clock inches toward 6pm every Friday and Saturday, the anticipation builds like a crescendo, signalling the commencement of The Happening Weekend Dinner. The expansive open space becomes a visual feast, with each buffet station thoughtfully arranged to ensure an experience without overcrowding.

The culinary journey unfolds with the top three highlights stealing the spotlight. First in line is the Southern Thai cuisine station, an ode to the beguiling and chilli-spiked flavours inspired by Pak Tai at The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui. Here, the Thai station balances tradition and creativity, employing high-quality ingredients to breathe life into authentic recipes from Thailand's southern provinces such as fresh rolls that

are dipped in a delightful, sweet chilli sauce, and the enticing aroma of Pad Thai that is prepared before your eyes. Moving on, the Japanese counter transforms into a showcase of the freshest Hokkaido produce, offering a satisfying array of sushi, sliced sashimi, teppanyaki and tempura. The expedition continues at the grill station, where guests are granted the freedom to select their choice of proteins or a medley of vegetables, all expertly grilled to personal specifications, enhancing the interactive nature of the dining experience.

But the culinary adventure doesn't conclude there. The buffet extends its offerings to include a dedicated pasta station, where a variety of pasta awaits, each ready to be paired with sauces and toppings. Diners will also discover crisp, oven-baked pizzas accompanied by refreshing salad options. The buffet also encompasses a tempting assemblage of hot local dishes, each prepared with a nod to regional culinary traditions, introducing diners to the abundance and diversity of local cuisine. At last, the dessert bar emerges as the grand finale, paying tribute to the flavours of New York. Diners can expect to find desserts that cater to every palate, from the classic richness of cheesecakes to the luscious decadence of chocolate cakes. The station also includes local sweet specialities, ice creams and seasonal fruits.

To complement this feast, the beverage options mirror the diversity of the buffet. Included in the package are various juices, teas and coffees. For those seeking a more spirited experience, the extensive bar menu offers a curated selection of cocktails, wines and beers, inviting diners to elevate their buffet experience with perfectly paired libations.

For more information, visit [www.thestarhilldining.com/outlets/shook](http://www.thestarhilldining.com/outlets/shook)



This and facing page:  
embark on a weekend  
culinary journey at The  
Happening Weekend  
Dinner at Shook! at  
The Starhill Dining.



# REFINED ELEGANCE

THE NEWLY REFURBISHED PRIME  
DELUXE AND PREMIUM ROOMS AT  
AC HOTELS BY MARRIOTT CREATE A  
CLUTTER-FREE HAVEN FOR GUESTS  
WHILE CATERING TO THEIR EVERY NEED.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT





As Spanish hotelier Antonio Catalán, who founded AC Hotels and lends his initials to the brand, said: “Hotels should serve as an escape, an oasis from the mundane.” This Marriott brand, with its Spanish roots and a European soul, offers a chic, fuss-free experience for the modern traveller. With 150 hotels globally, guests can expect the thoughtful and warm hospitality that has become synonymous with the Marriott brand at each destination.

Perfect for business travellers and vacationers alike, AC Hotels by Marriott’s three properties in Malaysia is close to the buzz of activity but removed enough if you want to escape. AC Hotels Penang is set in the Bukit Jambul neighbourhood, a mere 10 minutes’ drive from the airport and a short drive to Georgetown where one can explore the island’s heritage and culture. Meanwhile, AC Hotel Kuantan offers the perfect blend of being in the heart of the city and being near spots such as Teluk Cempedak Beach and the Royal Pahang Golf Club. Next, AC Hotels Kuala Lumpur, which stands between the Titiwangsa LRT and KL Monorail stations, is only a 15-minute monorail ride to the vibrant Bukit Bintang shopping area.

Their light-flooded, window-walled lobbies are furnished with grey velveteen couches, swivel leather armchairs, plush carpeting and statement floor lamps that add to their elegant and modern design. Here, you’ll be greeted by the multilingual convivial staff by name and with a welcoming smile as they facilitate a seamless check-in process.

A mobile check-in option allows Marriott Bonvoy members with Elite status to check in prior to their arrival, while an express check-out service is perfect for those who are short on time. Other Elite benefits include late check-outs, a hotel welcome gift and an enhanced room upgrade. In today’s hyper-connected society, Wi-Fi is an essential amenity and all AC Hotels provide free Wi-Fi throughout their respective properties.

In a complex world, AC Hotels ensures that the layout of its guest rooms help you have peace of mind. The Prime Deluxe and Premium room categories, both with king and twin bed options, boast newly renovated spaces by interior design firm Duoz, whose projects include JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur and The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui. Clean lines and soft grey-brown hues enhance the minimalist beauty of the space, with carefully positioned lighting creating a cosy ambience.

Showcasing an open layout, the purposefully designed rooms were optimised to fulfil your every need without the clutter for an effortless hotel experience. Sleek desks and precisely placed outlets ensure that you’ll never be more than an arm’s length away from an outlet while you’re typing away at your desk or lounging in bed. Open closets





Prime Deluxe King at AC Hotel Kuala Lumpur (above) and AC Suite at AC Hotel Penang (below).







Dine in comfort at AC Lounge and AC Kitchen (below).



give easy access to your items and plenty of space to place your luggage, while adjustable bedside lamps help you to get some reading done before you drift off to sleep. As for amenities, all the basics, including a television, a fridge, a safety deposit box and toiletries, are covered.

Floor-to-ceiling windows allow plenty of natural light, while blackout curtains keep rooms dark for restful sleep. These are accompanied by the luxury of plush Marriott mattresses and white bed linens. The hotels also prioritise the beauty sleep of guests with a lavender turndown station, where you can prepare a sachet in the lobby to help you relax and soothe before heading up to your room.

Start your mornings in AC Kitchen with its European-inspired buffet breakfast, which features specialities such as frittata, buttery scrambled eggs or local *roti canai* made on the spot. Service is delivered by enthusiastic staff who will bring your caffeine fix of an espresso or cappuccino to your table.

By day, AC Lounge provides a space to work and also offers quick bites such as honey-glazed chicken and cheese panini. As evening rolls around, unwind from a day of busy meetings

or exploring the city at the Lounge, which transports guests to Barcelona for a night. Order the signature cocktail, called ACGT (A Custom Gin Tonic), which is a nod to AC Hotels' Spanish roots with Tanqueray gin, tonic water and club soda garnished with orange peel and lime wheel. Pair it with tapas such as lamb prosciutto, which is sliced at the carving station before your very eyes.

The hotels also blend business and leisure with its meeting facilities and the latest equipment. They are an ideal setting for meetings, conferences and seminars, while their banquet halls are perfect for weddings.

You can also wind down with a dip in the outdoor swimming pool, which offers a welcome respite from the heat, or head to the fitness centre to maintain your workout regime.

With purposeful design at the heart of the AC Hotels by Marriott philosophy, you can rest assured that you'll be more productive, creative and fulfilled with every memorable stay at all AC Hotels in Malaysia.

For more information, visit [ac-hotels.com](http://ac-hotels.com)





LIFE FEATURE

# WANDERLUST WEDDINGS

SITUATED ON A PRIVATE BAY WITH BREATHTAKING VIEWS  
AND IMPECCABLE FACILITIES, THE RITZ-CARLTON, KOH SAMUI  
IS THE ULTIMATE LUXURY HOTEL TO HOST OPULENT  
YET INTIMATE WEDDINGS.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT

**T**hailand is home to stunningly beautiful archipelagos with warm temperatures all year round, and Samui is one of its most picturesque islands with pristine sandy beaches, turquoise blue waters, and coconut groves. Finding solitude at this popular destination may be challenging, but not so at The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, which is sequestered within a private bay at the northern tip and

is set in 58 acres of a former coconut plantation on Choeng Mon Beach. The all-suite resort boasts contemporary interiors with local architectural aesthetics that complement the sun-kissed bay. A place likened to heaven on Earth, its idyllic location paired with the unrivalled customer service that The Ritz-Carlton is known for results in the perfect backdrop for a tropical destination wedding without forgoing the pomp and circumstance typically accompanying the marriage rites.





### BREATHTAKING BACKDROPS

Couples will be spoilt for choice as The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui boasts eight exquisite indoor and outdoor settings to serve as a backdrop for ceremonies, dinner receptions or both. Let the ceremony unfold at Sala Thai, an elevated pavilion reception venue boasting sparkling ocean views imbued with a sense of local culture and a chapel-style design inspired by Thai traditional roofs. Next, The View is a stunning venue that will quite literally elevate your nuptials while offering a panoramic view of the resort.

Another breathtaking selection is The Tides Upper Deck perched on top of Tides Bar, which overlooks the magnificent azure waters connecting with the never-ending blue sky, with the option of a natural sand floor or grass carpet. At Sea Salt Deck, Sea Salt Shack and the Sundeck located next to the beach, the Gulf of Thailand takes centre stage for a waterfront wedding venue, serving as an intriguing and ever-changing backdrop to exchange vows.

Couples can also opt for the Banquet Hall, which is designed with traditional themes for dinner receptions, or go for Baan Talat, a uniquely Thai location with a market-style atmosphere filled with travelling carts.

### ISLAND ROMANCE

There are two packages to choose from for the big day, with a curated list of services and products to make the enchanting event truly yours. The Dream Wedding package is for intimate groups of up to 50 and includes preparations before and during the special day and dinner. Another exquisite option is the La Vue Wedding package.

The packages come with a 120-minute Samui's Coconut Heritage massage for the couple at The Spa Village Koh Samui, which utilises natural local ingredients and age-old healing practices of the region.

To say 'I do' in a truly remarkable style, The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui has an impressive roster of live entertainment to choose from, including a Thai cultural dance performance, a traditional Thai long drum parade, and a ranard player. To light up the night in a spectacular way, a fireworks display is the perfect way to cap off the festivities.

Trained and qualified Marriott Certified Wedding Planners are on hand to turn your fairy-tale wedding into reality by helping to determine an overall vision and to execute all the chic and sophisticated details from the space to cuisine.

### TANTALISING FARE

The exceptional culinary offerings mirror the gastronomic delights on the island with the touch of the exceptionally skilled chefs at The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui.

For those who elect for a dinner reception at The View, the five-course meal is a feast for the senses and includes Rock Lobster Carpaccio, Pata Negra and Dry Aged 28 Days Wagyu Ribeye. For the Beach Barbecue menu, a beachside dining extravaganza awaits with a bountiful spread including a paella station, an oyster bar, and a grill station.

Eat as the locals do at Baan Talat, where an impressive selection of local ingredients is served with delicacies from all over the country including a traditional sweets cart. At The Mookata, everything from meat slices to fresh seafood is either barbecued on a grill to bring out smoky aromas or prepared in a rich flavourful soup.

At The Ritz-Carlton Koh Samui, no matter what your requirement for a perfect wedding is, you, your spouse-to-be and your friends and family will be able to create timeless memories at this extraordinary haven.

For reservations, please call +66 77 915 777 or email [rc.usmrz.sales@ritzcarlton.com](mailto:rc.usmrz.sales@ritzcarlton.com)





# COOKING IN PARADISE

AT SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI, YOUR JOURNEY TO WELLNESS MAY ALSO INCORPORATE A CULINARY ARC WITH THE RESORT'S COOKING CLASSES.

Words by KENNETH TAN Photos by ANNA-RINA RAHIM AND MANGO LOKE

**F**or those familiar with YTL Hotels' Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, the journey to the resort is undoubtedly part of its appeal. The approach via resort shuttle—return airport trips are offered complimentary with direct bookings—traverses coastal highways and sinewy mountain roads, through vibrant and artsy Ubud and its verdant paddy terraces. About an hour into the journey, the ancient landscape of Bali becomes apparent, from the majestic sight of Mount Batur, to the calderas and volcanic lakes formed at the base of these mighty formations.

Arriving at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali feels like a homecoming of sorts, with the gracious welcome of a shoulder massage, foot wash and delicious accompaniment of a welcome drink made of coconut water, honey mint and lime—all of which instantly rejuvenate the senses. So much of the atmosphere here lends itself to healing, from the mineral-

rich black volcanic sands that are said to dispel low spirits—a long-practised remedy by the villagers of Tembok—to the tranquillity of the pastoral northern coast, away from the hubbub of Bali's southern fringe.

At this property, which has received various spa-related accolades since its inception, its F&B offerings complete the circle of well-being with a range of healthful dining options. Many of its dishes are farm-to-table by default, courtesy of easy access to produce and the day's catch from the village of Tembok. Menus are usually written up following the morning market run to the nearby Pasar Tukad Eling, where live poultry and freshly line-caught mahi-mahi and yellowtail tuna are found.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served at Wantilan, the open-air restaurant that enjoys constant sea breezes and a vista of swaying palm fronds backgrounded by the deep blue Bali Sea. It is here where you may partake in one of the





Clockwise from above: beef *rendang*, summer rolls (raw red cabbage, carrots, celery and bean sprouts rolled in rice paper, paired with a tangy chili dip), *kuih lapis* (colourful layered soft rice flour pudding, with grated coconut) and bottles of *jamu*.

myriad activities proposed by the resort. Its private cooking classes are conducted by its executive chef Mohamad Rizal, who brings his understanding of cosmopolitan cuisine from more than a decade of service at Fairmont Dubai, into the food served here.

Classes—limited to two persons a day—run the gamut of selecting, handling and storing fresh seasonal produce, preparations and modifications of recipes to cater to ingredient sensitivities, and a hands-on walk-through of three courses: appetiser, mains and dessert, as well as making a smoothie. For 1.5 million rupiah per couple, they receive cooking attire, a hands-on discourse on cooking and nutrition from Chef Rizal, and a personalised recipe book of what they have made.

"It's important to strive for a balance of the salty, spicy, sweet and savoury tastes," Chef Rizal explains of his philosophy to the dishes that he proposes at the cooking

classes, among them a healthful bean sprout and vegetable salad. "Fresh ingredients are key, of course, and we work closely with the local farmers and fishermen on a contracted basis to obtain the choicest selections."

Beyond the cooking, there is, of course, the eating and this is where the practised culinary nous of the kitchen team comes into play. At Wantilan, diners enjoy three-course lunches and dinners, ranging from seafood and meat to vegetarian dishes, with flashes of the chef's genius such as a cumin-infused yoghurt in the aubergine lasagne, or the dextrously cooked fish, redolent with flavours of the banana leaf in which it is baked, and served with the chef's *sambal matah* and two glasses of fruit-forward Chardonnay with aromas of green melon, nectarines and caramel and a vanilla custard palate.

For more information, visit [www.spavillageresort.com](http://www.spavillageresort.com)



# LIFE IS A CABARET AT THE ACADEMY

A LUXURY BLOOMSBURY HOTEL  
NEAR THE SHOWBIZ GLITZ AND MUST-SEE  
MUSICALS OF THE LONDON WEST END.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN







**I**t used to be a place where people dried their laundry, haggled at a market, grazed their horses and partook in salacious vices, but London's West End is now the largest theatre district in the world. Although topographical markers don't exist for it on a map, the West End evokes show business, scandal, lights and the red carpet. It's been the beating heart of thespian activity for centuries, and you know you're there if you're within the boundaries marked by Leicester Square, Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, Covent Garden, Soho and Savile Row.

Theatre-goers at West End are attracted by the world-class entertainment, dining and shopping that it offers, but lurking beneath the face paint is centuries of history that provide the backdrop to London's theatreland. From the 17th century onwards, the building of palaces and townhouses gradually displaced the poor communities in Covent Garden and nearby Seven Dials. This attracted residents such as painter Joshua Reynolds; Frederick, Prince of Wales; and Karl Marx. But change was already on the cards when the Great Fire of London happened in 1666. Around this time, Theatre Royal on Drury Lane was built and remains the longest-standing theatre in the West End. Piccadilly Circus is now home to Criterion Theatre and London Pavilion Theatre. (The name of the circus came from a tailor who made his fortune making piccadills, a frilled collar popular in the 17th century.)

By the 20th century, the West End went into full swing with the longest-running show in theatre history, *The Mousetrap*, which opened in 1952 and is still in production. It is staggering to know that more than 10 million people have seen this Agatha Christie classic whodunit. Some of Britain's

finest actors such as Laurence Olivier, Patrick Stewart, Carey Mulligan, Idris Elba, Judi Dench and Anthony Hopkins have trodden the boards in London. And from Hollywood, Gwyneth Paltrow, Orlando Bloom, Christian Slater, Jessica Lange and Madonna have all appeared on a West End stage.

### PLAYING IN THE WEST END

Apart from headlining shows such as *The Lion King*, *Moulin Rouge*, *ABBA Voyage* and *The Jersey Boys*, here is an insider's list of what to see:

- Nicole Scherzinger plays Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. On now until January 2024 at Savoy Theatre.
- Lily James and Kristin Scott Thomas in *Lyonese*, which opens in December 2023 at Harold Pinter Theatre.
- Matt Smith, who played the 11th Doctor Who, will star in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* at Duke of York Theatre, which opens in February 2024.
- *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club* is one of the hottest tickets in town, playing at Playhouse Theatre, which is on now until 29 June 2024.
- Studio Ghibli's *Spirited Away* is an extraordinary stage production at London Coliseum, which runs from April to July 2024.

The Academy Bloomsbury hotel is located in the centre of Bloomsbury and is only a 13-minute walk away from Soho via the high-end English village-like Store Street. The Guest Services Team at The Academy will be happy to assist you with advice about booking a West End show.

For more information, visit [www.theacademyhotel.co.uk](http://www.theacademyhotel.co.uk)





# BEAU NASH OF BATH, THE ORIGINAL DANDY

THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES TURNED 18TH-CENTURY BATH  
INTO THE CAPITAL OF FASHION, REFINEMENT AND ELEGANCE.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

**H**e was a flamboyant dresser, threw parties that the cream of society attended, and dictated the fashion trends and etiquette of the day. No, we're not referring to Karl Lagerfeld or Freddie Mercury. We're talking about Richard 'Beau' Nash, who was the influential Master of Ceremonies at The Pump Room and the Assembly Rooms in Bath for 20 years in the 1700s. As a tastemaker, Nash laid down a set of rules so particular for society to follow that he turned the small sleepy town into a spa playground of the smart set that lasted for decades after his death.

Refinement and etiquette were dictated by 12 rules laid down by Nash. Rule II advised ladies coming to a ball to appoint a time for their footmen's arrival to take them home to prevent inconveniencing themselves or others. Rule VI forbade a gentleman from giving his ticket for the ball to anyone but a gentlewoman, "unless he had none of his acquaintance". Rule IX wagged a finger at ladies who dressed and behaved like handmaids as they should "not be surprised if they are treated as a handmaid". Nash shocks with Rule X, where he requests that elderly ladies and children be content with sitting at the back of the ball as they are either





This and facing pages: illustrations of Richard Nash and his famous white hat.





past "perfection" or had never attained it. As the arbiter of good taste, Nash set the schedule of entertainment for the two seasons each year: the first from March to June and the second from September to December. Under his 'rule', the Bath programme of dancing dictated that the Pump Room hosted balls twice a week, which started at 6pm and comprised minuets, tea-drinking, country dances and a strict finish at 11pm.

The style of parties Nash threw twice weekly during the 'seasons' were like the ones used by Jane Austen in her novels to depict tension, longing or frustration. These public dances in the Regency era offered the rare opportunity for young men and women to be on their own without a chaperone and

the thrill of physical touch. In Austen's novels, dancing was part of the ritual of courtship.

For example, in *Mansfield Park*, Catherine Morland is distraught when she is not able to dance at her first ball in Bath because there is no one to introduce her and Mrs Allen properly. In another scene from this novel, Austen shines a light on Fanny's loneliness and isolation. Not being a skilled dancer when Fanny is thrown a ball for her birthday, she falls foul of one of Nash's rules: a lady has to be sporting when she does not get asked to dance as often as the other ladies. Meanwhile, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Elizabeth Dashwood and Mr Darcy's rocky relationship begins at the Meryton Assembly Ball. And in *Emma*, Austen contrives that her heroine never loses sight of Mr Knightley even as she dances with Frank Churchill.

Nash was born in 1674, almost 90 years before Austen in 1767, but the social etiquette set by him in the 1700s remained in place for more than 100 years after his death and shaped the behaviour of the aristocratic mineral-water drinking society of Bath. He was born in Wales but went to Oxford to study law, at which he was an abominable failure. Poor at his studies and not endowed with much of an allowance, Nash nevertheless realised that his dandified personal style—even at that young age—made him desirable company. Just after his 31st birthday, he decided to try his luck at the health spa town of Bath, where he was appointed assistant Master of Ceremonies (MC) under the tutelage of Captain Webster. However, not long after that, Webster died tragically in a





sword-fighting duel, and Nash found himself the new MC. One of his first pronouncements was the barring of sword-carrying at balls to avoid a repeat of Webster's fate.

Oliver Goldsmith, the 17th-century novelist and author of the biography *The Life of Beau Nash*, observed that Nash was not a physically attractive man. He was never born to be a beau garçon, but the source of his authority came from his force of personality. Nash knew how to make an entrance and he made sure his appearances in the public eye were extravagant and unforgettable. He made his signature the wearing of a white hat.

He was able to support his lavish lifestyle and expensive taste because he was a prodigious and successful gambler. However, when the anti-gambling law was tightened in 1745, his fortunes and influence gradually diminished. He died quite impoverished at the age of 82 in 1762, having had to sell most of his possessions to survive.

Nash has been known to say that the three ancient residents of Bath, politeness, decency and good manners, have of late left the city, but that whoever can restore them shall be rewarded with honour and respect. Posterity has certainly awarded Nash that honour and he is remembered to this day.

When you visit Bath to stay at The Gainsborough Bath Spa hotel for a few nights of pampering at its private hot springs spa, do spare a thought for Nash, the gentleman and Master of Ceremonies par excellence. And think of him making his arrival at the Assembly Room in a post chariot



This page: completed in 1771, the Assembly Rooms at The Gainsborough Bath Spa quickly became the heart of the fashionable Georgian society in the city.

Facing page: the Georgian-era Pump Room, Bath's social heart for over two centuries, has hosted Jane Austen and Charles Dickens and continues to host the customary English afternoon tea in the present day.

and six greys, with outriders, footmen, French horns and "every other appendage of expensive parade". If you'd like to dine at The Pump Room Restaurant or visit the Bath Assembly Rooms now managed by the National Trust, the very helpful concierge team at The Gainsborough Bath Spa hotel reception will be more than happy to assist and advise.

For more information, visit [thegainsboroughbathspa.co.uk](http://thegainsboroughbathspa.co.uk)



# HISTORY AT EVERY TURN

IN THE POSH COUNTRYSIDE OF BRAY-ON-THAMES,  
PAST AND PRESENT MELD SEAMLESSLY ACROSS  
A RANGE OF THRILLING ACTIVITIES, MICHELIN-STARRED  
GASTRONOMY EXPERIENCES AND UTTER RELAXATION.

Words by KENNETH TAN

**M**onkey Island Estate occupies seven acres of land that date back some eight centuries to the Middle Ages. It was first inhabited by a small order of monks known for their apothecary skills and was eventually purchased in the 18th century by Charles Spencer, the third Duke of Marlborough, who turned it into a fishing retreat.

In recent times, the property has been transformed by award-winning New York-based Champalimaud Design into 41 charming bedrooms and suites, the perfect base from which to discover the sights, sounds, scents and tastes of the delightful village of Bray.



### 1. A MAGICAL STAY IN THE WEDGEWOOD SUITE

At The Wedgewood Suite—deemed by Historic England to be of exceptional interest and conferred a Grade 1 listing—you can luxuriate among 409 square feet of luxury, coupled with sweeping views of the beautiful hotel grounds, quaint wildlife and the meandering Thames.

In this suite, you'll discover the loving restoration and fantastical adornment by Champalimaud Design, as well as ivory plasterwork sculpted into mermaids, seashells and mythical creatures constituting the Wedgwood Jasperware, which gives the suite its name. Jasper, the most famous of Josiah Wedgwood's inventions, remains a recognisable signature of the pottery brand's appeal, with the founder granted royal permission by Queen Charlotte to style himself as potter to Her Majesty.



### 2. THE MONK'S ELIXIR IN THE FLOATING SPA

The location's history inspires Monkey Island Estate's floating spa, a recall of the apothecary barges of the 1730s commissioned by the Worshipful Society of Apothecary in London. Here, therapies are drawn from a partnership between the hotel and Chelsea Physic Garden—the United Kingdom's oldest experimental botanical garden—which connects the spa to the healing history of the monks.

Among its many healing remedies, the Monk's Elixir is a can't-miss. This sensational hour-long treatment begins with ancient herbal tonics and aromatics, followed by a herbal infusion of essential oils that revitalises your body and soul thanks to its languorous massage strokes that incorporate the rhythm of the boat.



### 3. HONEYCOMBED DAYS WITH BEEKEEPING

Let Monkey Island Estate's resident bee-keeper Sergio take you through the intricacies of the science and art of apiculture. Beekeeping is essential to the Estate's flourishing flowerbeds and offers guests a chance to harvest the honey. Throughout the 90-minute session, you will be immersed in the age-old practice of beekeeping, which began some 10,000 years ago and was practised in the cradles of ancient civilisations as diverse as the Mayan and Egyptian as well as the Greek and Chinese.



### 4. UP AND ABOVE THE FRAY

In the bucolic setting of Bray, you will enjoy uninterrupted, bird's-eye views of the locality and surroundings with a hot-air balloon tour. From up high, cast your gaze across the Berkshire countryside, from the dense woodland of Windsor Forest and the hamlets that dot the parish.

### 5. READY AND AIM

Polish your marksmanship with a short drive to the local shooting range—of which there are several—where you undergo one-to-one sessions with a private shooting instructor, making you a crack shot in no time.







## 6. YOUR VERY OWN GIN

Now more fashionable than ever before, gin has experienced its headiest renaissance with a never-ending parade of premium varieties hitting the market. You too can create your own gin by first understanding the entire process of making one, courtesy of a master distiller at the Berkshire Botanical Distillery in Yattendon.

Famed for its exotic blends of rhubarb and raspberry, honey and orange blossom, and dandelion and burdock gins, the Berkshire Botanical Distillery allows guests to design their unique gin recipe and to distil their personalised bottle of gin on one of its mini stills.



## 7. WINDSOR CASTLE TO YOURSELF

A memory that will last a lifetime, the private tour of the State Apartments at Windsor Castle starts with an expert guide who will take you behind the ropes for a tour encompassing more than 1,000 years of royal history. This private tour takes place when the castle is closed to the public, giving you a chance to explore the intricacies and living heritage of a recognisable royal icon that began as a wooden castle for William the Conqueror and then became the stone fortress that it is renowned for today by Edward III.



### 8. IN THE EMBRACE OF NATURE

In 1932, George V commissioned Eric Savill to create the 35-acre natural wonder that is The Savill Garden. Over time, this attraction has offered boundless and breathtaking vistas of floral kaleidoscopes and ever-changing woodlands dictated by the passing of seasons. Spring brings the National Collection of magnolias and flowering Japanese cherry trees, while summers allow you to take in the scent of the Rose Garden and scenes of blooming hydrangeas.



### 9. AN ASCOT HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE RIDE

In the stately elegance of a horse-drawn carriage, take in the sights of the surrounding countryside in the manner of lords and ladies. Relax and explore ancient woodlands, 18th-century lakes, grand avenues and delightful garden scenes, all the while being regaled by a carriage driver or guide who will provide insights into the history and lesser-known facts of the area. This horse-drawn carriage ride includes a 'romantic proposal' package for those who wish to make it a very special experience with their loved one.



### 10. FALCONRY ON THE ESTATE LAWNS

This introduction into the world of falconry takes you deep into understanding this exotic pastime, which has evolved from its original need for hunting to sport and, now, as a hobby and status symbol. Across the 90-minute experience, the falconer eases you into the intricacies of first knowing the habits and proclivities of the bird, before demonstrating how these trained birds hunt on their majestic flight and then return to the falconer.



### 11. BE YOUR OWN CHEF

At Monkey Island Estate, the restaurants offer brasserie-styled meals as well as casual fare on the terrace overlooking the river. You too can learn to recreate the satisfying, delicious flavours of its kitchens with the newly launched cooking workshops. These private workshops include the guest's choice of a three-course menu and an hour-long tutorial of how to prepare each dish.

For bespoke groups, the cooking workshops may also take place in the hotel's private residences such as Long White Cloud or Lavender House. These cottages have their own kitchen and dining areas and offer a home-styled experience of making (and serving) that perfect meal in the countryside.



### 12. AFTERNOON TEA IN THE MONKEY ROOM

In the Monkey Room, which gives the island its name, you will spot the beautiful and painstakingly restored singerie scene by French artist Andieu de Clermont. More than three centuries later, the whimsy and wit of the artist's works in this room still elicit wry smiles, thanks to the capricious monkeys supplanting humans in their human-like activities of boating, fishing and shooting, all while dressed in the height of 18th-century fashion. The art, commissioned by the third Duke of Marlborough, provides a historical sense to the afternoon tea, which includes a glass of champagne to raise the spirits.





# MADE-TO-MEASURE HOSPITALITY

GORDON NICOLSON KILTMAKERS WEAVES SCOTTISH  
AND MALAYSIAN HERITAGE INTO A ONE-OF-A-KIND  
TARTAN FOR THE GLASSHOUSE.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

**L**ike the complex weaving of a Scottish tartan, there were threads of wit, altruism, piety and generosity in Lady Glenorchy's character, which moved her to devote her life and vast wealth to religious education and the building of chapels. The Glasshouse Edinburgh opened in 2003 out of the beautiful 19th-century frontage of one of Lady Glenorchy's chapels for the poor of Edinburgh to worship in. Today, The Glasshouse is a 77-room five-star sanctuary with a lush Rooftop Garden located next to Edinburgh Playhouse. To mark the 20th anniversary of The Glasshouse, the YTL Group embarked on a partnership with an Edinburgh institution, Gordon Nicolson Kiltmakers, to create a tartan design with the colours of the Malaysian flag. The red, white and blue on the YTL Tartan acknowledges Malaysia as a Commonwealth

country, while the yellow symbolises the sovereignty of the Malay rulers as leaders of the faith in their constituent states.

We had the privilege of speaking with Gordon Nicolson on a chilly autumnal afternoon, who explained that tartans are not only for families and clans but also for honouring a community you belong to and cherish. This explains why there are plaids for countries, cities, regions, companies and universities among the 14,000 tartan plaids registered with the Scottish Register of Tartans—a 'family' to which the YTL Tartan now belongs. Nicolson says the Register likes the fusion of the Scottish heritage of The Glasshouse with the Malaysian heritage of the YTL Group, as well as its rich provenance of being woven by the House of Edgar, whose roots boast of Queen Victoria and her equerry John Brown as customers to their shop in Pitlochry.







Understandably proud and knowledgeable about the history of the tartan, Nicolson says Highlanders have worn highland dress for centuries until they were banned from doing so by the Act of Proscription 1725. This was because the British government considered it martial dress and central to the identity of Jacobites, Highland clans who supported Bonnie Prince Charlie's unsuccessful bid to secure the Stuart crown. From as early as the 16th century, Highland clans wore the Great Plaid, or the belted plaid, a versatile piece of clothing that could be a cloak, blanket or bedding. Known in Gaelic as *feileadh mòr*, it is not only one of Scotland's greatest icons but also one of the world's leading national marks of identification, according to Nicolson. The oldest surviving specimen of a true tartan was found in a peat bog in Glen Affric and has been carbon dated to between the 15th and 16th centuries. Known as Glen Affric Tartan, it is now on display at the Victoria & Albert Dundee's Tartan exhibition, which is open until January 2024.

In 2021, the World Heritage Association put kiltmakers on the watchlist. However, Nicolson was five years ahead of the curve as he founded the Edinburgh Kiltmakers Academy in 2016. The Academy has now trained more than 130 kiltmakers, helping to preserve this proud and cherished artisanal skill for Scottish identity.

The Royal Stewart tartan, chosen by Sir Walter Scott for King George IV's visit to Edinburgh, is the best-known plaid in the world today. The YTL Tartan may be a newcomer to the fold, but visitors to The Glasshouse Edinburgh will get



This and facing pages: Gordon Nicolson created the YTL Tartan to celebrate the 20th anniversary of The Glasshouse Hotel, Edinburgh, in June 2023.

to see the hotel concierges proudly wearing their made-to-measure tartans when they greet you at the door. Nicolson has been known to drive by the hotel to check that the *bhoys* are wearing their kilts just right, or as he describes it, "at mid-knee length and their socks pulled up to the right height".

For more information, visit [www.theglasshousehotel.co.uk](http://www.theglasshousehotel.co.uk)



# DIAMONDS OF THE SEA IN THE SQUARE MILE

HOW THE DEMOCRATISATION OF CAVIAR  
TOOK IT ON A JOURNEY FROM THE RUSSIAN TSARS  
TO CAVIAR HOUSE AT THREADNEEDLES.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



Caviar House serves informal meals in the bar and dome lounge.







**Y**ves Saint Laurent, Pierre Bergé, caviar and a hotel that was once a Victorian bank is a heady mix, as the worlds of art, gastronomy and wealth collide at Threadneedles Hotel in the autumn of 2023. Bergé was not only the business partner of Saint Laurent but he was also a shrewd financier investing in select luxury brands. Impressed by the Prunier heritage in French gastronomy that dates back to the 19th century, Bergé added it to his portfolio of companies. Some of the firsts accomplished by Prunier include being the first establishment to prepare and sell French caviar, offer home delivery in Paris by bicycle, invent the concept of the oyster bar, and serve champagne by the glass.

This year, Threadneedles Hotel in London is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a gastronomic coup of a partnership with Caviar House & Prunier. The stylishly refurbished Bar and Dome Lounge, with its own historic heritage, will now be the venue of Caviar House at Threadneedles, a mouth-wateringly exciting fine dining destination in Square Mile. Diners will be feasting under the magnificent dome built by W & A Moseley architects from Manchester in 1856, when the historic building served as a Victorian city bank.

Exquisite marine delicacies such as oysters, shellfish, salmon and lobster ordered à la carte will arrive at tables that are magnificently lit by the stained-glass light of the dome surrounded by six composite Ionic-Corinthian columns. But the real protagonist of this culinary opera is caviar, and there could not be a more appropriate setting than Caviar House Threadneedles. Known as both diamonds of the sea and grey gold, caviar is no longer synonymous with Russian tsars or the shahs of Iran. Caviar House & Prunier is the business union between George Rebeiz, the world's largest importer of Iranian caviar since 1950; the Prunier family, the first producer of caviar in France since 1872; and a Swiss actor who founded Balik, a purveyor of smoked salmon. The story of caviar and smoked salmon from these three personalities reads like an epic adventure of gastronomy, sustainability and ingenuity.

In 1921, Émile Prunier set up processing centres where local sturgeon was caught, and was able to serve his own caviar for the first time in his art deco restaurant just off the Champs-Élysées. Soon, Prunier was not just catching wild sturgeon but also importing the classic Sevruga, Osetra and Beluga sturgeon to harvest eggs, thus starting a French tradition to rival the Caspian's finest exports. Since 1993, Prunier's farms have been producing homemade caviar from a shoal of sturgeon reared on the estuary of the picturesque Dordogne river, now a protected ecosystem thanks to the early efforts of Émile Prunier to champion sustainability. Although the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species put wild sturgeon on its list in 1998, it is now facing extinction and gone is the outdated snootiness of farmed caviar. Today, Prunier's busy little restaurant is still welcoming politicians and film stars into its listed building every day.

Prunier isn't the only world-class seafood producer to team up with Caviar House, as Balik's salmon is also available in the retailer's restaurants and shops. A favourite among connoisseurs, Balik was born in the 1970s when Swiss actor and director Hans Gerd Kübel bought a 300-year-old farm in Erbsol as a hideaway in the Swiss mountains. On a whim, he began to cultivate salmon on the farm. The inspiration to smoke the salmon came quite by chance when he met Israel Kaplan in Berlin, the grandson of the last purveyor of smoked salmon to the Russian tsar's court. Kaplan used his grandfather's experience and taught the Swiss to smoke what is now the famous Balik salmon. 'Balik' means 'best piece of fish' in Russian, and three principles have to be adhered to strictly to produce it: contact only with fresh water from its source, fine salt, and the delicate smoke of a fire from wood of the region.

Balik's salmon is also available on the Caviar House Threadneedles menu. It is recommended to commence with starter courses such as Balik Discovery, which boasts delicate slivers of smoked salmon, before moving on to the main courses that include a Seafood Platter brimming with oysters, salmon, shellfish, velvety Caviar House sauce and the bestselling tender Lobster Brioche Roll. Why not make your evening more memorable and start with either one of the four Ossetra caviars on offer? Or you could try one of the four original Baeri caviars upon which Prunier made its name.

This wonderful repast should end not with dessert but with a nod to the remarkable foresight of the late George Rebeiz. He was born into a family of merchants in Beirut around the time Émile Prunier was serving homemade caviar in his restaurant in Paris. In the 1950s, he was the Lebanese consul to Copenhagen and he saw a market for importing fine French food, seafood and Middle Eastern food to Scandinavia. But by the 1960s, he concentrated solely on importing Russian and Iranian caviar. Four decades later, he was known as the king of caviar, and his business merger with Pierre Bergé created what we know today as Caviar House & Prunier.

For more information, please visit [www.hotelthreadneedles.co.uk](http://www.hotelthreadneedles.co.uk)







Caviar House's high standard of caviar selection includes Beluga, Imperial and Pure Kaluga.



# AN URBAN OASIS IN THE HEART OF PERTH

AMID THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL LIES THE WESTIN PERTH, A FIVE-STAR SANCTUARY OFFERING LUXURIOUS COMFORT AND OPULENT DELIGHTS.

Words by EUGENE PHUA

I've always liked Perth. I have heard claims that it's boring and there's nothing to do there, but I've never once felt this way during my frequent visits. I like that Perth offers all the thrills and spills of a major Australian city yet has beachside getaways and countryside escapades that are a short drive away. Then there's the Instagram-famous quokkas on Rottnest Island a ferry ride away or the world-famous Margaret River region a road trip south. And I haven't even begun to scrape the surface of what you could do in Western Australia, a state covering an area larger than 2.5 million square kilometres. But even if I don't venture far from downtown Perth and only explore by foot (which I enjoy doing), I would still be delighted because I would have plenty to do in the central business district and have a haven to return to: The Westin Perth.

It's easy to find the five-star, 368-room luxury hotel. On the southern facade of The Westin Perth is a 22-metre mural of a woman by artist Australian artist Tyrone Wright. She glances at guests who are getting dropped off at the lobby or at urbanites scurrying by on street level. The hotel is located within Hibernian Place—filled with trendy bars and restaurants—and is nearby courthouses and office complexes, as well as the breathtaking Saint Mary's Cathedral. Ten minutes east on foot, whether on Hay Street or Murray Street, is downtown Perth and the heart of the city. Venturing a bit further beyond that brings you to Elizabeth Quay and its picture-perfect views of Swan River. So you can see why it's easy to like The Westin Perth before you've even checked-in. Speaking of which, the check-in process is so tranquil, I'm a bit startled. My experiences at other hotels involved snaking

queues, incessant noise and frantic processes, but here, my check-in is not only seamless but also kind, as staff members go out of their way to help organise my airport transfer for a couple of days later. They also offer me usage of the Executive Club Lounge and recommend that I book a seat for afternoon tea in the exquisite Haven Lounge. I heartily accept both invitations.

My stay is in a Deluxe King room, which is fit for royalty. There is something about a spacious room that rejuvenates me from head to toe, and this one, which is mine for the next two nights, is more than I need to feel refreshed and at home. Another key factor I pay close attention to in hotel rooms: sound isolation. I can't feel serene or safe if I can hear a racket coming from all directions, but here, I instantly feel that I've retreated to a private sanctuary from the moment I walk in. But what makes this room—and thus, by extension, The Westin Perth—my personal oasis in a city filled with adrenaline-pumping excitement is the bed. The Westin Heavenly Bed, to be precise. It isn't so much a bed as it is a vessel to the deepest, farthest reaches of slumberland. On both mornings, I feel like I've resurrected into a new body thanks to that bed.

The Westin brand's emphasis on wellness extends far beyond the comforts of its rooms. At The Westin Perth, there is the fully kitted-out Westin Workout Fitness Studio, a rooftop infinity pool boasting unobstructed vistas of the city, and a dedicated wellness level featuring an exclusive outlet of Bodhi spa. It offers a variety of massage, body and wellness therapies inspired by indigenous healing and uses the best in local botanical spa products. This time around, though, I



LIFE FEATURE

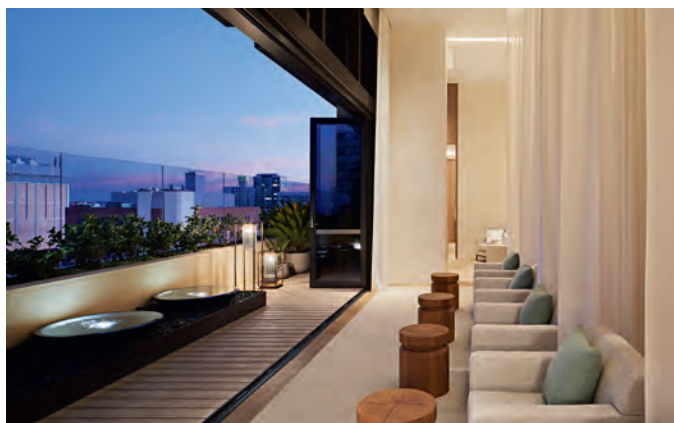
The Westin Perth is a rejuvenating haven with luxury accommodation, five-star amenities, and world-class food and beverage outlets.





This page: The Westin Perth's heated infinity-edge pool, Deluxe King room and Bodhi Day Spa.

Facing page: Garum.



make my way to the Executive Club Lounge to catch up on work in opulent surroundings. And thanks to the spectrum of complimentary, delectable refreshments on offer, as well as my comfortable seat, I clear all my deadlines in record time.

My second day at The Westin Perth takes things up a couple notches, as I have reservations for high tea at Haven Lounge for brunch and then at Garum for (a late) dinner of award-winning Roman cuisine. Considering how packed both are all the time, it's only thanks to the reception team during my check-in that I'm able to savour the delights at both establishments. With the former, the menus for high tea change seasonally and comprise four sweet treats, four savoury bites, a scone and unlimited coffee and tea. Other drinks, including champagne, is available and highly recommended both by friendly wait-staff and yours truly. My high tea experience is the perfect way to while away the day. Then, after a bit of window-shopping and people-watching downtown, as well as a brief lie-down, I develop an appetite again—and it's time for me to head to Garum.

There are authentic Italian restaurants, and then there's Garum, a Roman *osteria* situated in the revived historic Hibernian Hall. The restaurant is a collaboration between The





Westin Perth and award-winning Australian chef Guy Grossi, featuring contemporary Italian favourites and Roman dishes and methods from centuries ago. It's a lively place, buzzing with energy from both Perthians, travellers and hotel guests. Even something as simple as pork ragu *paccheri* is delicious, a true manifestation of food for the body and nourishment for the soul. I wish I could eat here daily.

As much as travel is a privilege to be cherished, it can sometimes be an exhausting affair, whether during or after. Yet my time at The Westin Perth has been the opposite. I check-out feeling reinvigorated. While waiting for my taxi, the concierge staff member wishes me a fond farewell and asks how my stay was. I tell him it was amazing, with no hint of exaggeration, and promise to be back soon. Every facet of the hotel and every initiative of its staff, including him, has been a joy and inspiration for me to focus on my wellbeing—not only while as a guest but also when I return to normal routines. The Westin Perth is an urban oasis, one that I recommend as highly as I would for the city it illuminates and elevates.

For more information, please visit [www.westinperth.com](http://www.westinperth.com)





# EXPLORING MELBOURNE

WHY YOU SHOULD BOOK YOUR NEXT HOLIDAY IN THE CAPITAL OF VICTORIA, WHERE ITS COSMOPOLITAN AND CULTURAL OFFERINGS PROMISE THE ULTIMATE CITY BREAK THIS SEASON.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT

**A**s Shakespeare wrote, "Summer's lease hath all too short a date," but an eternal summer is only a plane's ride away. In Australia, summer fever beckons from December to February and there's no better place to visit than Melbourne. You'll be in good company, as the Benchmarking Melbourne 2023 report dubbed it the friendliest city in the world. Victoria's capital boasts palm-fringed beaches, pockets of calm at the Royal Botanical Gardens, more festivals than you can fit on a calendar, and some of the country's best-known

landmarks, such as the National Gallery of Victoria. The city kicks up its heels from first light, so take advantage of its proud coffee culture and have an al fresco breakfast, serendipitously stumble across a farmer's market, and end the day with a taste of the multicultural melting pot at a laneway restaurant.

Here are our picks for a perfect stay in Melbourne.

## SCORE A TICKET TO THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN

All year round, world-class athletes gather in Melbourne to compete in international sporting events such as the



The Australian Grand Prix takes place from 21 to 24 March.





Australian Grand Prix and The Melbourne Cup. In fact, Melbourne is also known as the sporting capital of Australia. The first of four Grand Slam tennis events kicks off from 15 to 28 January 2024, so head down to The Australian Open to watch the best players in the world gather to play at Melbourne Park. With every ticket, enjoy Grand Slam tennis and full access to all the off-court fun.

### BE FUELLED WITH EXCITEMENT AT THE AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX

Mark your calendars for 21 to 24 March because you'll want to witness Australia's most illustrious motorsport extravaganza. Formula 1 will be returning to the 5.278 km Albert Park Circuit, where the cars hit speeds of more than 300km/h and will be steered by the greatest race car drivers, with stunning city skyline views in the background. An exhilarating show is promised both on and off the track with blockbuster Aussie musical acts and opportunities to see your favourite drivers in the flesh. There's nothing quite like watching 10 teams and 20 drivers going head-to-head for the honour of taking home the FIA Formula One World Championship title in the gorgeous setting that is Melbourne.

### EXPERIENCE THE GREAT VICTORIAN BATHING TRAIL

This 900-kilometre trail connects hot springs, mineral springs and sea baths across the southern coastline of Victoria, and new additions are in store.

A two-hour drive from Melbourne, Phillip Island Hot Springs, which opens at the end of 2023, will boast breathtaking ocean views, 45 bathing pools ranging from reflexology wading pools to the deep-sinking variety, a day spa, treatment facilities and more inspired by the healing powers of the ocean. Guests can connect with nature as the design by award-winning landscape architect Karl Russo involved the planting of 100,000 indigenous trees and shrubs around the property.

A little closer to Melbourne is About Time Bathhouse on Victoria's surf coast, due to launch at the tail end of summer. The idyllic destination offers a blissful experience through water, steam, sauna and ice in a space that is authentically Australian under ancient trees in the Currumbin Valley.

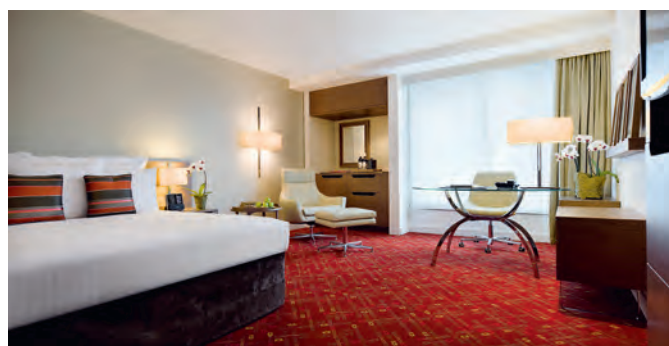
### STAY AT MARRIOTT MELBOURNE HOTEL

Enjoy a stay in style Down Under at the five-star Marriott Melbourne Hotel. Impeccable service, spacious suites and a prime location make it the perfect haven for both relaxation and work. Exploring Melbourne's central business district (CBD) is a breeze due to its proximity to public transport, allowing you can to get around easily by bike, tram or even by foot. You can also catch blockbuster productions as the hotel is just down the street from the East End Theatre District. Visitors can also soak in the arts and culture at the museums and landmarks nearby, such as the State Library of Victoria, or do a spot of shopping at the elegant arcades.

Tuck into contemporary cuisine from across Australia at The Essence, an in-house restaurant where locally sourced ingredients are used to prepare a Melbourne CBD high tea or scrumptious pre-theatre dinners. Whether your tipple of choice is a fine wine or creative cocktail, sit back for a night of timeless tunes at M Bar, while the new M Club executive lounge provides an exclusive place to unwind. Guests can also take a dip at the indoor heated saltwater pool, enjoy a long soak in the warm jacuzzi or indulge in the therapeutic benefits of a dry heat sauna.

Finally, find sanctuary in the 188 guestrooms, all of which feature plush pillows and bedding, a walk-in closet and a spacious bathroom with premium amenities and bathrobes. Elevate your stay by upgrading to a suite with a separate living room and views of the skyline.

For more information, visit [marriott.com.au/melmc](https://marriott.com.au/melmc)







# WICKEDLY GOOD THEATRE

VISITORS TO AUSTRALIA OFTEN THINK OF MELBOURNE'S ARTS AND CULTURE, BUT SYDNEY IS MAKING A MASSIVE INVESTMENT IN WORLD-CLASS PRODUCTIONS TO ATTRACT MORE TOURISTS.

Words by KIARA INMAN

**W**hen a theatrical production has won more than 100 awards, including a Grammy, an Olivier, six Helpmanns and three Tonys, expectations are high. But *Wicked* – which is playing at Sydney Lyric Theatre until 4 February 2024 – more than lives up to the hype. Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2023, this production is one of the most lavish to be staged in Australia. Its universal themes of female friendship, racism and politics, and good versus wicked are

just as relevant today as when it was written, and the cast, costumes and staging are first-class.

Both women leads are fabulous, with Courtney Monsma bringing a playful sparkle to Glinda the Good, while Sheridan Adam's Elphaba the Wicked blows us away with *Defying Gravity*, the show's most iconic number. Not only did many in the audience dress as their favourite witch (green outweighing pink by a good margin), but the standing ovation made it clear this show is as wickedly good as its reputation. I spend the next few days humming along to the catchy song





View works from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art communities at Yiribana Gallery.

*Popular* and finding references to the musical in our everyday interactions, a sign of why *Wicked* remains one of the most popular musicals ever performed.

## INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Just as popular is the range of immersive experiences offered by Cultural Attractions of Australia, which take visitors behind the scenes of some of the country's most iconic galleries, museums and sporting venues. Many of the tours include private dinners or performances after the spaces are closed to the public. I choose two of their tours: one at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the other at Sydney Opera House.

For a fascinating insight into Aboriginal culture, I am led through Yiribana Gallery within the new wing of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. My guide is Erin Vink, an Aboriginal woman who shares the stories of the artworks' creators, her ancestors and the land. This powerful exhibition is inspired by the Aboriginal language of Sydney, *burbangana* (which means 'take hold of my hand and help me up') and explores familial ties, cultural inheritance, history and resilience. Diverse displays from paintings and sculpture to photography and intricately woven baskets tell the history of Australia's First Nation's people across country and time.

Also included in the experience is a meal at the Gallery's Mod. Dining by Clayton Wells. In a soaring space with glimpses of the harbour, I feast on dishes pretty enough to rival the artworks all around me. From Meredith goat cheese and green vegetable tart with lemon myrtle to XO spanner crab noodles with crisp fried shallots, coriander and green



onion, followed by a divine caramelised pineapple and liquorice cheesecake, this is easily the best meal I've had at an art gallery yet. The Australian-focused wine list is also a highlight.

The next day, I enjoy a backstage tour of Sydney Opera House. My guide Mark takes me into the nooks, crannies and





This page, clockwise from above: O Bar and Dining; Chef Mark Stone of Midden at Sydney Opera House; the hero of Midden is its produce-focused menu of native Australian ingredients; Infinity cocktail at Maybe Sammy.

Facing page: Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel is set in the heart of the city.

concert halls underneath the famous white sails and shares some of the secrets of the famous faces who perform here. We even stumble upon one of them, Tim Minchin, composer of Broadway musicals *Matilda* and *Groundhog Day*, who happened to be rehearsing his show for the Opera House's 50th anniversary. He gives us a first-hand glimpse into the magic that happens daily at this famous temple to the performing arts. This tour is a wonderful way to get inside one of the world's most famous buildings and to discover its history.

#### FINE DINING AND DRINKING

Sydney's food and wine scene has come along in leaps and bounds since my last visit. One of the highlights is the





showstopping O Bar & Dining, spinning 47 storeys above the sparkling lights of Sydney, where stunning views meet their match in flawless food and service. Executive Chef Michael Moore has created a menu that showcases the finest produce in fresh and flavourful dishes such as mandarin and pepperberry glazed duck with fragrant red rice, golden raisins, spiced almonds and burnt orange; or steamed Murray cod fillet with zucchini flower, roasted hazelnut cream and lemon and herb.

Just a short stroll from O Bar & Dining is Maybe Sammy, the sort of place where Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin would have been and where creative cocktails come with a hint of the theatrical. With pink-jacketed bartenders who are there to entertain as much as they are to pour you a drink, the latest cocktail list is inspired by the idea of a personal 'mirage' where things are not as they seem.

My cocktail comes in a small plastic boat with a bubble I pop to release a smoky vapour before sipping. When Wei, my bartender, notices me fanning myself with a coaster, he comes over and dramatically presents a pretty fan for me to cool myself down with. No wonder Maybe Sammy has been named in the World's 50 Best Bars.

I also highly recommend Midden by Mark Olive, an Aboriginal chef who uses native ingredients to bring his heritage to life. During a fortunate chat with him, Olive explains that middens were piles of shells discarded by First Nation's people in gathering places. With views over Harbour Bridge, I dine on an inventive indigenous grazing plate that includes smoked kangaroo and emu, regional cheeses, native thyme hummus, and lemon myrtle tandoori crocodile. The braised wallaby shank was another surprise, served with native-infused tomatoes and sweet potato rosti. I am still dreaming about the signature bush pavlova with native fruit coulis and roasted wattle seed cream, so don't miss that.

## CLIMBING TO THE TOP

If you want to defy gravity like Elphaba, the protagonist in *Wicked*, then a climb up Sydney Harbour Bridge should be on your list. There are 1,332 steps to the top, but rest assured you are safely tethered to the steel arches all the way. My guide keeps me distracted from the traffic blurring past below by sharing fascinating stories, such as that of Vincent Kelly, who miraculously survived his fall from the bridge while it was being constructed in 1930; Francis de Groot, who beat New South Wales Premier John Lang to the ribbon-cutting ceremony by barging in on horseback and cutting it with his sword; or about the six million hand-driven rivets that hold the bridge together.

Nicknamed 'the coathanger' by locals, it's the lofty vistas from the top of the bridge that people really come for—and the views do not disappoint, stretching to the horizon in every direction. Before descending, my guide snaps photos of me in front of the Aboriginal flag that flaps at the bridge's apex. I'm happy to learn that I've burnt 504 calories during the climb, which will go quite a way to working off all those fabulous meals.

## WHERE TO STAY

The best jumping point from which to enjoy all of these experiences, as well as *Wicked*, is Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel. Located in Circular Quay, the five-star hotel is a five-minute stroll away from the Royal Botanic Gardens or a leisurely 15-minute walk from Sydney Opera House. Iconic hotspots such as Sydney Harbour Bridge and The Rocks are also close by. The hotel boasts 595 rooms, including 52 suites, all with postcard-perfect views of the city's downtown area or Sydney Harbour.

For more information, visit [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)







# BREATHTAKING BRISBANE BECKONS

FROM AN EPIC GERMAN OPERA TO A MIDDLE EASTERN RESTAURANT INSPIRED BY THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON, THERE ARE ENDLESS REASONS TO VISIT AUSTRALIA'S SUNSHINE CAPITAL THIS SUMMER.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT

**B**oasting an average of 261 days of sunshine each year, it's no wonder that Brisbane is the capital of the Sunshine State of Australia. So, this December to February, pack your sunnies and take a flight over to enjoy the unexpected yet delightful surprises that Brisbane has in store for the summer. If you've had enough of being cooped up indoors like the rest of the world over the past few years, the River City is the ultimate outdoor destination with its abundant wildlife, picnics in the arvo and barbies galore (no, not of the doll variety).

A city of excitement with culture and cruises, Meeanjin, the traditional name for Brisbane given by the Turrbal people, has hosted major events such as the 2014 G20 summit and will host the 2032 Summer Olympics and 2032 Summer Paralympics. Galleries and museums are also part of the city's DNA, such as the Museum of Brisbane and the Queensland Museum. It also boasts easy access to the country's bucket-list attractions such as the Gold Coast and Great Barrier Reef.

Here, we have compiled a comprehensive guide to the most iconic Brisbane experiences as well as some hidden gems.



### QUEENSLAND PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

Set off on an epic adventure with men and maidens, gods and giants, dragons and dwarves via Richard Wagner's *The Ring Cycle*. These four German-language music dramas (with subtitles) tell a complex story based on Norse mythology and Germanic legends. Its plot revolves around a magic ring that grants the power to rule the world, with drama and intrigue imbued throughout *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, as it is known in German. The 15-hour tale, running from 1 to 21 December 2023, is considered to be the peak of operatic excellence. It has been reimaged by visionary Chinese director Chen Shi-Zheng and will be performed over the course of four nights. Together with French conductor Philippe Auguin, who has conducted *The Ring Cycle* more than a dozen times, Chen leads a cast of international stars and some of Australia's most accomplished performers. An immersive virtual world was created using towering and moving digital panels accompanied by astonishing costumes and props.

### EAT AT BABYLON BRISBANE

Inspired by the once-thriving ancient metropolis of Babylon, the sleek and opulent Babylon Brisbane restaurant was fashioned by award-winning architecture firm Hogg & Lamb and encompasses three levels of bars, terraces and dining spaces by the riverside. Inspired by Levantine cuisine with seafood influences of the Eastern Mediterranean combined with the bold flavours of the Middle East, the menu is designed for sharing. Sample items such as wood-fired pumpkin kebab, and Turkish coffee-cured and wood-roasted duck, most of which are cooked over wood and charcoal on a custom-built three-metre-long *mangal* (a Turkish grill) and two rotisseries. On a balmy afternoon, knock back refreshing signature cocktails such as Semiramis' Throne, which is made of Tanqueray Sevilla, mastic liqueur, apricot, lemon, falernum and orange blossom.

### EXPERIENCE THE TASTE OF QUEENSLAND ART

Have a taste of local art, both literally and figuratively, with the Taste of QAGOMA: Tour & Lunch Experience, which runs

until 29 March 2024. The Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) and Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) sit 150 metres apart by the Brisbane River and are home to ever-changing exhibitions, immersive cultural experiences and a rich collection of art from diverse cultures across Australia and around the world. The tour showcases stories of the QAG and GOMA from their origins in 1895 to today's two architecturally acclaimed buildings, and includes fascinating revelations and insights into key artworks before concluding with a relaxing lunch at GOMA Bistro overlooking the Brisbane River.

### STAY AT BRISBANE MARRIOTT HOTEL

With a stay at any Marriot hotel, you can be sure that luxury is in each detail and the Brisbane property is no different. Advantageously positioned in the central business district next to the picturesque Brisbane River (which you can kayak in or take a ferry on), the hotel is also near Howard Smith Wharves, the city's newest restaurant and entertainment precinct. With a A\$20 million makeover, the five-star property boasts modern decor and features a colour scheme reflecting the earth tones of Brisbane's environment and history amid a serene location. All 267 rooms offer elegant marble bathrooms, signature Marriott bedding with Egyptian cotton sheets, and flat-screen TVs. For a stay at the height of luxury, opt for the one-bedroom Presidential Suite with river views on a high floor and a whirlpool.

Start your mornings with a workout at the fitness centre and end the day with a relaxing dip in the outdoor pool and whirlpool. Guests can also wine and dine like a local at the mouthwatering farm-to-table dining options, with all meals impeccably paired with a selection of wines. At Motion Dining, tuck into inventive culinary creations from steak to seafood while feasting your eyes on the Brisbane River. Inside the restaurant is the chic M bar, which boasts an interactive wine wall with an eclectic mix of domestic and international wines, light bites and handcrafted drinks.

For more information, visit [brisbanemarriott.com](https://brisbanemarriott.com)



Babylon Brisbane's menu is inspired by the rich textures and flavours of Levantine cuisine.



The chic M Bar at Brisbane Marriott Hotel serves light bites, coffees and handcrafted drinks.





SET WITHIN TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN MARINE PARK, GAYA ISLAND RESORT IS A JEWEL LOCATED OFF THE CAPITAL OF SABAH, KOTA KINABALU. GOLDEN SANDY BEACHES AND CRYSTAL CLEAR WATERS TEEMING WITH MARINE LIFE ARE COMPELLING ATTRACTIONS, WHILE ITS SPA VILLAGE OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO SAMPLE AUTHENTIC BORNEO-INSPIRED THERAPIES.

[GAYAISLANDRESORT.COM](http://GAYAISLANDRESORT.COM)



THIS LUXURIOUS RESORT IS SET ON A PRIVATE TROPICAL ISLAND ON THE STRAITS OF MALACCA. VILLAS EITHER FRINGE THE HILLSIDE OR ARE GRACEFULLY BALANCED ON STILTS OVER WATER. AN AWARD-WINNING SPA VILLAGE OFFERS WORLD-CLASS TREATMENTS DERIVED FROM CHINESE, INDIAN AND MALAY HEALING TRADITIONS.

[PANGKORLAUTRESORT.COM](http://PANGKORLAUTRESORT.COM)







TANJONG JARA RESORT  
UNMISTAKABLY MALAY



TANJONG JARA RESORT ON THE EAST COAST OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA EMBODIES THE ESSENCE OF MALAY CULTURE AND TRADITIONS. FACING THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND SURROUNDED BY THE LUSH GREEN BEAUTY OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE, THIS RESORT REVEALS A QUIETER BUT EQUALLY ATTRACTIVE SIDE TO MALAYSIA.

[TANJONGJARARESORT.COM](http://TANJONGJARARESORT.COM)



CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT  
TRAILS, TALES AND TRADITIONS



EVOKING THE SPLENDOUR, THE ROMANCE AND THE NOSTALGIA OF ONE OF MALAYSIA'S OLDEST HILL STATIONS AND ITS GRAND COLONIAL HERITAGE, CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT WITH ITS LUXURIOUS ROOMS AND AWARD-WINNING SPA VILLAGE IS THE BEST PLACE TO TAKE IN THE AREA'S ROLLING HILLS, TEA PLANTATIONS, ROSE GARDENS AND STRAWBERRY FARMS.

[CAMERONHIGHLANDSRESORT.COM](http://CAMERONHIGHLANDSRESORT.COM)







NESTLED WITHIN THE EMBRACE OF A PRIVATE SUN-KISSED BAY, THE RITZ-CARLTON, KOH SAMUI IS SURROUNDED BY OCEANFRONT BEAUTY AND QUINTESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES THAT ARTFULLY REFLECT THE SAMUI WAY OF LIFE. THIS MAKES THE BEAUTIFUL PROPERTY AN IDEAL SETTING TO EMBARK ON WELLNESS PROGRAMMES, CULTURAL IMMERSIONS OR CULINARY JOURNEYS.

[RITZCARLTON.COM/KOHSAMUI](http://RITZCARLTON.COM/KOHSAMUI)



LOCATED IN KUALA LUMPUR'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE BUSINESS DISTRICT, THIS STYLISH LUXURY HOTEL IS CONVENIENTLY POSITIONED FOR UPSCALE SHOPPING, DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT. IT IS HOME TO AN AWARD-WINNING SPA, AND GOURMANDS WILL BE DELIGHTED BY THE INDULGENT AFTERNOON TEA EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS LI YEN'S STELLAR CHINESE CUISINE.

[RITZCARLTON.COM/KUALALUMPUR](http://RITZCARLTON.COM/KUALALUMPUR)







HOTEL  
STRIPES  
KUALA LUMPUR

AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION®  
HOTELS



LOCATED ALONG BUKIT BINTANG ROAD AT THE HEART OF KUALA LUMPUR, JW MARRIOTT IS IDEAL FOR BUSINESS AND LEISURE TRAVELLERS. WITH WORLD-CLASS SHOPPING AND DINING NEARBY, THIS CONVENIENTLY LOCATED HOTEL WITH ITS EXTENSIVE RANGE OF FACILITIES IS ONE OF THE CITY'S FINEST.

[JWMARRIOTTKUALALUMPUR.COM](http://JWMARRIOTTKUALALUMPUR.COM)



HOTEL STRIPES IS MALAYSIA'S SECOND AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION HOTEL. IT COMBINES A MODERN VIBE AND HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO ITS LOCATION IN ONE OF KUALA LUMPUR'S OLDEST NEIGHBOURHOODS. WITH CONTEMPORARY GUEST ROOMS AND SUITES, THE HOTEL IS A CONVENIENT BASE TO EXPLORE THE MALAYSIAN CAPITAL'S MANY ATTRACTIONS.

[STRIPESKL.COM](http://STRIPESKL.COM)





S  
THE  
STARHILL



THE STARHILL IS THE NEW HOME OF THE TASTEMAKERS IN KUALA LUMPUR THAT OFFERS THE BEST OF EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL IN A BOUTIQUE ENVIRONMENT; EXUDING ELEGANCE AND A REFINED HOME-LIKE AMBIENCE INFUSED WITH WARM HOSPITALITY AND STYLISH AESTHETICS FOR ALL ITS TOUCH POINTS. A FINE CURATION OF ONE-OF-A-KIND FLAGSHIP STORES OF GLOBAL PREMIUM BRANDS IN HIGH FASHION, TIMEPIECES, JEWELLERY, WELLNESS AND LIFESTYLE INDULGENCES PAIR UP WITH THE BEST OF INTERNATIONAL AND ASIAN CUISINES IN CAFES, BISTROS AND RESTAURANTS, AWAITING ALL WHO HAVE A DISCERNING PALATE FOR STYLE AND TASTE.

THESTARHILL.COM.MY





**S**  
THE  
STARHILL  
DINING



THE STARHILL DINING CELEBRATES CULINARY SOPHISTICATION, BRINGING TO DINERS FRESH, SEASONAL AND GLOBALLY INSPIRED DINING EXPERIENCES WITH A DIVERSE SPREAD OF GASTRONOMIC CREATIONS SERVED BY THE TASTEMAKERS, EACH WITH A UNIQUE FOOD PROGRAMMING. THE STARHILL DINING'S COLLECTION OF CAPTIVATING DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT CONCEPTS INCLUDES SHOOK!, KUALA LUMPUR'S CHOICE RESTAURANT THAT CONTINUES TO FUEL THE IMAGINATION; LUK YU TEA HOUSE THAT EMBRACES A POETIC CHINESE HERITAGE; THE ALCHEMY FEATURING GIN BOTANICALS FOR EVERY SEASON; THE POPULAR JOGOYA RESTAURANT; AND FINE ARABIC CUISINE AT TARBUSH LOUNGE.

[THESTARHILLDINING.COM](http://THESTARHILLDINING.COM)





## THE SURIN

PHUKET



SITUATED ON PANSEA BEACH, ONE OF PHUKET'S MOST PRIVATE STRETCHES OF SAND, THE SURIN OFFERS A PERFECT SLICE OF THAI BEACH LIFE. THE COTTAGES AND SUITES ARE BUILT INTO A CAREFULLY CONSERVED LANDSCAPE. FROM SUMPTUOUS CUISINE TO WATERSPORTS, THE SURIN COMBINES IDYLIC TROPICAL CHARM WITH THE WARMTH OF THAI HOSPITALITY.

[THESURINPHUKET.COM](http://THESURINPHUKET.COM)

## VILLA TASSANA

PHUKET



VILLA TASSANA IS SET ON PHUKET'S IDYLIC NAI THON BEACH, SET AMID A TROPICAL FOREST AND OVERLOOKING THE EMERALD ANDAMAN SEA. IT OFFERS 2,800 SQUARE METRES OF LIVING SPACE, WITH THREE OPULENT BEDROOMS, A 15-METRE POOL, LIVING AND DINING PAVILIONS. SPA, SPORTS AND GOLFING ARE WITHIN EASY REACH INCLUDING THE BLUE CANYON COURSE.

[TRAVELCENTRE@YTLHOTELS.COM.MY](mailto:TRAVELCENTRE@YTLHOTELS.COM.MY)







REGARDED AS THE CRADLE OF MALAYSIAN HISTORY, MALACCA IN ITS HEYDAY WAS A PORT CITY THAT WELCOMED SPICE TRADERS, SULTANS AND WARRIORS. SOAK UP THE MAGIC AND THE HISTORY AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA, THE CITY'S FINEST HOTEL, BUILT IN THE 1920S AND FURBISHED WITH INTERIORS INDICATIVE OF THE CITY'S RICH CULTURE.

FULLY RESTORED TO ITS FORMER GLORY, THIS ELEGANT 1930S PROPERTY MARRIES HISTORY WITH WORLD-CLASS HOSPITALITY. DINING OPTIONS INCLUDE HAINANESE FAVOURITES AT COLONIAL CAFE AS WELL AS AN INTERACTIVE DINING EXPERIENCE AT CONTANGO, WHILE THE ROOMS ARE A BLEND OF CONTEMPORARY STYLE AND OLD-WORLD FINESSE.

MAJESTICMALACCA.COM

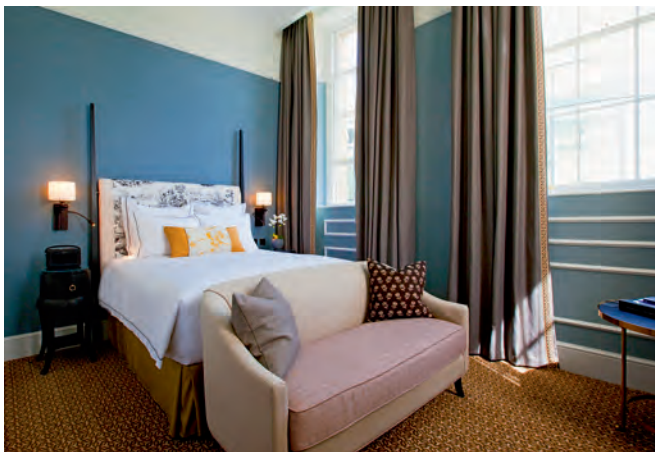


MAJESTICKL.COM





THE  
GAINSBOROUGH  
BATH SPA



THE GAINSBOROUGH BATH SPA OFFERS THE ONLY NATURAL THERMAL SPA WITHIN A HOTEL IN THE UK. THE HOTEL IS A MOMENT'S STROLL FROM BATH ABBEY, THE HIGH STREET STORES ON MILSOM STREET AND THE ROMAN BATHS, WHICH MAKES IT A CHOICE LOCATION FROM WHICH TO EXPLORE THE CITY AND ITS NEARBY ATTRACTIONS.

[THEGAINSBOROUGHBATHSPA.CO.UK](http://THEGAINSBOROUGHBATHSPA.CO.UK)



THREADNEEDLES  
LONDON



THIS FORMER VICTORIAN BANK HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A DISCREET, BOUTIQUE-STYLE HOTEL, CROWNED BY AN ELEGANT STAINED GLASS DOME, AN UNEXPECTED FIND IN THE CITY'S HEART. HOTEL THREADNEEDLES EXUDES GRANDEUR IN A THOROUGHLY MODERN WAY, WHILE SERVICE IS POLISHED; IT'S ALSO UNPRETENTIOUS AMID THE BUSTLE OF SQUARE MILE.

[HOTELTHREADNEEDLES.CO.UK](http://HOTELTHREADNEEDLES.CO.UK)





## THE ACADEMY LONDON



SITUATED IN BLOOMSBURY, THE ACADEMY COMPRISES A COLLECTION OF FIVE GEORGIAN TOWNHOUSES COMBINED INTO ONE CHARMING LUXURY HOTEL. THIS REJUVENATED 50-GUEST ROOM/SUITE BOUTIQUE HOTEL JUXTAPOSES TIMELESS GLAMOUR AND A CONTEMPORARY TAKE ON TOWNHOUSE LIVING.

MONKEY ISLAND ESTATE IS LOCATED ON A PICTURESQUE ISLAND IN THE RIVER THAMES IN THE HISTORIC VILLAGE OF BRAY, BERKSHIRE. SET ACROSS SEVEN ACRES, THE PROPERTY FEATURES 41 EXQUISITE ROOMS DESIGNED BY THE AWARD-WINNING NEW YORK-BASED CHAMPALIMAUD DESIGN AS WELL AS SIX PRIVATE RESIDENCES.

[THEACADEMYHOTEL.CO.UK](http://THEACADEMYHOTEL.CO.UK)



[MONKEYISLANDESTATE.CO.UK](http://MONKEYISLANDESTATE.CO.UK)





## THE GLASSHOUSE

EDINBURGH



THIS LUXURY BOUTIQUE HOTEL IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE BEST PLACES TO STAY IN EDINBURGH, WITH COSY CONTEMPORARY INTERIORS, WARM SCOTTISH SERVICE AND CONSISTENTLY SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF THE CITY CENTRE AND CALTON HILL FROM THE HOTEL'S TWO-ACRE ROOFTOP GARDEN.

CENTRALLY LOCATED NEAR THE HAGUE CITY CENTRE AND THE NORTH SEA COAST, THE HAGUE MARRIOTT FEATURES CONTEMPORARY STYLE WITH A WARM AMBIENCE. THE 306 COMFORTABLE AND SPACIOUS ROOMS AND SUITES ARE THOUGHTFULLY APPOINTED WITH STYLISH DESIGN ACCENTS AND COMPLIMENTARY WI-FI. MANY OF THE CITY'S ATTRACTIONS ARE LOCATED NEARBY.

[THEGLASSHOUSEHOTEL.CO.UK](http://theglasshousehotel.co.uk)



[THEHAGUEMARRIOTT.COM](http://thehaguemarriott.com)







BLACK VOLCANIC SAND, THE MAJESTIC MOUNT AGUNG, THE DEEP BLUE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE MYSTICAL BALINESE WAY OF LIFE COME TOGETHER IN STYLE AT SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI. LOCATED IN THE NORTH OF THE ISLAND, THE RESORT IS A HAVEN OF WELLNESS, WHERE GUESTS CAN ENJOY ALL THE BENEFITS AND PLEASURES OF SPA LIFE AMID TRANQUIL SURROUNDINGS.

[SPAVILLAGERESORT.COM](http://SPAVILLAGERESORT.COM)



A GLAMOROUS AND PRIVATE HIDEAWAY IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, MUSE SAINT-TROPEZ IS ALL ABOUT THE HIGH LIFE. LOCATED IN RAMATUELLE AND SURROUNDED BY FORESTS OF UMBRELLA PINES, THIS BOUTIQUE PROPERTY FEATURES JUST 15 SUITES, EACH OF WHICH IS NAMED AFTER FAMOUS 'MUSES'.

[MUSE-HOTELS.COM](http://MUSE-HOTELS.COM)







THE MELBOURNE MARRIOTT IS CENTRALLY LOCATED, CLOSE TO THE CITY'S THEATRE PRECINCT, SHOPPING DISTRICTS AND CHINATOWN. FEATURING WORLD-CLASS SERVICE, ALL 186 WELL-APPOINTED ROOMS AND SUITES ARE MODERN AND ELEGANT. FACILITIES INCLUDE A HEATED INDOOR POOL, GYMNASIUM, SIGNATURE RESTAURANT AND VIBRANT LOUNGE.

[MARRIOTT.COM/AU/MELMC](http://MARRIOTT.COM/AU/MELMC)



THE 563-ROOM SYDNEY HARBOUR MARRIOTT IS SET IN THE HEART OF CIRCULAR QUAY, OVERLOOKING THE HARBOUR BRIDGE AND OPERA HOUSE. GUESTS WILL FIND THEMSELVES NEAR DINING, FASHION AND ENTERTAINMENT HOTSPOTS. THE SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE, OPERA HOUSE, THE ROCKS AND HYDE PARK ARE ALL MOMENTS AWAY.

[MARRIOTT.COM/SYDMC](http://MARRIOTT.COM/SYDMC)







THE BRISBANE MARRIOTT, WITH 267 ROOMS AND SUITES, IS IDEALLY PLACED BETWEEN BRISBANE'S CBD AND THE FORTITUDE VALLEY HUB. WITH A STUNNING BACKDROP OF THE BRISBANE RIVER, STORY BRIDGE, KANGAROO POINT CLIFFS AND CITY SKYLINE, THE HOTEL IS CLOSE TO SHOPPING, RIVERSIDE DINING, THE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS.

[BRISBANEMARRIOTT.COM](http://BRISBANEMARRIOTT.COM)



## THE WESTIN

PERTH



THE 368-ROOM WESTIN PERTH IS LOCATED IN THE REVITALISED EAST END OF PERTH KNOWN AS THE HISTORIC HEART OF THE CITY, CLOSE TO SHOPPING MALLS, ELIZABETH QUAY AND THE VIBRANT SWAN RIVER PRECINCT. THE HOTEL IS THE CORNERSTONE OF HIBERNIAN PLACE, FEATURING A LIVELY AND ECLECTIC MIX OF BARS, CAFÉS AND RESTAURANTS.

[WESTINPERTH.COM](http://WESTINPERTH.COM)







HINODE HILLS  
NISEKO VILLAGE

THE  
GREEN *gb* LEAF  
Niseko Village

  
**Hilton**  
Niseko Village

KASARA  
NISEKO VILLAGE  
—TOWNHOUSE—



THE HEART OF NISEKO VILLAGE IS ITS MAIN PULSE, WHERE PAVED INTIMATE WALKWAYS ARE FLANKED BY CONTEMPORARY SHOPPING AND DINING OPTIONS. JUST MOMENTS FROM NISEKO VILLAGE'S AWARD-WINNING HOTELS, RESIDENCES AND LIFTS, ITS SLOPESIDE LOCATION ALLOWS FOR SEAMLESS SKI-IN, SKI-OUT ACCESS BETWEEN MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES AND INDOOR DIVERSIONS. BOTH MODERN AND TRADITIONAL INTERWEAVE, EVOKING A GENTEEL LIFESTYLE AT THE VILLAGE WITH ITS AUTHENTIC JAPANESE MACHIYA ARCHITECTURAL SETTING. APRÈS-SKI IS EXCITINGLY REDEFINED AT NISEKO VILLAGE.

NISEKO-VILLAGE.COM





*Higashiyama*  
NISEKO VILLAGE A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE



HIGASHIYAMA NISEKO VILLAGE, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE, SETS A COMMUNION WITH NATURE WITH EVERY ELEMENT OF THE EXPERIENCE. HOKKAIDO'S SEASONS TRANSFORM THE UNIQUE LANDSCAPE, SETTING THE SCENE FOR UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURES INTO THE SOUL OF NISEKO. THE FIRST RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE TO GRACE JAPAN, HIGASHIYAMA NISEKO VILLAGE RESIDES AT THE BASE OF MOUNT NISEKO ANNUPURI, WITH PANORAMIC VIEWS OF MOUNT YOTEI AND THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAIN RANGES. EMBRACE A NEW LEVEL OF BESPOKE LUXURY IN HOKKAIDO WITH THE EXQUISITE REFINEMENT OF A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE TO RETURN TO EACH DAY.

[RITZCARLTON.COM/HIGASHIYAMANISEKOVILLAGE](https://ritzcarlton.com/higashiyamanisekovillage)







AC Hotel Kuala Lumpur.



AC Hotel Kuantan.



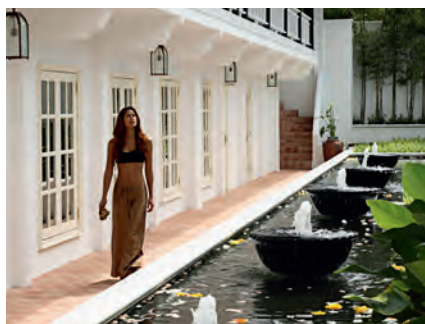
AC Hotel Penang.

LOCATED IN KUALA LUMPUR, PENANG AND KUANTAN, MALAYSIA'S AC HOTELS FEATURE A MODERN HARMONIOUS DESIGN WHERE GUEST ROOMS AND FLEXIBLE, OPEN SPACES ARE OPTIMISED FOR A COMFORTABLE AND EFFORTLESS STAY. WITH A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO BUSINESS AND LEISURE, FACILITIES INCLUDE THE AC LOUNGE, WHICH IS IDEAL FOR CREATIVE MEETINGS AND WHERE DRINKS AND TAPAS SELECTIONS INSPIRED BY LOCAL FLAVOURS ARE SERVED THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

AC-HOTELS.COM







THE SPA VILLAGES CELEBRATE THE HEALING CULTURE OF THE REGION IN WHICH EACH IS BUILT. EACH SPA VILLAGE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTER AND AUTHENTICITY, HONOURING LOCAL HEALERS AND TRADITIONS THAT HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN THE GENERATIONS.

PANGKOR LAUT | TANJONG JARA | GAYA ISLAND | CAMERON HIGHLANDS | MALACCA |  
KUALA LUMPUR | TEMBOK, BALI | KOH SAMUI | BATH

[SPAVILLAGE.COM](http://SPAVILLAGE.COM)





# Q & A : FRANK WOO

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WE SPOKE TO THE MIXED MEDIA ARTIST WHO CREATED FANTASTICAL ANIMAL SCULPTURES AND ARTWORK THAT REVEAL HOKKAIDO'S NATURAL BEAUTY FOR NISEKO VILLAGE.

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Words by ALICIA CORBETT

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**You studied at Bunka Fashion College in Japan in your youth. How did your experience help you with the Niseko-yo project?**

I found making the sculptures easy because of my time there. I know how to create a pattern. I know how to create a model. I know how to join the fabrics and materials. Only the materials are different. A sculpture, in a sense, is similar to the soft fabric production line, which is where I came from. Instead of using LeaDo and Trace software, I use glue and the welding technique to join the pieces. People don't understand that if you don't have this type of manufacturing production knowledge, you don't know how to make a sculpture properly. The massive animal sculptures for Niseko-yo are far from being the biggest sculptures I've created, as I've also made a 35-metre-long hanging sculpture in Wuhan, China.

**When did your working relationship with YTL begin?**

I moved to Malaysia in 1995 and my friend introduced me to YTL in 1996. When The Ritz-Carlton in Kuala Lumpur opened, I created most of the artwork for the hotel. That is when I started working with YTL and since then, I've created artwork for many of their other properties too. For Niseko-yo, I felt excited about the project because YTL always gives me free rein to work as an artist. They also gave me a grand location to work with for my creations, so I'm very happy.

**What were the challenges you faced for this project?**

Our main challenge was time as everything revolved around snowfall. We couldn't install the Hokkaido Brown Bear sculpture at the top of the mountain if it snowed because there was no proper road, and the truck wasn't able to go up.

**Who is an artist whose artwork you admire?**

I still see myself as a student who needs to study more and to continuously upgrade myself. I don't want to follow anyone but, instead, create my own path.







TONDA *PF* MINUTE RATTRAPANTE

ESTD  1954  
**SINCERE**  
FINE WATCHES

Pavilion Shopping Mall KL, Level 2, Tel: 03-2141 8418  
Suria KLCC Shopping Centre, Ground Floor, Tel: 03-2166 2181

**PARMIGIANI**  
FLEURIER





VistaJet introduces the world's first fleet of Global 7500 business jets, flying faster and farther than ever before. The Global 7500 offers the largest cabin in private aviation with four true living spaces, including a business centre, a full size kitchen and a permanent bedroom. Every journey is tailored to ensure seamless travel in elegant interiors incorporating in-flight offices and a home away from home environment.

Explore the VistaJet Global 7500 [vistajet.com/global-7500](http://vistajet.com/global-7500)