

YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

Vistana Vistas

New Energy,
New Verve

Cottage Couture

The Best Beds
in Bray

Saké & Tee

Golfing in Niseko

Swiss Watch Report • Diving Tenggol Island • Balinese Spa Oils

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UNMISTAKABLY MALAY



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SUCIMURNI

Every breath is pure refreshment, a relaxation of the soul, a journey of revival.

In Malay, we call this Sucimurni. In Malaysia, it is Tanjong Jara.

Embrace a way of life anchored in purity of mind, body and spirit.

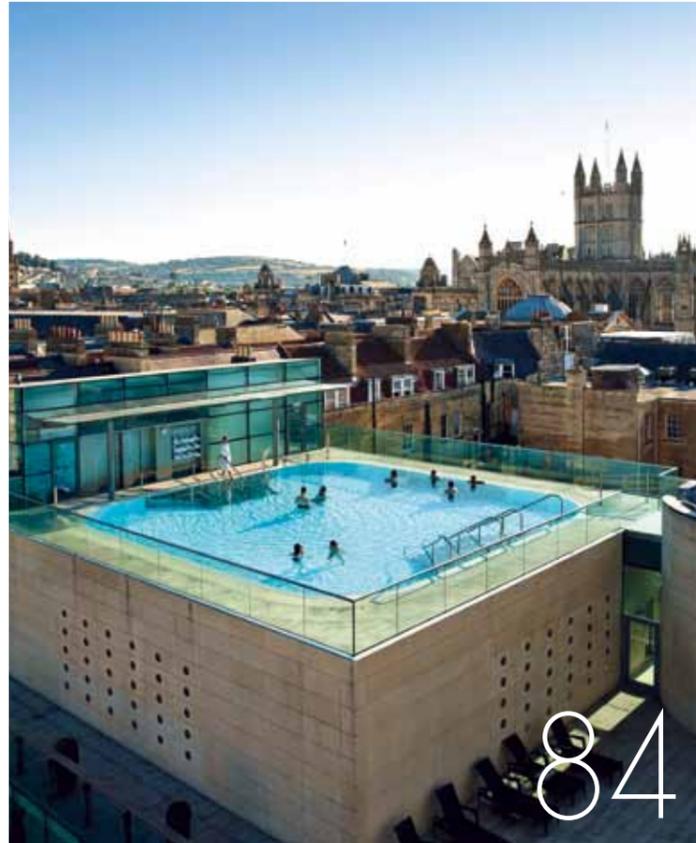
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YTL HOTELS
Treasured Places, Treasured Moments



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TANJONG JARA RESORT
UNMISTAKABLY MALAY



"Most Innovative Spa In The World" by Tatler UK, Spa Awards

MANDI BUNGA

Seven jars of scented flowers. Seven showers of blessings.
Secrets of ancient Malay healers, now a Spa Village ritual.

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STARLIGHT GAZING

Sensorial experiences at Asia's most innovative wellness retreat

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YTL HOTELS
Treasured Places, Treasured Moments

A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



*Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh
Managing Director,
YTL Corporation*

Nineteen years ago, YTL Hotels began our city portfolio with the Vistana Hotels, a wholly Malaysian brand which flourished to the top of its genre. Our cover story this month showcases our fully refreshed Vistana Hotels in the key cities of Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Kuantan. Taking business travel to the next level, our updated rooms maximise comfort and practicality while new F&B facilities, complimentary WiFi, 24-hour gyms epitomise the new brand promise of 'Vibrance, Verve and Value', enabling the perfect balance between business and pleasure.

Dive season also opens this issue on the Malaysian East Coast. Tanjong Jara Resort, our uniquely Malay property in Dungun, has always proven to be the preferred choice among underwater enthusiasts due to its proximity to Tenggol Island – a true haven of marine life. For water pleasures of a different variety, it is my great delight to announce the recent handover of the acclaimed Thermae Bath Spa, in the UNESCO World Heritage City of Bath in the UK, to YTL Hotels, which will perfectly complement our soon-to-open classic hotel, The Gainsborough Bath Spa.

For those who prefer terra firma, now's the time to store your skis away and prepare to tee off in Niseko, Japan, in the shadow of majestic Mount Yotei. Golfing in this pristine part of the world is always a pleasure. The summer season in Niseko is also particularly focused on families, offering a wide range of activities. If a slower pace sounds more pleasing, consider the charms of our new countryside cottages in Berkshire, England, under YTL Hotels' MUSE Collection, all ideal from which to explore the surrounding towns of Eton, Henley and Windsor as well as enjoy the world-class dining of Bray village. Whatever strikes your fancy this season, we have a YTL Hotel for you.

God bless and enjoy the issue.



Your eyes lock with a Proboscis monkey's for the first time.

It makes a strange noise.

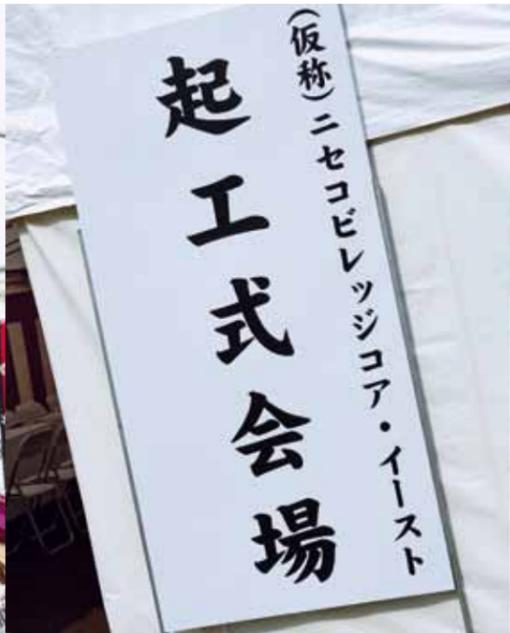
And you don't know whether to stand in awe or run.

Your moment awaits.

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A special groundbreaking ceremony was held recently on the site of a new expansion plan for Niseko Village in Hokkaido, Japan. Attended by key partners, local dignitaries and representatives of YTL Hotels, an auspicious date was especially chosen for the occasion. "Niseko Village is always in season," noted Dato' Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Hotels, who had flown in especially for the occasion. "Most people know Niseko for the fine powder snow and world-class skiing but what we aim to do is showcase and celebrate its three other equally beautiful seasons as well." The new developments slated for the village include more retail outlets as well as F&B, complementing and enhancing the existing offerings of Niseko Village. "We are placing a lot of emphasis on food," added Dato' Mark, "as we all know Hokkaido to be the food republic for Japan. We are investing in Niseko for the long-term and what we are aiming for is for the experience to get better and better." This new phase looks set for completion by the end of 2014. Watch this space. ■



1. Long Shiau Wee. 2. Tomomi Hayashi, Vice Mayor of Niseko Town, Hiroyuki Nakamura, Member of the Japanese House of Representatives, and Kenya Katayama, Mayor of Niseko Town. 3. Toshio Kurotaki and Keita Yamamoto. 4. Tomoyuki Yamanobe, Punch Ratnavele, YTL Hotels' Executive Director, Dato' Mark Yeoh, Long Shiau Wee and Cedric Cheah. 5. Dato' Hj Mohd Zainal Abidin and Datin Marfuah Rahman. 6. Punch Ratnavele, Long Shiau Wee and Eiichi Tanaka.





In conjunction with Louis Vuitton Malaysia's Global Store Opening, the Maison together with YTL Corporation celebrated eight of Malaysia's iconic women with an exhibition entitled *Malaysia's League of Extraordinary Women*. The evening, dedicated to honouring women who have significantly contributed to the development of the country and excelled in their respective fields, included an extensive collection of biographical profiles of Tan Sri Michelle Yeoh, Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, Ling Tan, Tunku Azizah Iskandar, Datuk Nicol David, Datuk Tom Abang Saufi, Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood and Dato' Sheila Majid. The opening saw the attendance of honourable guests, Former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his wife, Tun Jeanne Abdullah, before they were ushered to a private dinner led by Group Managing Director of YTL Corporation Berhad Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Francis Yeoh. 🇲🇾



Women of Pride

1. Carol Lee and Datin Joneser Chai. 2. Dato' Sheila Majid, Dato' Dr Zaha Rina and Hashridz Mushrim. 3. Tara Sosrowardoyo, Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir and Ineza Roussille. 4. Frank Nelwan and Cassandra Kassim. 5. Tan Sri Michelle Yeoh, Tun Jeanne Abdullah, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh and Kathy Lam. 6. Model presenting the Louis Vuitton's Icon collection SS 2014. 7. Datin Rebecca Choo, Professor Datuk (Dr) Jimmy Choo, Dato' Yeoh Soo Min and Jeremiah Tan. 8. Yohan Rajan and Lim Wei-Ling. 9. Ling Tan, Christopher Kilaniotis and Datuk Tom Abang Saufi. 10. Wei-Hsiang Chong and Ivan Lam.





Cheers For The Year!

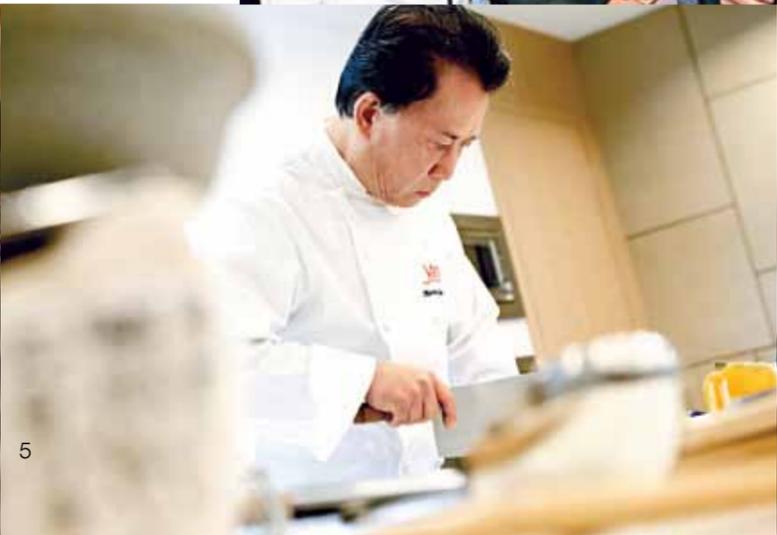
The Starhill Culinary Studio proved the perfect venue for the British Malaysian Chamber of Commerce's New Year celebration, an evening of drinks and fashion extravaganza that saw nearly 100 selected guests, comprising mostly chamber members as well as the city's movers and shakers. Orchestral music filled up the



venue, with the melodies courtesy of a traditional yangqin (hammered dulcimer). The line up of the evening included a Glenmorangie tasting with Moët Hennessy Diageo Brand Ambassador Chong Wai Keng, as guests were led through a series of food and wine pairing sessions. Accompanied by the evening's crowd pleaser, special guest Chef Martin Yan left many guests starstruck with his live cooking demonstration. A fashion show by Taiwanese designer Shiatzy Chen matched with timepieces by Bedat & Co capped off a perfect evening. 🍷



1. Paula Conway and Amanda Powell. 2. Elisabeth Laubel and Elaine Ferguson. 3. UV Wong, Klevin Cheong. 4. Datin Joan Mary Russell. 5. Chef Martin Yan. 6. Datuk Seri Michael Yam, Dato' Larry Gan and Richard Archer. 7. Chef Martin Yan and Aniza Khalid. 8. Paula Johnstone and Frank Johnstone. 9. Tina Fadzil and Alwizah Al-Yafii Kamal. 10. A Chinese musician plays the yangqin (hammered dulcimer) as the entertainment for the evening. 11. Mohd Ibrahim Masrukin and Siva Kumeren. 12. A model presents a creation by Shiatzy Chen, paired with a watch from Bedat & Co.





It's Bath Time!

YTL Hotels welcomes its newest member to the family – the Thermae Bath Spa. A recent ceremony was held in the historical English spa town where a symbolic key was presented to Dato' Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Hotels & Properties, by Henk Verschuur, of Thermae Bath Spa, to commemorate the successful handover of the spa's operating contract. This marks yet another significant milestone in YTL Group's notable investments in

Bath, which also includes Wessex Water and The Gainsborough Bath Spa, opening in the summer of 2014. Wellness enthusiasts would soon be able to immerse themselves in a new dimension of healing and spa therapies in the very place where spa culture originated. After all, Bath's association with well-being goes back centuries and the word 'spa' itself is an acronym of the ancient Latin phrase of *salus per aquam* (health through water). **■**



1. Henk Verschuur, Dato' Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Hotels & Properties, and Colin Skellett, Chair of the newly-formed Bath Hotel & Spa Ltd. 2. Chik Lai Ping, Vice President - Spa Division of YTL Hotels & Properties. 3. Melissa Mettler. 4. Henk Verschuur hands over the symbolic key of Thermae Bath Spa to Dato' Mark Yeoh.



Donna spa
STARHILL GALLERY

Relaxation for Body Mind & Soul

Room Massage Service for • JW Marriott • Ritz-Carlton • Mandarin Oriental

*Ms. Jade Park



HOT COMPRESS PACKAGE (2hours)
(Most Rejuvenating Spa Experience) Harper's Bazaar 2012

- Herbal Hot Compress
- Excellent Donna Massage
- Scalp Massage
- Served with Ginger Tea & Refreshment

Usual Price: RM530
PRICE: RM390

EXCELLENT DONNA MASSAGE
(Best Traditional Massage) 2013

Healing Massage
Handed down over 4000 years, this healing massage reduces pain in tensed and stressed muscles, especially at the neck, shoulders and back areas. It restores the body's natural balance, leaving you feeling light and easy after the massage. Ideal for travellers and businessmen.

60 minutes RM260 nett • 90 minutes RM360 nett • 120 minutes RM480 nett



FLOWER BATH PACKAGE (2hours)

- Bath of your choice
- Excellent Donna Massage
- Scalp Massage
- Served with Ginger Tea & Refreshment

Usual Price: RM580
PRICE: RM390



SCRUB PACKAGE (2hours)
(Best Stress Relieving) Harper ' Bazaar 2012

- Scrub of your choice
- Excellent Donna Massage
- Scalp Massage
- Served with Ginger Tea & Refreshment

Usual Price: RM550
PRICE: RM390



NECK & SHOULDER MASSAGE

- 40 minutes RM150 nett

FOOT MASSAGE

- 40 minutes RM120 nett
- 60 minutes RM150 nett

MANICURE

- 45 minutes RM90 nett

PEDICURE

- 45 minutes RM90 nett



* **Best Traditional Massage Award**
(Harper's Bazaar 2013)

* **Asia Spa Magazine**
Malaysia & Singapore Best Day Spa (2013)

* **Things to Do in Kuala Lumpur**
(Lonely Planet)



Best Day Spa

Note: Services are offered in the comfort and privacy of your room between 10am till 1am (Last call at 12am), 7 days a week.

Please contact: + 603-2142 4899 for more details and bookings. Address: S20 & S27, Pamper Level, Starhill Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Website: www.donnaspa.net

YTL Hotels' latest news, events, attractions and not-to-be-missed experiences.



01

01

Dive Right In

Underwater enthusiasts, rejoice! Dive Season 2014 is open at **Tanjong Jara Resort**. A mere 50 minutes away by speedboat from the mainland, Tenggol Island is truly one of the region's best-kept diving secrets. Park yourself here for a few idyllic days to explore the amazing diversity and colours of its underwater sights. From vivid corals to marine life like double-headed parrotfish, eagle rays and black-tipped reef sharks, the resort's team of dive instructors are ever-ready to lead you on a journey of wondrous discovery. Check out the *Tenggol Diver's Delight* experience, which includes two daily dives, equipment rental, barbeque beach lunches and daily breakfast and dinner at the resort. Priced at RM1,540++ per room per night, based on a twin-share basis for a minimum of three nights, this package is available for booking until 28 October 2014.



03

02

An Appetite For Art

A specially created 'Art Promenade' can be seen at **The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur** from now until June 2014 to help promote and support emerging Malaysian artists. This initiative is a partnership with the *Prudential Malaysian Eye* exhibition, which is sponsored by Prudential in association with the Saatchi Gallery. The hotel's satellite art exhibition features 17 artworks by eight Malaysian talents directly from the *Prudential Malaysian Eye* book. A special menu, available until 1 July, featuring creative cocktails, mocktails and dishes, has also been created by the hotel's executive chef, bringing the term 'edible art' to life. A special Art Stay package, which includes overnight accommodation, breakfast for two and a three-course meal will be available for the duration of the exhibition.

03

Love In A Cold Climate

Valentine's Day may be over but there's no reason you can't continue to woo your sweetheart in style. At the **Cameron Highlands Resort's Spa Village**, indulge and unwind after a long day trekking or out on the golf course with its *Romantic Evening Experiences* package, which includes a two-hour spa experience and dinner for two. For RM1,150 nett, choose from the Cameron's Mint, Rose Garden, Fresh Strawberry Escapade or Chrysanthemum and Avocado Escape treatments, followed by a two-course dinner at The Dining Room. Or for just RM600 nett, enjoy a relaxing tea bath and deluxe massage, before tucking into a hearty steamboat dinner at Gonbei Restaurant. The packages are available from Mondays to Thursdays. For reservations, please contact the spa receptionist.



04



05

04

Island-Tripping

It's all too easy to refuse to leave the posh surroundings of **Pangkor Laut Resort's** private beaches and verdant enclave but, for the adventurous, an excursion to nearby Pangkor Island, just a short speedboat ride away, is well-worth it. At present, over 25,000 people live on the island and are mainly involved in fishing and tourism. A visit to the island would offer a unique glimpse into life on a sleepy fisherman's island. Dotted with small, colourful settlements, traditional Malay homes and winding streets, you will be taken to visit a few sights, including a restored Dutch fort, a remnant of the island's Dutch colonial history, as well as the Fu Lin Kung Temple, a tranquil Taoist place of worship built into the hillside. Also pop into shops that sell local produce such as freshly caught seafood, traditional snacks and handmade noodles.

05

Purnama Perfection

Full moon takes on new meaning at **Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali**. During this magical time, guests may choose to indulge in two special rituals to commemorate *purnama* (full moon). Take part in a mystical ceremony at a nearby temple and witness how the Balinese celebrate the full moon. Guests are required to dress appropriately, including wearing long-sleeved tops with a sarong and sash. Or enjoy a beneficial Full Moon Cleansing Bath, as it is believed the healing process and absorption potential of the body is at its peak on the day of the full moon. Here, resort staff will prepare an indulgent bath in the privacy of your own room, using local sea salt from Tianyar to bio-energise weak points as well as facilitate energy flow. Choose from Herbal, Detoxifying/Invigorating or Nurturing Milk, depending on your needs

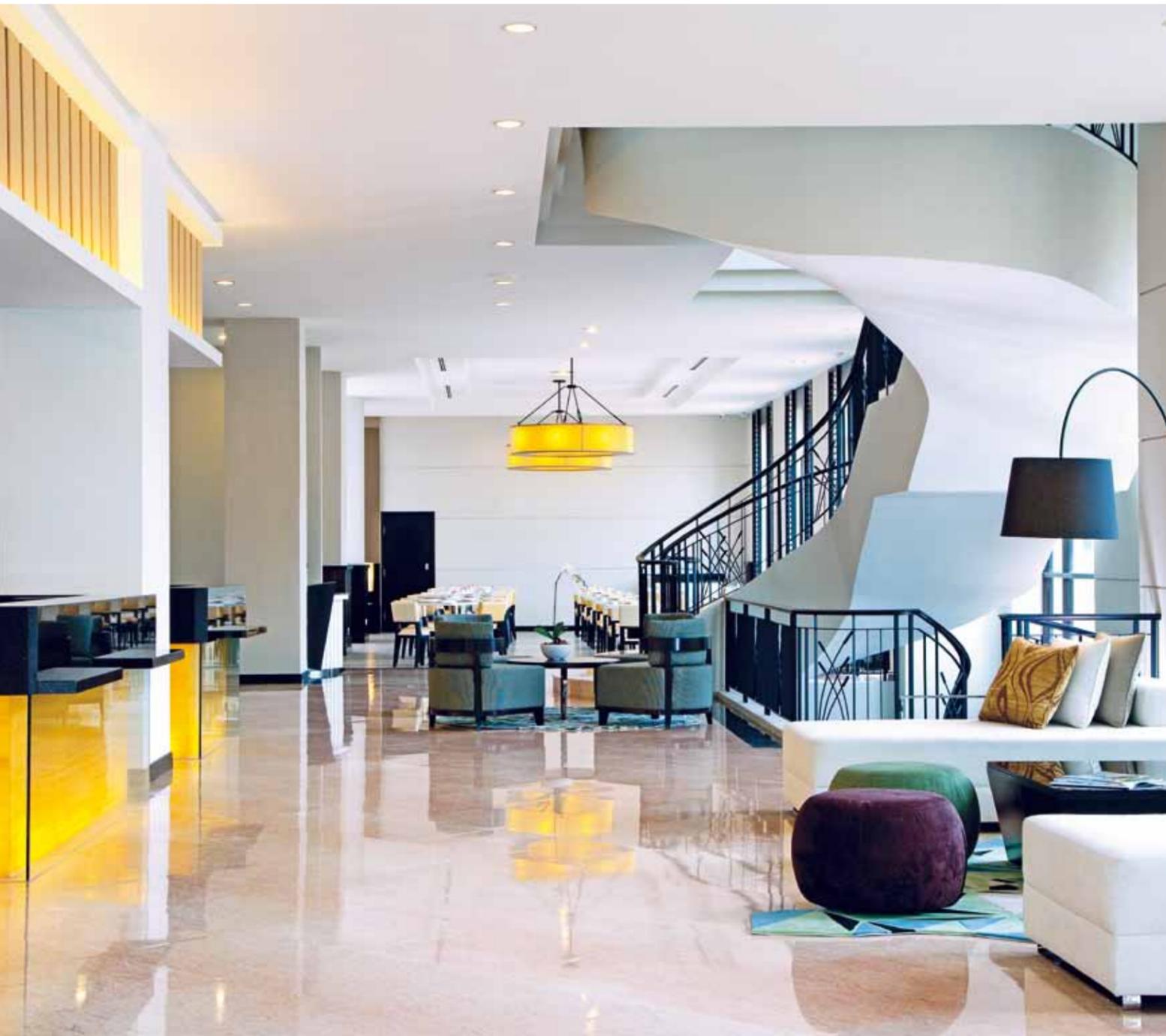
06

Culture Club

Sabah might attract the bulk of its visitors with its myriad natural offerings – from the majesty of Mount Kinabalu to its glorious jungles and mind-boggling biodiversity – but its cultural offerings are also well-worth discovering. **Gaya Island Resort** has *A Cultural Journey* package that offers guests the chance to visit and experience the sights, sounds and smells of a local *tamu* (market), before exploring the intricacies of the Fook Tet Kung Temple and a church that dates back to 1885. The final stop in this unique cultural trail is the Monsopiad Cultural Village, named after a fearsome warrior who lived some 200 years ago, where guests will be regaled by tales of ancient head-hunters. The highlight is, undoubtedly, Siou Do Mohoing (the "House of Skulls") where 42 of Monsopiad's "trophies" hang from the rafters. ■



06



The bright and cheery lobby of Vistana Penang is a welcoming sight.

The word 'hotel' brings to mind carefree holidays and escapades to long sandy beaches and room service. There is a brand of hotels, however, that operates a little differently. Hotels for the business traveller work as a support system for the guest, and this calls for a range of targeted services and facilities. The executive, who has found himself with neither staff nor office, needs more than a plush room and computer workstation.

Cabanas and deckchairs do little for someone on a working stay. Hotels for the business class have to function as a work space as well as a place of respite. Providing and anticipating the needs of this special category of hotel guests means having to keep up with changing work trends. These usually short-staying visitors require business amenities as much as they need a sanctuary after a long and gruelling day.

The first thing that one notices about the newly-refurbished Vistana Hotels in Kuantan, Penang and Kuala Lumpur is the signage. Gone is the blocky typeface, replaced, instead, by a stylish font that hints at the changes made to the chain. The decor from the mid-1990s, similarly, is no more, with the refurbishment introducing contemporary lines and modern fittings that brighten the lobby, welcoming guests into its cheery embrace. What you notice next are the staff: mostly young and dressed in Edmund Ser-tailored uniforms, this spirited crew sound off welcome greetings as soon as guests are within earshot. Their exuberance seems to be linked to the new ambience.

The three Vistana Hotels, located in key city locations of the peninsula, offer more than strategic positioning in bustling cities. Being business guest-centric, the hotels go all out to cater to the needs of their guests. Simplicity is the watchword for Vistana. This does not mean skimping on providing a wonderful hotel experience but comes in the form of cutting out the unnecessary and focusing on what business guests really need the most.

SIMPLIFIED EXCELLENCE

The newly-refurbished Vistana Hotels are set to be the ultimate choice for business travellers.

Text **Eric Ian Chan** Photography **Jacob Termansen, Marcus Wong & Yong Keen Keong**



Room service, for example, is done away with. Having meals sent up to the room is good for those on holiday, not so much for the working professional.

Instead of being cooped up in their rooms, Vistana encourages guests to drop in at the Barista, a 24-hour coffee bar that whips up an assortment of drinks and light meals. Guests can sit and watch the news on big TV screens. The Barista is also a great place to pick up a morning shot of espresso before heading out. Embracing the current coffee culture and trend of spending an afternoon working in a quiet café environment is perhaps one of the cleverest steps the Vistanas have adopted. Casual and unassuming, it has created a watering hole to draw busy executives.

For private discussions, seats that are fashioned into intimate nooks allow for working lunches. This cosy area is Hub247, a functional workspace where document printing and quick online research can be done. For meals, the hotels' Cafe dishes up a buffet menu of Western favourites and Asian delights.

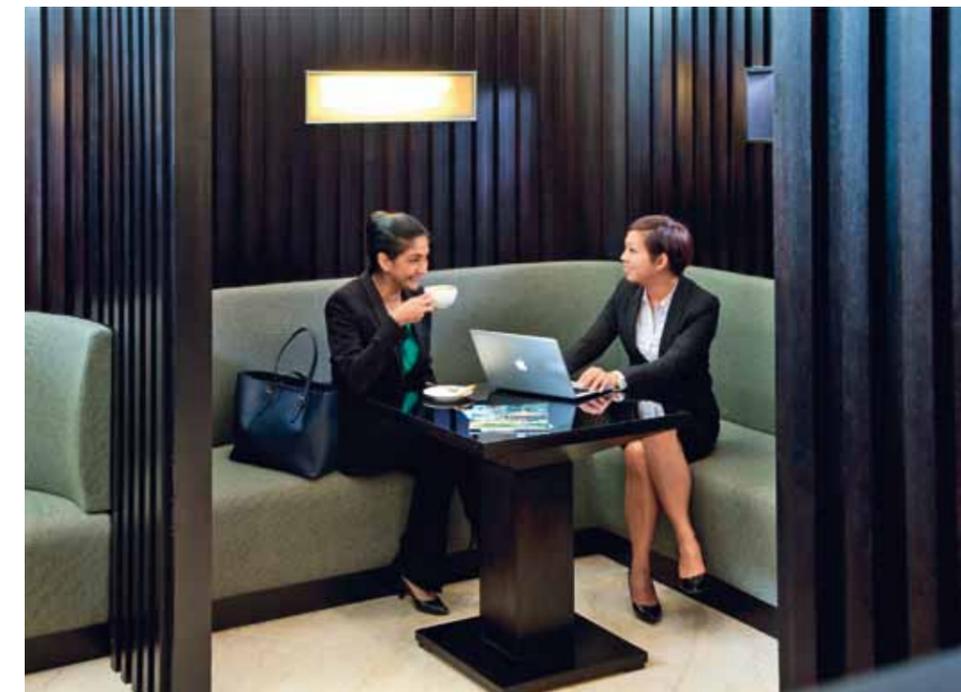
When the stress of the job gets too much, there's the round-the-clock gym that features some state-of-the-art treadmills and workout machines. For the gym-averse, short laps at the hotel pool might do the trick. Whether it is swimming or simply relaxing in the cool water, the body and mind are energised and ready for another day at the conference table.

When it's time to retire for the night, the room's styling and lighting are most welcome. Significantly different from other hotels, where rooms are overly bright, each Vistana room has subdued lighting. From the textured dark brown or maroon wallpaper to the ebony of the furnishings, the room provides solace from the toils of the day and gently whispers the promise of a good night's rest. For those who like to read before sleeping, lamps on either side of the bed can be articulated to point at a page no matter how the individual sits. Many a guest have praised how restful the feather-topped beds of the hotels are. The bathroom in each guest room has also been upgraded. Old-styled bathtubs are out while rainshowers are in. This modern touch makes it possible to stand under simulated raindrops and feel the stress drain away.

The upgrades of the Vistana hotels are significant and, more importantly, specialised and tailor-made for the business traveller. While the new look is certainly refreshing, it is the unique attention towards the working guest that is most appreciated.



STAYING CONNECTED
All Vistana hotels have free WiFi. Each guest is given a personalised password to get online. For those who want faster connections, the hotels offer two affordable Internet plans.



Clockwise, from left: Cafe at Vistana Kuantan serves us good eats from East and West; The hotel crew, rejuvenated by the recent refurbishments, smiling in their new Edmund Ser uniforms; Brainstorm or meet in style at Hub 247.

Vistana Kuantan City Centre

Located in the heart of Kuantan, Pahang, it caters to business travellers visiting the bustling East Coast Economic Region. Getting to the hotel is easy as it is less than half an hour away from the Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah airport.

Attractions: Standing at the lobby, the city is minutes away to your right while the beautiful beaches of Teluk Cempedak await you on the left. The hotel is also near some of Kuantan's must-visit places, including the Sungai Pandan waterfalls and the favourite hiking spot, Sungai Lembing. For a round of golf, the Royal Pahang Golf Club is just down the road.

Rooms: The hotel features two room types – Executive Deluxe Rooms and Executive Suites. The former is perfect for the lone business traveller and the latter offers space for meetings and impromptu discussions.

F&B: The Barista, a coffee bar that serves up light bites and an assortment of drinks, is next to the pool, giving you an ideal place to chill and relax. Cafe, the hotel's restaurant, is also near the pool and offers a hearty Western and Asian buffet.

Facilities: Vistana Kuantan City Centre is popular with locals who fill its ballroom with wedding ceremonies. For business, the eight meeting rooms are more than adequate to hold seminars and company functions of varying capacities.

Vistana Kuantan City Centre is in Jalan Teluk Sisek, 25000 Kuantan. Tel +609 517 8000.

Vistana Kuala Lumpur Titiwangsa

The hotel, which is near Putra World Trade Centre and Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, serves as an ideal catchment for business travellers. For those intimidated by KL traffic, the Monorail and LRT are virtually at the hotel's doorstep. Using both transport networks, the entire city is well within reach.



Attractions: Shopping in KL is almost a given for visitors. Retail therapy is to be found at Bukit Bintang and surrounding areas. For those who like a little culture and a night at the theatre, the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre is a short cab ride away.

Rooms: This hotel commands the lion's share of rooms in the chain. It boasts 360 Executive Deluxe Rooms, with two Executive Suites tucked away for the business elite. Thick earth-toned drapes and comfortably lit rooms keep the frenetic pace of the city at bay.

F&B: The buffet at Cafe is on frequent rotation, so guests will always have something new to try out. The Barista near the lobby's entrance entices coffee lovers into its midst. Guests often sip their favourite brew and watch the world news at Hub247 as they wait for their morning rides to their appointments.

Facilities: With 12 meeting rooms and a banquet hall, Vistana Kuala Lumpur Titiwangsa is equipped to handle meetings and corporate functions of varying sizes. The hotel attracts event organisers, who find it a conducive place for weddings and social events. As with all hotels that bear the Vistana name, this one also provides gym and pool facilities for guests to unwind.

Vistana Kuala Lumpur Titiwangsa is at 9 Jalan Lumut, off Jalan Ipoh, 50400 Kuala Lumpur. Tel: +603 4042 8000.

Vistana Penang Bukit Jambul

A short drive from Penang International Airport and a heartbeat away from the city centre stands Vistana Penang Bukit Jambul. The year-long refurbishment has transformed this Vistana, making it gleam like a jewel in the heart of Bukit Jambul. It has 221 Executive Deluxe Rooms and 17 Executive suites. The hotel's location in prime real estate is ideal for visiting executives.

Attractions: Penang's culinary flair is well known, which is good news for hotel guests who want to sample the local fare. The hotel is surrounded by places that offer some of the state's best food. A short walk away is Original Penang Kayu Nasi Kandar restaurant. The eatery is so popular that patrons literally line up to sample the famous Indian selection. Some rooms overlook the Bukit Jambul Country Club, which beckons hotel guests looking to tee off. The consistently

The upgrades of Vistana hotels focusses on the needs of business travellers. Rooms and suites are cosy and perfectly lit to promote a good night's sleep.





Barista at Vistana Kuantan is a nook where visitors can sip on coffee and talk business.

“Being business guest-centric, the hotels go all out to cater to the needs of their guests.”

agreeable weather also means they can stay longer on the green. Kompleks Bukit Jambul, a shopping centre, is a mere five minutes' walk from the hotel. It's also a convenient place to shop for phones and phone accessories.

Rooms: As in other Vistana hotels, the Executive Deluxe Rooms and Executive Suites offer a consistent quality. The inviting layout of the rooms makes for a relaxing haven after a long day at meetings. An adjoining suite wing which will perfectly complement the main hotel will be introduced in the near future.

F&B: The changing trend that is skewed towards coffee runs and sitting at the cafe is not lost here. Barista at the hotel offers 24-hour service of great java and food. The counter is most popular in the morning as executives get their caffeine fix, or favourite beverage, before work. This is Penang after all, so Vistana's Cafe leans towards offering local favourites that are rotated to ensure longer-staying guests enjoy the full palette of street food the island has to offer.

Facilities: The pool is at the centre of an atrium. Although modest in size, it is ample for guests to have a good soak after a long day. However, if being still is not your style, the gym is the place for a good workout. Run on the treadmill and look out to the pool as you burn calories and beat stress. Vistana Penang Bukit Jambul is a favourite for organising meetings and corporate incentive events. Its 10 meeting rooms and one ballroom are always in high demand. However, for short, casual discussions, the hotel's Hub247 is private and comfortable enough for talks that go well into the night.

Vistana Penang Bukit Jambul is at 213 Jalan Bukit Gambir, Bukit Jambul, 11950 Penang. Tel: +604 646 8000. ■



24-hour gyms keep corporate warriors fighting-fit for boardroom battles.



1. The sea of tea plantations on the way up Gunung Brinchang.
2. Verdant sights await intrepid trekkers. 3. A cicada finds respite on the steps leading to the Mossy Forest.



didn't want to be blinded by his headlamp so I let him walk in front of me, behind Madi, and we headed into the shrubbery. I took his tripod when he found it difficult to walk the trail and lug around his bulky camera equipment. I turned off my lights and waited for my eyes to adjust to the dim surroundings. I stepped on rocks, then walked into water and got wet when leaves brushed against me. The tripod was helping me balance a little and I was glad I took it from Ed.

"Turn off your lights," said Madi in a hushed tone. Ed did and we stood still. It took me a few seconds to realise why we had stopped. Moonlight was shining down through the canopy, illuminating the foliage beneath. It was a stunning sight that galvanised Ed to set up his camera for a shot. I walked over to Madi who was standing still, as if he wanted to blend into the darkness. "This is part of the Jim Thompson trail," he said finally. "This is where he last walked before he disappeared." Back at the Cameron Highlands Resort, I prepared for hiking the next morning. I had been tired out the day before, having climbed up Gunung Irau. On top of that, Ed and I had persuaded Madi to take us for a night walk, so it had been a day well spent. But I was more excited about the Thompson trail. There's so much mystery surrounding the prominent American businessman. In the resort's tea room, pictures of Thompson loom over the walkway that leads to the silk boutique that bears his name.

Highland Mystery

A forest walk in Cameron Highlands turns a local legend into a titillating adventure.

Text **Eric Ian Chan** Photography **Edmund Lee**

Jim Thompson, the American businessman who rekindled the region's silk trade, was on holiday in Cameron Highlands. On Easter Sunday 1967, he went for a walk and was never seen again. Or, at least, that was the story.

We got out of our hotel van. It was 8pm and already dark. As the headlights of the van disappeared into the distance, we were left standing on a tar road enveloped by darkness. "Is this the trail?" asked Edmund the photographer, taking the headlamp I handed him.

"Yes, this is it," replied S Madi, the resident naturalist from Cameron Highlands Resort, as he walked towards some bushes with his torchlight while Ed and I tried to find our bearings. Even with the headlamp strapped to his head, Ed couldn't see a thing. He had problems seeing in the dark, he told us apologetically. I





4. S Madi, resident naturalist of Cameron Highlands Resort, is a self-confessed Jim Thompson hunter. His knowledge on the man makes the Jim Thompson Trail an adventure. 5. A lone spider hides on the trail where Jim Thompson walked for the last time. 6. The night sky that illuminated the Jim Thompson Trail on the night hike. 7. Moonlight Bungalow, the place where Jim Thompson stayed whenever he visited the highlands. He was seen waving from the grounds the afternoon he disappeared.



“Thompson’s disappearance was made more intriguing when people close to him also disappeared. His sister was found murdered a few months later.”

When he vanished on 26 March 1967, a massive search party combed the hillsides of Cameron Highlands. It proved futile, however, and, because Thompson was never found, the mystery endures to this day. He was more than the man who revived the world’s desirability for Thai silk. During the Second World War, he was a member of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services), the American secret service that was the precursor to the CIA. He was well-travelled and often visited Cameron Highlands to see his friends, Dr Ling Tien Ge and his wife, and stayed at the Moonlight Bungalow.

According to Madi, locals remembered Thompson as a quiet man. He was known to walk into a shop for his tobacco, pay for it and leave without uttering a word. “He wouldn’t even say thank you,” said Madi, repeating this little insight he had gleaned from the shop owner. A self-confessed Thompson hunter, Madi, has been fascinated by the man since he was young. Born and raised in Cameron Highlands, Madi had done his homework, talking to people who knew Thompson and could recall the day he disappeared and the search that ensued.

“So what’s the deal with Thompson?” I asked Madi as we boarded the hotel van after the night hike. “I’ll tell you tomorrow,” he replied. The trail looked completely different in the morning light. With Ed now better able to see his way around, I could focus on the path. Madi leads visitors from the Cameron Highlands Resort on this trek daily. “I discovered this trail,” he said proudly. “Previously, they thought it was somewhere else, but this is the right one.”

We walked in from a lone tar road and followed the path. It was oddly quiet, making the trail a touch more mysterious. I tried to picture a white man walking these parts on that fateful Easter morning after church service. The trail was clearly marked and the vegetation was only semi-thick, but I couldn’t see why anyone would want to have a stroll in these parts. Madi said the foliage was more lush 47 years ago and that Thompson had walked the stretch often. Throughout the trail, Madi piled on the Thompson mystery with insightful commentary he had garnered from people he had interviewed. “He had asked for fish head curry, his favourite, before he disappeared,” said Madi. “They thought he had fallen into the ravine, or maybe he had gotten lost,” he added. His use of ‘they’ told me that he thought differently.

The trail was a U-shaped walk. Although there was a fair mix of ascents and descents, the trail was not difficult to cover. In the cool environment, we hardly broke a sweat. Our short hike ended at the point where we began the night walk. I found out that the water I had stepped into the night earlier was a stream.

We walked out of the forest and onto tar road. We continued down a narrow road towards Thompson’s last known residence. Along the way, Madi’s mood lifted and he resumed his tale of Thompson.

“That’s Moonlight Bungalow, where he was staying,” Madi said a short while later, pointing to a hilltop building a distance away. Although located on an adjacent hill, the bungalow was clearly visible. According to Madi, someone saw Thompson shortly before he disappeared. He was seen standing and waving from the bungalow. We headed down the road and passed the trail.

A little further on, Madi stopped. “This is where he was seen getting into a car with a few Caucasian men.” My confusion appeared to delight Madi. He proceeded to say he had

spoken to many witnesses who saw Thompson on the day he disappeared. Contrary to popular belief, Thompson was seen getting into a car and was driven off. He was later reported to have boarded a helicopter and left the country, sans passport or luggage. At least that was how Madi put it.

Thompson's disappearance was made more intriguing when people close to him also disappeared. His sister was found murdered a few months later. Were all these events linked somehow? To Madi, the Thompson tale had all the hallmarks of a good conspiracy. Perhaps Thompson needed to leave the country, he ventured. Perhaps, he orchestrated his own vanishing act. Perhaps... Adding fuel to pet theory, Madi said Thompson's surviving relatives are keeping mum about the whole thing.

The hotel was not far away from the trail and Madi suggested we walked back. Along the way, he rattled on about the man, with speculations of international affairs or secret love affairs that led to his disappearance. At the back of my mind, I wondered if someone was working on a screenplay as this tale was turning



8



9



For quick hikes and night walks, here is a list of what you should have with you.

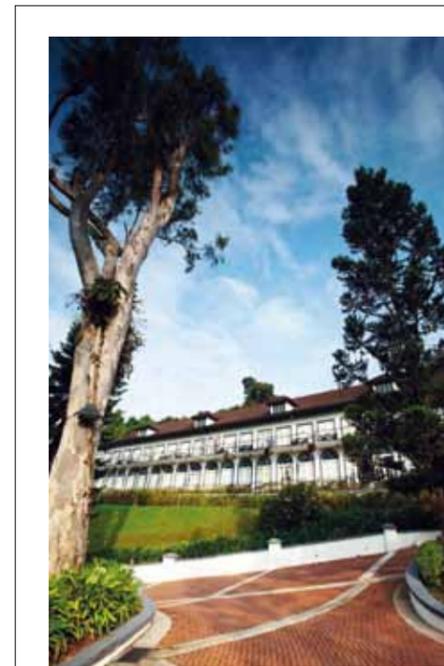
- **Headlamp** – Try to avoid carrying a torchlight as you would need your hands for balance.
- **Good pair of shoes** – While sneakers are fine, we suggest you bring a sturdy pair that you are not going to regret getting a little dirty.
- **Bottle of water** – Cameron Highlands is cool but you still need to keep yourself hydrated. Make sure you have at least a small bottle of water handy.
- **Sunscreen** – The temperature can fool you into thinking that you won't get sunburnt but, trust us, you can.
- **Backpack** – Put everything in your backpack and make sure your hands are free. Sling on the pack before you go on the hike to ensure you are comfortable with the weight.

You don't need insect repellent as the temperature keeps most bugs away. However, if you are more comfortable having one at the ready, make sure it comes with sunscreen as well.

out to be more fascinating with each subsequent step back to the hotel. Before we went in, Madi had one more nugget of trivia to reveal. The Cameron Highlands Resort was built on the same spot where the Cameron Highlands Hotel used to be. It was where Thompson would regularly go for his afternoon tea.

Like the stories that surround prominent assassination plots or famous disappearances, the Thompson tale fuels the imagination and excites the spirit. There is little possibility of anyone knowing exactly what took place. Perhaps, that is a good thing. The mystery is what gets people coming to the Cameron Highlands Resort to seek out Madi for an exclusive tour of the Jim Thompson trail.

I shook Madi's hand, thanking him for a great walk and for the past two days of hiking in the highlands. A group of Japanese tourists walked past and posed for pictures at the stairway of the lobby. They beamed and held up their Jim Thompson bags, no doubt filled with exquisite silk bought from the hotel's boutique. I wondered if they have any inkling of just how fascinating the tale behind the name really was. ■



Cameron Highlands Resort offers eco-tours and hikes that show visitors the lush greenery Cameron Highlands has to offer. The tours, usually headed by S Madi, the resort's naturalist, are packed full of information that includes local history, plant life and ecology. These tours can be customised and tailored to visitor needs. The resort's exclusive Jim Thompson Mystery Trail is highly recommended and you could ask Madi more about the enigma that is Jim Thompson.

Cameron Highlands has grown over the years as a tourist town and hamlet that is peppered with new farms

If you are a fan of nature, it is best to see the splendour of the highland's fauna while you still can. Book yourself a trip to Cameron Highlands Resort and spend time appreciating the greenery. Ask your guide to tell you about the indigenous plant life (there are more than 113 species of fern) and see for yourself the delicate line that nature and development straddle.

For reservations, please email [YTL Travel Centre at travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my](mailto:travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my) or call +60 3 2783 1000

8. The narrow tar road said to be where Jim Thompson was picked up by person or persons unknown. 9. A Jim Thompson portrait on the wall that leads to the hotel's silk boutique that bears his name.

Saké & Tee

Japan's northern island of Hokkaido has long been a well-trodden tourist trap for powder-hungry skiers in winter, but it's blissfully quiet in late spring and early summer. Leave the kerfuffle of big city life behind and head to Hokkaido's mountain retreat of Niseko as it blossoms into an Eden-like garden, famed for its fresh fruit, eye-popping scenery and spectacular golf.

Text **Todd Andre** Photography **Yong Keen Keong**

The air smells sweet and cool. The trees are leafless except for dozens of tiny green buds on the edge of every twig and branch. It's a clear day, so, before teeing off, admire the snow-capped peaks ahead and swig a dram of the best single-malt whisky in the world, purchased the day before from the local distillery. Sound like a perfect day in the Scottish Highlands? Well, it could be, but this is spring – and the start of golf season in Japan.

Talk about Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, and you'll probably think of snow first – mind-blowing and improbable piles of it. Hokkaido has one of the world's most famous ski resort clusters that receive some of the world's highest annual snowfalls. But even with Japan's golf-obsessed culture, the archipelago's stunning volcanic highlands and 172 golf courses, along with a size, climate and population density comparable with Scotland (more than 500 courses), Hokkaido still has yet to carve out its

rightful place in the imagination of golfers. South-East Asian golfers, in particular, should have a special interest in exchanging their hot and sticky cities for a few weeks of fresh air and sweat-free swings. The uninterrupted horizon of pea-green pine trees and fresh, clear rivers brimming with ice-blue snow melt of Hokkaido is in stark contrast to the polluting, dry cityscapes of South-East Asia.

Head straight to the heart of the island's tourism industry in Niseko, a tiny town of nearly 5,000 farmers and fruit growers, only about two hours' drive west of Sapporo's New Chitose Airport. Japan's economic bubble in the 1980s and early 90s created a golf boom in Hokkaido, with some of the most beautiful courses located in Niseko. The green season starts in April. By early May, Niseko is largely thawed out, but the snow will have only disappeared a week or two earlier – if at all – so it's best to postpone your trip to late May or early June to ensure all the

Tee off in the shadow of Mount Yotei in Niseko.



Wholesome family fun is available for one and all at the Hilton Niseko Village.

courses are open and in good condition. The courses are playable in May as the Kentucky bluegrass does not go dormant in winter; but, despite spring's sunny skies, brisk breezes off the snow-capped peaks will keep fair-weather duffers away.

The courses are in semi-season, so the green fees are a bit cheaper with fewer tourists around. The weather is quite agreeable around this time: daytime highs are a comfortable 21°C in the afternoon, but expect dips to 10°C late at night and in the early morning. If you like a lie in, you will love this – you're better off sleeping in and teeing off at noon than rushing out for a freezing first tee.

Whether you're hitting the 900,000 sq m of ski-able terrain in the winter or smashing drives in the summer, the Hilton Niseko Village is probably one of the most convenient and luxurious places to stay in the region. Nestled at the base of the 1,308m high Niseko-Annupuri Mountain, it has a stunning view of the slopes, with the 1,898m Mount Yotei flanking

the hotel. Golfers need not venture far, as the 6,845-yard Niseko Village Golf Course is right at the Hilton's doorstep. It's a picture-perfect resort course. The fairways are wide and flat. Shimmering cold-water creeks occasionally crisscross the forgiving, spaced-out foliage that is eager to catch your errant ball. The scenery couldn't be more beautiful, with Yotei or Annupuri towering high above most fairways.

The biggest challenge is the par-four fifth hole. If you're playing from the whites, dense silver birch trees stand under a silhouette of Yotei only 212 yards straight ahead on this 90° dogleg right. Long hitters are forced to either ease up on their power to stay out of trouble, or risk their ball hitting the right-side trees to cut the corner. Once you're done with the bend, though, it's a straight shot to a green guarded by only one left-side bunker, a non-factor depending on pin placement. There's a perfect photo op at the 10th hole, where your crew can clamber around the par-six signboard



next to the 721-yard hole's tee box for a group snapshot. Where playability is concerned, the hole's unbending fairway will prove unchallenging for long hitters.

When you're done, drop your gear off in the locker room at the ground floor across from the clubhouse. Used by heavily dressed skiers in the winter season, the generously sized lockers can easily fit your golf bag, and there are driers for your shoes, socks and shirts. Green fees run about ¥7,200 (RM233) on weekdays and ¥10,000 (RM324) on weekends and holidays.

For a cheaper alternative and different golfing experience, the Niseko Golf Course near the Hilton is worth the 15-minute drive. The 6,805-yarder is more of a shot maker's course, and more frequented by locals than tourists. The large local presence has more to do with the significantly lower ¥5,500 (RM178) weekday and ¥7,500 (RM242) weekend price tag than anything else. It lacks the polish and rigorous upkeep of Niseko Village, but the distinctive character and design of the cosy clubhouse more than make up for it. There are just as many beautiful holes here as the flagship course. The biggest difference between them is that Niseko Golf Course has sizable changes in elevation from hole to hole, resulting in shorter, hilly holes. Inaccuracy is penalised by the deep-knit texture of the rough and the comely-but-infuriating bamboo bushes known as Sasa. Roaming drives gobbled up by the Sasas are not retrievable without a machete and patient-playing partners, so stock up in the pro shop.

The course was designed by the legendary Arnold Palmer, known for his ability to integrate courses into their natural settings. This design philosophy is evident on Niseko's par-three fourth hole: the "signature" hole treats golfers to a view of snow-capped Yotei just to the right of the back tee box. Every hole is a feast for the eyes. The volcanic vista has created dozens of hot springs called onsen. One of the best is back at the Hilton. Its

award-winning Wakka (meaning "water") Spa is pure relaxation. Treat those sore shoulders and lower back muscles with the spa's therapeutic, three-hour After Golf Escape, and then let your freshly kneaded muscles soak up the mineral-rich springs and the geothermal heat of the onsen. Relax and admire Mount Yotei's crisp contours reflecting off the ice-cold pond nearby.

Another, perhaps more manly, way to warm up the body is with whisky. Fortunately, this region produces some of the best single malt scotches in the world. Founded by Scottish-trained whisky distiller, Masataka Taketsuru, in 1934, the Yoichi distillery is one of Japan's oldest. The day trip is a must for whisky lovers, as it is only one hour north of Niseko on the south-western edge of the beautiful Shakotan Peninsula. Owned by Nikka Whisky Distilling, it's the same brand that shocked the world when its Yoichi 20-Year-Old was voted the best single malt in the world – ahead of its Scottish competition – in 2008.

Stop by the 1920s-era bar and museum (frankly, it's about time these two concepts were combined) for a dram or two poured from the liquid library. Once you're done savouring the selection of sweet sherry and salty peaty scotches, be sure to read about the founder and master distiller's unlikely romance with Glaswegian Jessie Cowan. It only took the pint-sized Taketsuru two years in Glasgow to woo the freckled lass back to Japan and take her hand in matrimony.

If you're up for a road trip, an hour's drive east from Yoichi will take you through sleepy seaside fishing villages, past cold-water surfers on Ishikari Bay, through kilometres of tunnels to the historic port city of Otaru. Walk along the glittering Victorian canal next to

the main road for a bit of quaint nostalgia and stop in a café occupying the old stone-built warehouses. Grab a vanilla ice cream made from fresh Hokkaido milk and shop for handcrafted glass or a unique Otaru music box on Sakaimachi Street.

Fledgling photographers should venture north-west of these two towns to explore the Shakotan Peninsula's craggy coastline. The mountainous 30km stretch, part of the Niseko-Shakotan-Otaru Kaigan Quasi-National Park, has plenty of spectacular vistas. Pull over at Cape Ogon and hike uphill for 15 minutes to reach a lookout tower where you will be greeted by the wondrous view of the Sea of Japan.

Of course, no trip to Japan is complete without tasting saké. A healthy sampling of the local sakés, as well as distilled potato, buckwheat and rice versions of shochus, are available at the Ezo lounge back in Niseko Village. Hokkaido's chilly winter climate contributes to the clean bite of the region's 15 brands of saké. Sub-zero temperatures allow the saké to ferment slowly, producing a dry and refreshing drink reminiscent of the crystal clear mountain waters used to brew it. Ezo has its own special charm. The stylish faux log cabin is woody and warm, but with a contemporary twist. Branches are pinned to the otherwise industrial lighting fixtures in the ceiling, bringing a lightness to the heavy cabin feel of the log panelling. It's a great place to unwind; if you hang around into the wee hours, there are private rooms for a bit of karaoke, too.

Drinks aside, there is great food aplenty. A good meal made with fresh, locally sourced ingredients isn't hard to find. The mineral-rich volcanic soil and

temperate climate yields a wealth of fruit and vegetables, and supports thriving dairy farms and ranches. Those famously expensive Hokkaido melons aren't available until July, but expect the first fat spears of asparagus in spring and Niseko's Camembert and "crispy" cheeses are available all year round. Seafood lovers can also expect bounties of world-renowned kegani (horsehair crab), salty uni (sea urchin) sushi and kurosoi (black rock fish) sashimi at local restaurants and izakayas (shoebox-sized Japanese pubs) when in season.

Hokkaido is a bit of a distance for Malaysians to get to as you have to fly from Kuala Lumpur through South Korea to get up to Sapporo or via Tokyo or Hong Kong. Thai Airways offers a direct flight from Suvarnabhumi, which is worth noting. And it's two hours' bus ride to Niseko.

For an extended trip it's worth going the distance, especially during the dry season in South-East Asia when the haze is full blown. Japan is known for its friendly, but non-English speaking locals, and its efficient local infrastructure and general orderliness make it a headache-free family trip. Plus, the cool spring and spectacular scenery are reasons enough to visit even if you are not there for golf.

Other forms of recreation are not lacking. For a bit of adventure, Hilton's PURE activity centre is a nice diversion. Ride Japan's longest zip line, try your hand at trapeze, or take a stomach-churning romp down the steep summer slopes of Annupuri on a mountain bike. For the kids, there are any number of activities to delight them, from junior golfing lessons to kite-flying to trekking through the woods. Niseko Village's other hotel, the nearby Green Leaf, is another great holiday base. It's a boutique hotel and each room comes decorated with framed works from local artists. Unfortunately, it's only open during the busy winter months. Either place is excellent for a calm escape to nature, Hokkaido-style. ■



Take a mountain bike ride down the steep slopes of Mount Annupuri or try your hand at Japan's longest zip line.



*Glorious gardens
await you at
Lavender House
in Berkshire.*

Cottage Culture

On your next trip to beautiful Berkshire in England, a stay at the lovely Lavender House or the small but perfectly formed Dormer Cottage should certainly be on the cards.

Text **Helen Oon**

Take three humble workers' cottages dating back 500 years and merge them into one big house. Bring in an architect/designer who can marry heritage charm with sleek modern lines and you get a sumptuous cottage that's a little bit country and a little bit rock 'n' roll.

The idea is to retain as much of the historical integrity of the building as possible without compromising style and comfort. The modest white double frontage of Lavender House belies its exquisite interior. From the outside, it looks just like all the other period cottages on the street, with a tiny box garden of lavender plants in Juliette balcony iron-mongered baskets and dwarf trees of cherry, quince, apple and pear to give that country orchard look. But, turn the door key, step inside and you will be whisked into a different world.

Through a double glass door in the porch-cum-boot room to store shoes, coats and umbrellas, it opens into an inner sanctum that seems to stretch on forever into the garden. It's like looking at a painting-in-perspective scene. The indoor-outdoor effect gives the illusion of bringing the lush garden into the commodious interior through its wall-to-wall glass patio doors, topped by a skylight that runs across the whole length



“Lavender House is designed to create a home-away-from-home feel with an allure of decadence and a hint of indulgence.”

of the back of the house. This is the ultra chic heart of the house that sets it apart from all the other cottages on the street.

Lavender House has undergone extensive renovations to become a stylish modern abode with heritage chic, painted in tones of lavender purple accented with silvery grey and earth hues. Its open plan concept flows seamlessly from the dining and living rooms into a kitchen that would make any cook weep with delight. It's like a culinary operating theatre, kitted out with all the mod cons, from a shiny chrome American-style double door refrigerator and pull-out freezer drawer, and boiling water on tap (the kettle is so last century) to induction cooker and top-of-the-range gas hob complete with ovens fitted to professional chef standards. It is complemented with a country touch by a large built-in circular cutting board in addition to a piece of freestanding wooden cutting block in the centre of the kitchen. A wall of mirror by the sink brings in a reflection of the garden while one is doing the washing up.

Then, there's my personal favourite – a miniature herb garden in a built-in trough with a variety of herbs planted next to the induction cooker. It's brilliant! The garden is designed with a black stone water feature and spacious sitting area equipped with a pizza oven and barbecue kit, surrounded by plants and lavender bushes.

The living-cum-dining room furniture is an eclectic collection of choice pieces, some picked up from vintage shops, while others were commissioned or bought from designer stores; Roche Bobois' stylish collection is in there as well. To inspire the orangery feel in this area, a cluster of tall potted plants adorn a corner to give an illusion of being in a garden in keeping with the indoor-outdoor theme of the house. It is accented with a red brick wall by the living room to give texture and add colour to the earth tone.

If the weather is not conducive to country walks or to sitting out in the garden, there is the cosy cinema room to chill out in with a movie collection or plethora of TV programmes on a large Bang & Olufsen cinema screen. The silver and purple tone of this room, with darkened walls and diamante-studded drapes for blackout effect, is the perfect place for a spot of multimedia entertainment. All you need is some honey-buttered popcorn, a glass of wine and you are all set.

By the stairwell is an intimate study, paying homage to the extraordinary evolution of Penguin books through the decades in a wallpaper montage of classic book covers



Feel at home away from home in YTL Hotels' MUSE Collection of charming countryside cottages.

in splashes of red, blue, orange and purple, adding a playful touch to the otherwise minimalist room. An antique desk with a modern laptop sum up the heritage-contemporary style of the house. Upstairs are three bedrooms set in dreamy hues of earthy cream with a hint of lavender purple. The master bedroom has a dressing room and *en suite* bathroom with a Victorian roll-top bathtub standing on clawed feet painted in vivid purple.

Lavender House is designed to create a home-away-from-home feel with an allure of decadence and a hint of indulgence. It is perfect for a country getaway or for private functions.

A stone's throw away is Dormer Cottage, a 500-year-old one-bedroom building infused with period character. It is exquisitely quaint, with exposed original wooden beams on the ceiling and an open log fireplace to enhance the cosy ambience. It is a perfect showcase of clever designing, which somehow turned a tiny cottage into a spacious sitting room-cum-dining room. A modern extension at the rear houses a contemporary kitchen with all the mod cons and designer cookware.

A stylish bathroom with shower and water closet is tucked in the corner of the kitchen, making smart use of tight spaces. The back patio door opens into a surprisingly large garden with a wooden decking and cascading water feature that creates a tranquil sanctuary. The elegant cottage is ideal for a weekend break in the countryside.

Lavender House and Dormer Cottage are located in the prestigious riverside parish of Bray-on-Thames between Windsor and Maidenhead. This unassuming enclave is the jewel of Berkshire. It is quintessentially an idyllic old English village, oozing with period character and charm. It is also a culinary centre, as there are two three Michelin-starred

restaurants — The Fat Duck, owned by Heston Blumenthal, and The Waterside Inn, helmed by Alain Roux, son of legendary chef Michel Roux.

The core of the village is made up of historic buildings, twee cottages and two traditional pubs — the Hinds Head and the Crown, both owned by Blumenthal. There are only four three Michelin-starred restaurants in the UK and two are in Bray. Every nook and corner is history personified. St Michael's, the village parish church, dates back to 1293, with ancient graves standing in silent witness to its chequered past in the churchyard.

Bray is the ideal base to explore nearby Windsor, with its imposing medieval Windsor Castle, built by William the Conqueror in the 11th century. It is the oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world, and is HM Queen Elizabeth II's favourite weekend home. Also worth a visit is the town of Ascot, which hosts Royal Ascot, the most prestigious event on the British racing calendar. Graced by the British Royal Family, it takes place every June and is an occasion where high society and aristocrats mingle with the public to parade in their finery and outlandish hats.

Eton College is a stroll away from Windsor. A cruise on the River Thames is an excellent way to see the sights of this wealthy county. What better way to experience quintessentially English country homes than by staying in heritage cottages like Lavender House and Dormer Cottage in the heart of Bray? ■

YTL Hotels' MUSE collection in Bray includes Bray House, Lavender House and Dormer Cottage. For reservations, contact the MUSE Bray Reservation Office: Tel: +44 1628 583 517 or e-mail bray@muse-hotels.com

The elegant Dormer Cottage is ideal for a weekend break in the countryside. Its back patio door opens into a large garden with a wooden decking and a cascading water feature that creates a tranquil sanctuary.

Dormer Cottage is a 500-year-old one-bedroom building infused with period character.”





Life-Changing Tenggol

Live the dive life on the East Coast of Malaysia, best experienced through the traditional Malay charms of Tanjong Jara Resort.

Text **Simon Pridmore**

A Great Location

March marks the start of the diving and snorkelling season around Pulau Tenggol, the underwater playground for visitors to Tanjong Jara Resort on the East Coast of the Peninsular Malaysia. This is a time of cloudless blue skies and calm, clear seas, ushered in by the south-west monsoon. When you stay at Tanjong Jara, you have Tenggol at your doorstep. As you recline on the resort's long, golden beach, you will spot the island out on the horizon, tempting you to rise from your torpor and get a little action in your life.

The Tanjong Jara water sports team makes it easy to get the best from a day out in the water. During the season, which runs from March to October, a van is on hand every morning to whisk you from the resort to the dock on the mouth of the Dungun River, a 10-minute drive away. From there, it's another 45 minutes by speedboat to the island.

The East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia borders the South China Sea and lies at the edge of the famed Coral Triangle, the planet's epicentre of marine biodiversity. Tenggol lies within the Terengganu National Marine Park, so its waters and inhabitants have been under government protection and allowed to thrive undisturbed since 1994. So, not only is there plenty of colour and variety in the marine life around Tenggol and its satellite rocks and pinnacles, the fish are there in numbers, too, and the corals are in excellent shape. Just the perfect setting to draw divers and snorkelers.

A major sea current flows along the coast and there are a limited number of offshore islands along its route. Tenggol is therefore something of a marine oasis for large pelagic animals that break their journey to rest and feed nearby. Although

A wealth of colourful marine life await divers in the waters off Tenggol Island.

nature is always capricious and the gods of the sea are sometimes jealous of their bounty, you can justifiably anticipate encounters with underwater celebrities such as barracuda, black tip reef sharks, eagle rays, manta rays and enormous but entirely benign whale sharks, particularly towards March/April and September/October.

The main island is steep, rocky, rugged and heavily forested but a large, sheltered white sand bay on the western side offers calm, crystal clear water and a thriving coral reef to entertain snorkelers and new divers. Everyone's base for the day's activities lies in the bay, where the resort has an open-air lodge with bathroom and dining facilities. The speedboat anchors in the shallows and you wade to the beach in translucent, aquamarine water. I know this sounds like every resort brochure you have ever read but, in this case, the fantasy is reality!

A Snorkel from the Beach

If you are standing on the beach looking out to sea and turn to your right, you will see a small group of rocks breaking the surface. This is usually the "gateway" to your first snorkelling experience of the day. To the left of these rocks is a long rectangular rock formation that breaks the surface at low tide. Beyond this, the reef begins and the action starts.

In the centre of the bay, close to the boat mooring, a huge field of staghorn coral stretches away to the small rocks. The coral is so named because it forms a

structure that resembles intertwined deer antlers. The staghorn provides shelter for thousands of colourful reef fish, mainly damsels and cardinals that sparkle in the sunlight of the shallows. You will also see lots of green and blue male parrotfish, surrounded by their less brightly coloured entourage, as well as a school of yellow and black fox-faced rabbit fish.

Do a little duck dive and swim down to look more closely and you may be able to spot more exotic creatures living within the protective horns of the coral, such as the beautiful spotted juvenile sweetlips which turn, twist and twirl like flamenco dancers. Be careful as you approach the corals. Although they look like rocks, they are quite fragile and can be badly damaged by a careless hand or foot.

Around the corner of the bay to the right, you may follow your guides over a shallow plantation of large table coral and into a small inlet with gardens of soft corals. Look for larger fish such as groupers and napoleon wrasse here and be especially alert for one or more of the resident population of turtles.

A Snorkel from the Boat

A second snorkelling route on the opposite side of the bay offers schools of larger fish and some close encounters with Nemo. This tour starts from the boat, which is stationed by a white buoy placed in the sweet spot to begin your exploring. The large boulders immediately beneath the keel are home to a school of large flat-sided batfish as well as several anemones with little Nemo clown fish peeking out from the fronds. Duck-dive down to see these cute guys up close. Notice how brave the big ones can be in defending their territory from you. Spend time watching the batfish as they move slowly with almost imperceptible adjustments of their fins. You will see small blue cleaner



You will find crystal clear waters and a thriving coral reef in the bay on the western side of Tenggol; Green sea turtles and clown fish are among the denizens of the sea around Tenggol.



“Do a little duck dive and swim down to look more closely and you may be able to spot more exotic creatures living within the protective horns of the coral.”



wrasse darting around them, picking off parasites and dead scales, sometimes disappearing completely into their gills to pick up tasty morsels.

If you swim back towards the beach a little, you will come across another luxuriant stand of staghorn coral. The tiny damselfish and other fish will duck down into the coral as you approach, sensing a predator, but, if you stay relatively still, they will gain confidence and gradually re-emerge.

When you head in the direction of the rocks near the shore, the water will become very shallow so be careful not to scrape your knees

and elbows. However, you may find turtles and bigger fish hiding there, so it is worth a look. Swimming to the sea-side of the boat will take you across more staghorn and a further group of boulder corals with anemones attached.

East-Side Action

The action for more experienced divers lies on the other side of the island, where the vertical cliff line continues underwater to form current-swept walls, and around the various rocks and pinnacles that lie to the north and south. A vibrant reef community creates the perfect environment to sustain large schools of fish and keep the bigger animals coming back. Even when the stars of the underwater show are not around, there is always so much to see. Do as very

experienced divers do and just stop from time to time to observe the behaviour of some of the more unusual and entertaining denizens of the reef. You can pause and listen to parrot fish crunching down on hard corals with their sharp beaks or watch octopuses moving over the seabed, their skin changing colour and texture to match their immediate surroundings. It is fascinating to see lionfish floating gracefully over schools of small fry looking for stragglers, the beauty of their feather-like fin arrangements belying their predatory intent.

On the seabed, look out for shrimps and gobies that share burrows in the sand, where they work tirelessly together to keep their homes clear of debris.

Life-Changing Moment

Beware, though: there is a good chance that the underwater encounters you experience at Tenggol can change your life. Sometimes, those used to exploring tropical seas tend to forget what a thrilling experience it can be for beginners. As I was relaxing over lunch between dives at Tenggol, I overheard a girl described her morning to a friend. “I couldn’t believe it was real,” she declared, “it was like a 3-D movie!” The next day, she took up a diving course and, a few days later, she was waving to me underwater to show me a blue-spotted ray she and her instructor had found. Life-changing indeed! ■

Look out for colourful soft coral and graceful lionfish when you dive in Tenggol.



TANJONG JARA RESORT

Embodying the essence of Malay culture and tradition, Tanjong Jara Resort on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia offers the perfect experience of Malay hospitality. Fronted by the South China Sea and surrounded by the lush green beauty of the local countryside, Tanjong Jara offers you an experience of Malaysia like no other.



Hollywood Beauty

Rosario Dawson opens up about life and career from The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

Text **Kassandra Kassim** Photographs **Getty Images**

Hollywood actress Rosario Dawson, who is set to star in seven films due out this year, swanned into Kuala Lumpur recently for the launch of the show *Newsmakers Unplugged*, which has just aired on StarWorld.

Vivacious and hardly the reserved, unapproachable Hollywood star you might expect, she gamely tried all things Malaysian during her 48-hour stint in the country. Among the things she did on her shortlist was to sample the local food and the joy of massages. Dawson lights up when the subject turned to Malaysia's famously spicy food. "I love spicy food. It's what I grew up with.

And I think it's funny because, looking around at all the people here, I think I could pass off as a Malaysian!"

"I've been having a lovely stay so far," she says, referring to her luxurious abode at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, the colonial hotel that was recently reopened, having been fully restored to its former glory by YTL Hotels. Dating back to the 1930s, it is an Art Deco architectural masterpiece and is also home to The Majestic Spa, which the actress happily experienced. "I have tried the Malay massage at The Majestic Spa and it was heaven. In fact, I think I might go for another one. The only thing I'm sad about is that I just don't have enough time to do all the things I want to."

Dawson, it seems, has been keeping busy, with a slew of films due out this year, from the remake of *Sin City* to a comedy in which she co-stars with Chris Rock. Although she tactfully skirted around the question about which film she enjoyed working on the most, she says: "The film I did over the summer with Chris, which he wrote, directed and starred in, was great fun. It was really silly to kinda' get paid to laugh all day."

Discovered early in her childhood by über director Spike Lee, Rosario has gone from strength to strength, using her African/Puerto Rican/Cuban/Irish descent to her advantage. Her mixed ethnicity, she believes, has helped her stand out in terms of getting roles, compared to the bus-loads of blonde blue-eyed hopefuls who turn up in Hollywood chasing their dream. "I think it has helped me to be in so many types of films, with so many different kinds of leading men," says Dawson in reference to the wide portfolio of films she has in her CV, which include comedy, horror, musicals and dramas.

Hugely inspired by her mother who raised her as a single parent at just 17, Dawson says she inherited her strong and independent spirit. That outlook,

"The film I did over the summer with Chris Rock was great fun. It was really silly to kinda' get paid to laugh all day."

along the way, has driven her to pick up a few important life skills other than acting. Like how to be a great cook and a home DIY genius. "You just need to learn how to really take care of yourself," quips Dawson by way of explanation.

We ended the interview by asking her who she would choose to be if she was a rock star, given her penchant for appearing in musicals like *Rent*. "Freddie Mercury!" she blurts out. What wows her about the late singer was his latitude as a performer. "It was his voice and his ability to do acrobatic acts on stage and performed to hundreds of thousands of people."

Meanwhile, this round in Kuala Lumpur wasn't enough and Dawson, 35, vows to return to explore more of the country. Unaffected, gracious and warm, Dawson is the kind of person who appreciates the subtle differences in people and cultures. To Dawson, we say: "Come back anytime!"



From top: Rosario Dawson leaves her mark in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's celebrity guest book; Rosario Dawson as Mimi Marquez in the film version of the Broadway musical, *Rent*.





Mad About Bags

Spring is officially here and, along with it, a whole new crop of colourful and joyful bags. Celebrate the season with bursts of colour and stylishly designed bags to complete your outfit for every occasion.

Rock That Bag

For those who want to stand out and yet have their lives streamlined in a pretty package, the **Kenzo California** bag is the ultimate pick. This iconic Kenzo is recreated in new beach breezy tie dies, high wave prints and vibrant colourways of such sophistication that it becomes the perfect spring-summer statement by itself. Gorgeoussness aside, the level of functionality is also unparalleled as the interior features multiple pockets and holding areas for easy organisation and storage. Look stylish and laidback as you tote a bag that exudes luxury and versatility at one go.



Minimalist Beauty

Fully structured, highly detailed and impossibly classic, **Dior** has come up with yet another drool-worthy bag collection. The new *Diorissimo* bicolour bag in smooth calfskin and black and rose dragée details is playful yet perfect for the modern woman who wants to look fun, fabulous and elegant. The bag boasts aesthetical perfection, with its impeccable details and smooth calfskin exterior. The contrast of colours and printed charms gives the bag a youthful appeal but stays true to Dior's minimalist aesthetic. Besides its exterior beauty, the bag also comes with an adorable detachable soft leather pouch inside. There's just so much to love about this bag!



Mellow Yellow

When you're looking for a smaller tote and in need of a colour pop, **M Missoni's Multicolor Raffia Hazel** bag is exactly what you need. From its distinctly simple shape to the hazelnut stitch detail, this hand crocheted bag is chic and unique. The bright yellow colour adds frisson to your outfit, while the exclusive Technicolor Plexiglas ring handle is adorably distinctive. It also helps that this charming bag is light yet solid at the same time.



Yours Truly

The new **Valentino Rouge Absolute Signature** emphasises individuality and authenticity to bring a new dimension to the label's classic bags range. You can now choose and combine freely to create a signature look and embellish the handbags any way you desire from the variety of available elements, ranging from monograms and zodiac signs, to beetles and griffons. The vivid gold hardware here is dazzling, standing out on the bright red hue that is also available in three different shades – from the Valentino signature red to rubin and scarlet. The bag is spacious and just the right size for everyday use.

Languid Days

WHILE SUN-DAPPLED
HOURS AWAY IN SMART,
EFFORTLESSLY-FEMININE
ENSEMBLES THAT'LL KEEP YOU
COOL WHILE LOOKING CHIC.

Photography Gerald Goh/IROM Studio Photography Assistant Coby Choi
Styling Calvin Cheong Hair&Makeup Cat Yong Model Marcella M/Base Model
Location MUSE Pangkor Laut Estates

CRIMSON
LEISURE

Red toga dress,
Paule Ka at Antoinette
at Starhill Gallery.





TEA BREAK

This page: Tweed jacket and silk princess cut dress, RED Valentino.
Facing page: White dress, Khoon Hooi; Zip up jacket, RED Valentino.



**WATER
NYMPH**

This page: Tube
bodycon dress,
M Missoni;
Sunglasses, Kenzo.
Facing page: Red
jacket dress, Kenzo;
bag, Illiza Ho.





**LUSCIOUS
LINES**

This page: Shiny silk
blend dress, **Kenzo**.
Facing page: Striped
silk dress, **Khoon Hooi**.





HOT STRIPES

Tiger and tartan-print bomber jacket and pleated wrap skirt, McQ by Alexander McQueen; Granville bag, Dior.

Opulent Timekeepers

As Richard Mille and Jaeger-LeCoultre, two outstanding watchmaking brands, show, there is more to timepieces than keeping track of hours and minutes.



Two-Timing

The new **Jaeger-LeCoultre Duometre Unique Travel Time** is the first-ever world-time watch that allows to-the-minute adjustment of the second time zone. This timepiece boasts impressive designs and mechanics, evident in its Dual-Wing system of two distinct mechanisms operating under one regulating organ but powered separately for maximised precision. The first displays the local time while the other refers to the second time zone; the globe at the bottom of the watch, synchronised with the travel time, represents a world map of time zone indications. Powering the timepiece is the remarkable Calibre 383 movement, visible through the sapphire crystal caseback, along with engraved names of the cities in the world's 24 time zones encircling the edge. This pink gold edition celebrates Jaeger-LeCoultre fine watchmaking that adds to the physical appeal and uniqueness of this ultimate timekeeper.



Back In Brown

The third member of the splendid **Jaeger-LeCoultre Grand Reverso Trilogy**, the *Grande Reverso Ultra Thin 1931* comes in a chocolate-toned dial. Visually, the watch has a pleasing appearance, with its 18K pinkish gold pin buckle and case complementing the chestnut brown Casa Fagliano alligator leather strap. A tribute piece to its 1930 steel and brown dial predecessor, this manually wound watch with two faces is composed of the reliable in-house Calibre 822/2, 19 jewels and 45-hour power reserve. With an ultra-thin case that measures 46.8mm X 27.4mm by 7.3mm, this timepiece is also lightweight and comfortable on the wrist.

Animal Magnetism

An exceptionally eye-catching piece, **Richard Mille's RM51-01 Michelle Yeoh Tiger and Dragon Tourbillon** combines engraving and enamelling on top of its highly complicated movement. A tribute to Tan Sri Michelle Yeoh and her upcoming film, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon II*, the timepiece, as its name suggests, revolves around both creatures. Sculptures of both animals are fused into the gear trains and through the horological components, making it seem as if the tiger and dragon are clutching the manually wound tourbillon movement. Created with 3N red gold and carved entirely by hand – with a finishing touch of micro painting – this timepiece boasts realism in the animal features and an exceptional array of features, including a power reserve of 48 hours, grade 5 titanium movements and a torque-limiting crown to protect from possible overwinding. Available in 18K white or red gold, this stunning timepiece is limited to 20 pieces.



Web of Time

The Academy Award-winning actress, Natalie Portman, collaborated with **Richard Mille** to create the phenomenally inspiring *RM19-01 Natalie Portman Tourbillon* that comprises a manually wound tourbillon assembled around a black rhodium-plated, 18K white gold baseplate set with black sapphires, a first for Richard Mille. The centrepiece and an integral part of the movement features an 18K white gold spider encrusted with diamonds, with its body supporting the bridges of the tourbillon and its legs holding up the two winding barrels. Just like the one dedicated to Michelle Yeoh, the *Natalie Portman Tourbillon* is limited to 20 pieces worldwide.

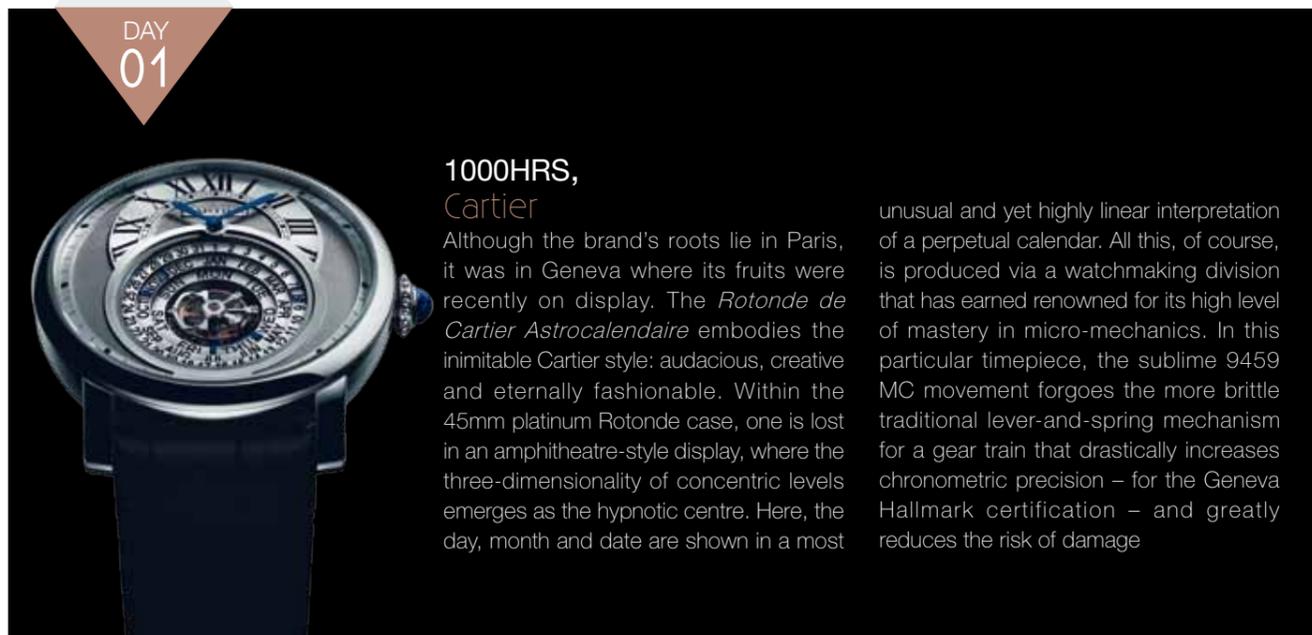
WATCH AFICIONADO'S DIARY

THE RECENT SALON INTERNATIONAL DE LA HAUTE HORLOGERIE (SIHH) IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND PROVED TO BE, AS ALWAYS, A CELEBRATION OF ALL THINGS FINE AND PRECIOUS.

Text Kenneth Tan

Monday,
Jan 20th

DAY
01



1000HRS, Cartier

Although the brand's roots lie in Paris, it was in Geneva where its fruits were recently on display. The *Ronde de Cartier Astrocalendaire* embodies the inimitable Cartier style: audacious, creative and eternally fashionable. Within the 45mm platinum Rotonde case, one is lost in an amphitheatre-style display, where the three-dimensionality of concentric levels emerges as the hypnotic centre. Here, the day, month and date are shown in a most

unusual and yet highly linear interpretation of a perpetual calendar. All this, of course, is produced via a watchmaking division that has earned renowned for its high level of mastery in micro-mechanics. In this particular timepiece, the sublime 9459 MC movement forgoes the more brittle traditional lever-and-spring mechanism for a gear train that drastically increases chronometric precision – for the Geneva Hallmark certification – and greatly reduces the risk of damage

1145HRS Vacheron Constantin

Visitors were captivated by the stunning open-worked *Patrimony Traditionelle 14-Day Tourbillon*. This timepiece exerts an almost illusionary effect on the beholder, such is the magnificence in its intricate nature and its play of light. With highly-polished and matt surfaces courtesy of the brand's traditional adherence to the Geneva Hallmark's punishing requirements, this platinum encased timepiece is further proof of the brand's founding principle, exhorted by co-founder François Constantin who declared: "Do better than possible, and it is always possible."



"This timepiece exerts an almost illusionary effect on the beholder, such is the magnificence in its intricate nature and its play of light"

1515HRS, Van Cleef & Arpels

This year, the brand reaches for the heavens and beyond with a wristwatch called *Midnight Planétarium Poetic Complication* that reflects the movement of the six celestial bodies closest to the sun, namely Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, all of which are visible from Earth with the naked eye. A self-winding movement, infused with the genius of Maison Christian van der Klaauw, is the logical force behind the true orbiting circuit of all the planets (and hence Saturn takes 29 years to circle the dial). Then, to add the poetry and myth to this piece, as Van Cleef & Arpels are wont to do, a rotating bezel is used to select a day of choice, in which a sapphire crystal star will ring the Earth on the given day, to signify the day's importance. This 44mm timepiece of pink gold is available with baguette-cut diamonds and a folding buckle set with round diamonds.



1400HRS, Audemars Piguet

Last year turned out to be a great one for this luxury sports timepiece brand. It experienced a substantial jump in revenue and, although its CEO, François-Henry Bennahmias, was coy about actual figures, he hinted that the bump hovered closely to the CHF100million mark. For 2014, the party goes on with the big news revolving around the *Royal Oak Offshore* – with six new versions of the 42mm chronograph coming to the fore. Also new to the world is the 42mm *Royal Oak Offshore Diver*, sculpted entirely in white ceramic, making it virtually scratchproof. The white 'Super Ceramics' used on the bezel, case middle, pushers and crown is nine times harder than steel and also 40 per cent more resistant than black ceramic, with hardness registering at 1,850 Vickers versus 1,300 Vickers, respectively.



1630HRS,
Panerai

That ancient longing of being able to stop time and start it up again, is now manifested in a modern-day chronograph by Officine Panerai: the *Radiomir 1940 Chronograph*. Made available in a trio of noble materials, namely white gold, red gold and platinum, this timepiece fondly harks back to the brand's very first chronograph, the *Mare Nostrum* of 1943, found on the wrists of the Italian Navy's deck officers. In the present day, the *Radiomir 1940 Chronograph* is powered by the OP XXV calibre conceived and assembled at Panerai's Neuchâtel manufacture. Here, the brand's watchmaking wizards used the Minerva 13-22 movement as the base to develop the sophisticated hand-wound chronograph calibre, which features column wheel, swan-neck regulator and Côtes de Genève finishing of the bridges. For those in the know, the Minerva lineage is yet another subtle tip of the hat to Panerai's heritage, with the Minerva of the 1920s supplying movements to the Florentine watchmaker.



1745HRS,
Jaeger-LeCoultre

Fresh from the whirlwind celebration of its 180th anniversary last year, Jaeger-LeCoultre hardly pauses to catch its breath with its jaw-dropping 2014 novelty – the *Hybris Mechanica 11*. At 7.9mm-thick, this timepiece is approximately half the size of most grand complication timepieces, ushering another era in ultra-thin grand complications. With its brand mantra surmising that only the impossible matters, Jaeger-LeCoultre thus rips up the rule book on grand complications, to conceive a minute repeater and flying tourbillon with flying balance-wheel within an 18K extra-white gold case. Limited to only 75 pieces, this 41mm timepiece relies on an automatic winding system conducted by a platinum segment on the oscillating weight, which confers greater efficiency and effectiveness in the self-winding process.

Tuesday,
Jan 21st

DAY
02



1115HRS,
Richard Mille

Always the great entertainer, Richard Mille premiered its 2014 novelties through a snazzy 3D presentation. This, naturally, raised lust levels past the roof when a slew of mouth-watering mechanical marvels appeared in front of the viewers as larger than life. Among the wonders were the arachnid-inspired *RM 19-01 Natalie Portman* and the NTPT-carbon enhanced *RM 35-01 Rafael Nadal* – with a movement capable of withstanding extreme shocks exceeding 5,000Gs. Yet another piece that evoked a visceral pang of desire was the *RM 36-01 Competition G-Sensor Tourbillon Sébastien Loeb*, a horological personification to the most successful driver in World Rally Championship history. In the exact centre of this tribute piece is the G-force sensor, which indicates up to 6Gs of force. A connected scale indicates safety levels of G forces – from green zones to red zones – for the pilot, with one-touch resetting on the central pusher. All this happens within a case diameter of 47.7 mm machined from carbon nanotubes for the case band and titanium for both bezel and caseback.



1400HRS
Baume & Mercier

In his opening remarks, the brand's CEO Alain Zimmerman, lauded the Clifton as a reference that has "turned into a successful collection." He continued: "It is important to us as a Maison, to transmit our most important elements of accessibility, perfection and quality." The evidence of this belief is amply provided through a grand range of Clifton iterations, from the superlative *1892 Flying Tourbillon* to the classical *Steel on Steel*. A particular delight is the *Clifton Two-Tone*, a 41mm mechanical self-winding piece with a sapphire crystal case back, alligator strap and a beautiful satin-finished silver dial which shows two elongated hands and Arabic numerals.

The seventh-oldest watchmaker still in operation, Baume & Mercier's excellence in measuring time goes back to its founding values of 1830. Its beautifully crafted timepieces are inspired by icons from its rich heritage and anchored on its 184-year-old motto, which states: "Accept only perfection; only manufacture watches of the highest quality."

BY THE NUMBERS:

14,000

The estimated number of visitors from around the world to the 24th edition of the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie. The next edition takes place from 19 to 23 January 2015 at Geneva's Palexpo.



1515HRS,
Roger Dubuis

This year represented a return to tradition for Roger Dubuis, with a giant cuckoo clock adorning its booth's interior. This clock served as a wink and tribute to brand founder, M Roger Dubuis, who was enraptured from a young age by the church tower clock in his village. It would be this love which consequently drove his fruitful journey into watchmaking. In line with this heritage, the *Hommage Double Flying Tourbillon* is a scintillating bridge to the very first Hommage models of 1995, the brand's founding year. Through the march of Time, the Hommage collection has attained certain panache,

with double tourbillons and hand-made guilloché featuring on the 2014 version. To power this flamboyant timepiece, an all-new RD100 movement was crafted: composed of 452 individually hand-finished parts and requiring 1,200 hours of manufacturing – necessary in part to attain the seriously rigorous Geneva Hallmark. Happily, the exuberant end result validates the effort invested and, upon a cursory gaze, one quickly identifies the brand's cherished historical design codes: long slender lugs, a concave bezel, fluted crown and large Roman numerals in either pink or white gold cases.

Tuesday,
Jan 21st

DAY
02



1630HRS, Montblanc

In a style accustomed to the brand, a host of specialities wrought in the Swiss Jura was spectacularly unveiled to the world, with actor Hugh Jackman in tow as the new brand spokesperson. Among the highlights is a timekeeping ode to the brand's famed *Meisterstück* fountain pen – celebrating its 90th anniversary this year. In the limited edition *Meisterstück Heritage Pulsograph*, an 18K-red gold case of 41mm envelopes the beating MB13.21 calibre. The latter is a manually wound monopusher chronograph, incorporating the technically masterful column wheel and horizontal coupling mechanism. Shades of the famous Minerva manufacture – now belonging to Montblanc – are naturally infused in this timepiece, with the traditional arrow of Minerva appearing on the hand-finished movement and visible through a sapphire crystal caseback.

Wednesday,
Jan 22nd

DAY
03



1045HRS, A Lange & Söhne

Visitors to A Lange & Söhne's booth could not help but be moonstruck by the 45.5mm *Richard Lange Perpetual Calendar 'Terraluna'*. Inside this timepiece, an awesome feat of mechanical wizardry creates four precisely jumping displays of the perpetual calendar: date, day of week, month and leap year. This regulation takes place amidst the precise strokes of the hours, minutes and seconds. And, of course, with the brand being the standard bearer for Saxon inventiveness, there is a clear innovation in the form of the patent-pending orbital moon-phase display, surrounded by 2,116 stars of five various sizes. At any time of day, those who gaze upon the inky blue of the moon phase – positioned on the caseback – would have an extraterrestrial appreciation of the moon, sun and the earth's northern hemisphere. A constant-force escapement controls delivery of power in the twin mainspring barrels, ensuring constant precision across a 14-day power reserve.



An extremely precise mechanism in this Lange timepiece reproduces the synodic month (planetary interactions of the Earth or moon with the sun) of 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 3 seconds that it takes 1,058 years before the display needs to be corrected by one day.

1400HRS, IWC Schaffhausen

Reaching into the depths of its creative wisdom and the underwater world, IWC put forth an array of Aquatimer diving watches, powerful and enigmatic in equal measure. The *Aquatimer Perpetual Calendar Digital Date-Month* sits loftily as a top-of-line reference in the collection, with a limited production of only 50 pieces in 18K red gold and rubber-coated titanium. With the perpetual calendar being one of the most exacting of complications, this self-winding *tour de force* utilises the herculean 89801 calibre to drive five rotating discs that display day, month and leap year, with no loss of precision. Luminescent elements on the hands, dial and internal rotating bezel provide clarity in the jet-black darkness, and it is the selfsame rotating bezel which gives IWC an edge in diving timepieces with the IWC SafeDive system. This life-saving piece of case engineering eliminates the severity of an accidental movement of the external bezel, with an ingenious counter-clockwise only rotation of the internal ring. It is this feature that thus ensures that divers do not exceed their requisite dive time – since the internal ring will never push forward under unintentional means – and hence negates potentially perilous consequences.



“Piaget – the master of ultra-thin timepieces, succeeded in staking its flag in the last remaining unconquered territory of ultra-thin mastery.”



1515HRS, Piaget

One of the biggest stories at SIHH also happens to one of its slimmest. If the statement seems a bit curious, it's only because Piaget – the master of ultra-thin timepieces, succeeded in staking its flag in the last remaining unconquered territory of ultra-thin mastery. The 38mm *Altiplano 900P* is, in essence, a reinvention of the wheel – or timepiece, in this case. What Piaget did was to re-imagine the watch, removing the main plate from the equation and fusing case and movement into one.

This revolutionary move earned it the right to claim the mantle of the world's thinnest hand-wound mechanical watch, wresting the last of remaining ultra-thin titles away from the previous holder. The new world-record holder measures in at a thickness of just 3.65mm for both case and movement. Housed in an 18K white gold case, this timepiece brings Piaget's story – celebrating its 140th year – full circle, starting with the brand's 2mm-thick Calibre 9P of 1957, which was, at the time, the first ultra-thin hand-wound movement by Piaget. ■

Beauty At Its Best

For most of us, skincare and personal wellbeing are not luxuries but necessities in our daily lives. These latest beauty products and miracle savers offer the best in terms of function and form.



The Perfect Shave

Acqua Di Parma dedicates its new shaving experience, Collezione Barbieri, to refined men with impeccable lifestyles. A projection of modernity, Collezione Barbieri presents a fair fusion of elegant design, refined textures and stylish packaging designed with the idea of enhancing the pleasure and luxury of the shaving ritual. The entire collection expresses masculine elegance, with products composed of the finest formulas and accessories intended for the modern man who takes pride in his appearance and wellbeing. Combining elegance and ergonomic design, this collection is, indeed, an essential accoutrement of the contemporary gentleman.



Super Shield

La Mer breaks new ground with the creation of its luxury sunscreen, *Blanc De La Mer SPF 50 UV Protecting Fluid*. This miracle sunscreen not only protects your skin from sun damage and future hyperpigmentation, but also gives all the benefits of La Mer's *Miracle Broth*, which aids cell renewal and enhances the skin's natural healing ability.



Nature's Miracle

A new age of timeless beauty is revealed with the latest breakthrough from **La Prairie**. The new *Cellular Swiss Ice Crystal Cream* and *Cellular Swiss Ice Crystal Dry Oil* combine the goodness of nature's most powerful and sophisticated secrets to create a perfect formulation for modern needs and environment. Using these two products together will bring remarkable results in delaying the process of aging and providing lavish and lasting hydration to the skin.



Sonic Cleansing

The daily cleansing ritual is now enhanced with **Clarisonic's** newest addition, *Aria*. Unlike typical routines, Clarisonic *Aria* is the latest innovation in advanced skin care, utilising oscillation movements to transform the cleansing experience into an enthralling ritual that produces unsurpassed results each day for beautifully transformed skin. With a sonic movement brush that allows a three-speed option, this device cleanses our skin six times better than hands alone. The face is left perfectly cleansed and refreshed with no damage to the skin. With the new *Aria*, cleansing has never been more stylish and effortless.



Gentlemanly Indulgence

The *Scotch and Shave* promotion at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is an experience to be savoured.

Text **Christy Yoong** Photography **Law Soo Phye**
Art Direction **Sheila Cheah** Model **Bruno Vanin/Base Model**

If you feel the need for some gentlemanly pampering, head for The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Smoke House, where a treat of dapper and drink awaits. The ongoing *Scotch and Shave* promotion has the happy promise of ensuring you leave with a lighter step than when you arrived, once you've had your personal grooming session at Truefitt & Hill and a flight of subtly different vintages of Glenfarclas single malt whiskies.

Start by going to Truefitt & Hill on the lower ground floor of The Smoke House, where you can get comfortable on the plush barber chair. Ashkan Malekpour, who manages the salon, will help you decide if you would like a Traditional Hot Towel Wet Shave or Royal Hair Cut. "We start the shave by applying pre-shave oil to soften the beard or moustache," Ashkan says. "Then we cover the face with a hot towel, scented with lemongrass, for two minutes."

Shaving cream is prepared and applied liberally using one of Truefitt & Hill's famous super badger hair shaving brushes. "Each brush contains up to 4,000 bristles and is handmade entirely in England," Ashkan says. The shave is carried out with a straight or cut-throat razor as "you get a very close and smooth shave," he adds. A cold towel wrap follows before he uses baby powder to soothe your face and applies aftershave balm.

Ashkan Malekpour of Truefitt & Hill prepares to give Bruno Vanin a Traditional Hot Towel Wet Shave.

Ashkan also explains that Truefitt & Hill takes every care possible to make the occasion, which takes 30 minutes, a painless one – a reflection of its long experience in the practice, having first opened

in 1805. "Some people have more sensitive skin and we have shaving gel and cream specially formulated to deal with this," he says.

The Royal Hair Cut takes about 15 minutes longer and begins with a wash and conditioning. "We'll talk about styles before we start and use both scissors and electric razors, and finish with texture clay or styling paste to shape the hair after we're done," Ashkan says. Take your time, then, to peruse Truefitt & Hill's wide range of products; having been in the business for more than two centuries, it knows a thing or two about gentlemanly grooming.

Once you're done, head back upstairs to the bar of The Smoke House, where John Yap, The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Director of Beverage and true barman-at-heart, will be happy to lay out your flight of Glenfarclas single malts. "These are textbook Speyside single malts, aged in sherry oak," he says. The *Scotch* part of the promotion offers shots of 15, 17 and 21-Year-Old expressions of Glenfarclas – Gaelic for 'glen of the green grass' – located in Ballindalloch, in the heart of the Speyside malt whisky country.

"It's a good, traditional, family-owned distillery, with very loyal staff," Yap adds approvingly. "It is a small producer, which means those who work there are well-versed with the entire operation, from distillation right up to the bottling, which allows them to better control the quality of the whisky."

The promotion is a real treat especially for single malt lovers who enjoy discerning the finer nuances of vertical flights. All three vintages are complex and full-bodied, richly amber in hue with a long finish on the palate. "They are very subtle whiskies; very refined and rounded," Yap adds. "They are just the thing to sip and linger over." And linger you should – as all true gentlemen know, there's nothing like a soothing dram (or three) smooth chin, and, perhaps, even a cigar, to put the perfect gloss on your day. ☑

The Scotch and Shave promotion at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Smoke House is priced at RM165 nett per person. For details or to make a reservation, call 603-2785 8000 or e-mail tmkiresv@ytlhotels.com.my



"These are textbook Speyside single malts, aged in sherry oak."



The three Glenfarclas vintages on promotion are complex and full-bodied, with a long finish on the palate.



Above: Harvesting patchouli in Central Java; Left: Aromatic ylang-ylang thrives in Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's gardens.

Perfume Plantations

Explore the aromatic, healing world of Indonesian essential oils.

Text & Photography **Simon Pridmore**
Additional Photography **Edmund Lee**

Hundreds of years ago, the part of the world that we now know as the Indonesian archipelago was the focus of attention for spies, explorers and entrepreneurs from the west, who were desperate to find the source of the enormously valuable and rare spices that were believed to originate from these mysterious dots of land on the edge of the known world.

Christopher Columbus was one of these explorers and it was his quest to find a western route to the 'Spice Islands' that led to his discovery of the Americas. And the rest, as they say, is

history. But the same trees and plants that gave the region its fame remain much coveted today and the fertile volcanic soil of Indonesia, combined with the labour and skills of its people, still produce rare and valuable crops that delight the world. In remote villages in Bali, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Sumatra and elsewhere, farmers cultivate trees, bushes and grasses and distil fabulous oils that are the essences of our perfumes and aromatherapy potions.

Natural Benefits

Essential oils are liquids that are extracted from the leaves, stems, flowers, bark or roots of a plant, usually by steam distillation. They are so named because they contain the true essence of the plant they are derived from. They are highly concentrated and a little goes a long way. They are not the same as fragrance oils, known in Bahasa Indonesia as *minyak wangi*. Whereas essential oils are derived solely from naturally occurring organic material, fragrance oils are largely composed of alcohol and artificial substances and do not offer the same therapeutic benefits.

These bounties come from the chemical composition of the essential oil and can be both physical and psychological.

Changing Ways

Demand for essential oils is increasing as people look for natural rather than manufactured products. Tapping this trend, businessmen are encouraging farmers to grow specific crops for the purpose of creating essential oils and are paying them a fair price for the products. Rather than just growing the plants and selling the raw material, some enterprising villages have taken the next step and set up distilleries to process the essential oils locally. By doing this, they increase their direct income and provide employment, both skilled and unskilled, for local people, keeping the older generation occupied and giving the young the chance to live and work close to home, rather than join the exodus from the countryside to the cities.

However, it is not always easy to change rural ways. I recently visited a village in south-west Sumatra with one of the sons of the village chief, who told me that he had great difficulty persuading the local farmers to meet the needs of his friends who ran a small export business in Jakarta. The older folk remembered days gone by when experts and businessmen would arrive in their cars, ask them to plant specific crops and make exciting promises of riches to come. When the farmers complied and harvest time arrived, either the men failed to return or offered only token amounts for the crops. Many had burned the crops in anger and the experience has since been seared in their memories.

The young man and his friends convinced the farmers of their sincerity this time by paying an advance and won them around completely when they paid the balance promptly at harvest. They also helped the farmers set up a small distillery and taught them how to process the essential oils themselves.

Fabulous Fragrances

I first visited one of these distilleries just as the patchouli (*nilam* in Bahasa Indonesia) crop was being harvested. Patchouli is a small bushy herb of the mint family and its essential oil is in huge demand worldwide – in cosmetics, where it is used as a fixative, slowing down the evaporation of the more volatile elements of a perfume; the food industry, where it acts

They are usually achieved either through inhalation, whereby the oil molecules enter the lungs and are absorbed into the bloodstream, or by application to the skin, which absorbs the oil.

Normally, essential oils are not applied directly to the skin on their own as they are just too potent. Instead, small amounts are mixed with a carrier, such as sweet almond oil, apricot kernel oil or grape seed oil, to create an all-natural massage oil that can be safely and effectively applied. The ideal ratio is 1ml of essential oil to 50ml of carrier oil.

Aromatherapists will create custom blends of several essential oils, which combine to have a more beneficial effect than any single oil on its own.

as a good masking agent for unpleasant tastes and smells; Chinese medicine, which uses the herb to treat headaches, colds, nausea and abdominal pain; and aromatherapy, which uses it to combat stress and a wide variety of skin complaints.

I was shown around the operation. Outside, newly harvested leaves were arriving, piled high on the back of pick-up trucks as workers were spreading them out in the sun to dry. Others were tending a nursery containing hundreds of small patchouli plants under plastic covers, while the mountain stream providing the distillery's water supply gurgled past them.

Inside a shaded area, I found a large vat of boiling water suspended above a log fire. On top was another vat into which a consignment of dried patchouli leaves was tipped before being tightly sealed. The steam from the first vat rose through the second where it became saturated with the vaporised oil from the leaves. It continued to rise and passed into a long coiled pipe fitted into the lid where it cooled, condensing into a mixture of essential oil and patchouli flavoured water (the hydrolate) that dripped into a metal bowl waiting at the mouth of the pipe. Being lighter than water, the oil floated on top. A sweet, rich, herbaceous and earthy scent hung heavy in the air as a technician used a ladle to scoop the precious, viscous, amber oil from the surface.

For the farmers, patchouli is an excellent choice as it does not need to be replanted each year and the leaves can be harvested every four to six months. Another huge advantage is that it is shade-tolerant so it can be grown under the forest canopy or in the shadow of coconut trees or fruit orchards without the need for destructive land clearance.

When I visited again towards the end of the year, the ylang ylang harvest was in full swing. It had been delayed by the extended rainy season but we watched as the flowers were picked, loaded into vehicles and bags, and delivered to the distillery where the fire had been lit and the water was bubbling away. This time, I photographed the process and marvelled at the teamwork on display and the large number of villagers, both men and women, who were involved in the work and diligently and expertly went about their business as I clicked away.



Clockwise from left: Patchouli being processed in Indonesia; the patchouli plant; Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is an enthusiastic advocate of local essential oils.



How to Buy Essential Oils

How do you make sure that the essential oil you are buying is genuine? The first indicator is the price. This is not to say that, if a bottle of beautifully scented oil is expensive, it must therefore be pure. Especially in Indonesia, some essential oils are surprisingly cheap in comparison with similar oils in Europe or the United States, primarily because the plants are grown there.

The cost of producing different essential oils, however, can vary greatly. Take into account the rarity of the plant, the conditions in which it is grown, the quality of the distillation and how much oil can be extracted from the plant material by weight. For example, it takes about 1,000kg of jasmine petals to create just one litre of jasmine essential oil, whereas it takes only 30kg of lemongrass to produce a litre of lemongrass essential oil. Jasmine is thus a very expensive oil, while lemongrass is not. Therefore, if you are looking at a range of essential oils and they all carry the same price, they are highly unlikely to be the real thing.

If the oils are brightly coloured in attractive pastel shades of pink, blue and green, they will not be pure essential oils from the



plant. Essential oils tend to be clear or possess natural plant-like colours; various shades of yellow, amber or brown are common, while black pepper essential oil is dark green bordering on black.

Another clue that you are buying the genuine article is that essential oils are packaged in dark brown or dark blue glass bottles. This is because sunlight has a detrimental effect on the oils and plastic is not substantial enough to resist their power. The bottles will also have orifice reducers fitted to allow the oil to be dispensed one drop at a time. Remember, they are very powerful. Four or five drops in an aroma diffuser lamp or candle burner will keep a room smelling wonderful all evening!

The Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is an enthusiastic advocate of local essential oils and you will find their fragrances and therapeutic effects everywhere you go. From the small flower soaps in your room to the massage oils in the spa and even in some of the wonderful concoctions produced in the kitchens, the product of Indonesia's perfume plantations infuses every aspect of life here. ■

Soaking Up Bath

The Thermae Bath Spa in historical Bath, England, is the country's original natural thermal spa and the latest feather in YTL Hotels' well-decorated wellness cap.

Photography **Matt Cardy, Rob Slade & Andy Short**

One of the greatest and simplest pleasures in life would be to soak in a hot bath. From the Japanese obsession with *onsen* (natural hot springs) to the ancient admonishments by Hippocrates, the great physician, that bathing comes with a host of health benefits, there's much to be said for the sybaritic ritual of soaking in hot water.

Naturally, one of the best spots for any aquatic wellness seeker would be the ancient Roman spa town of Bath. After all, the word 'bath' stems from the Old English term for 'to immerse oneself in water', and the city's natural thermal springs have long proven irresistible: attracting, first, Bladud, the legendary king of Britons, and then the Celts, Romans, Saxons and Georgians.

Modern-day Bath is an elegant and lively destination, being recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Located on the banks of River Avon and just 144km west of London, it is peppered with striking examples of architecture as well as a majestic abbey. However, its ancient Roman baths remain one of its main draws. Bath's association with water-wellness is legendary and the word 'spa' draws from the Latin phrase of *salus per aquam* or 'wellness through water'.

Today, three springs in the centre of the city feed, not only the Roman baths, but also The Gainsborough Bath Spa and Thermae Bath Spa. It is said that over a million litres of mineral-rich water bubble up from the springs each day. Opened to the public in 2006, Thermae Bath Spa is set in the heart of the city and remains the UK's only natural thermal day spa. Here, visitors can soak away the stress of modern-day living simply by immersing



themselves in the soothing, warm waters. It's no different from what the ancient Celts and Romans used to do.

The spa, opened day and night, is divided into several sections to cater to different customer needs. Embracing both the ancient and modern, The New Royal Bath offers a spectacular open-air rooftop pool that overlooks Bath's seven surrounding hills, while the more bashful may opt for the indoor Minerva Bath. For smaller groups, the intimate 18th-century Cross Bath, housed in a separate building, is another delightful option, standing on an original Celtic sacred site dedicated to the goddess, Sul.

To enhance the Thermae experience, a spa therapy is highly recommended. Massages and facials are popular but Thermae Bath Spa's signature treatment is *watsu*, an aquatic body therapy that incorporates elements of massage, stretching and *shiatsu*. Twelve qualified therapists are available to take you through this gently restorative treatment. With all these and more to discover, there's no better time than now to start planning your trip to discover true Bath culture in this beautiful city set on the banks of the Avon. ■

Thermae Bath Spa is open all-year round, except for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Something To Celebrate

When it comes to celebrating special occasions, few gifts keep on giving as much as Spa Village Kuala Lumpur's generous birthday and anniversary packages do.

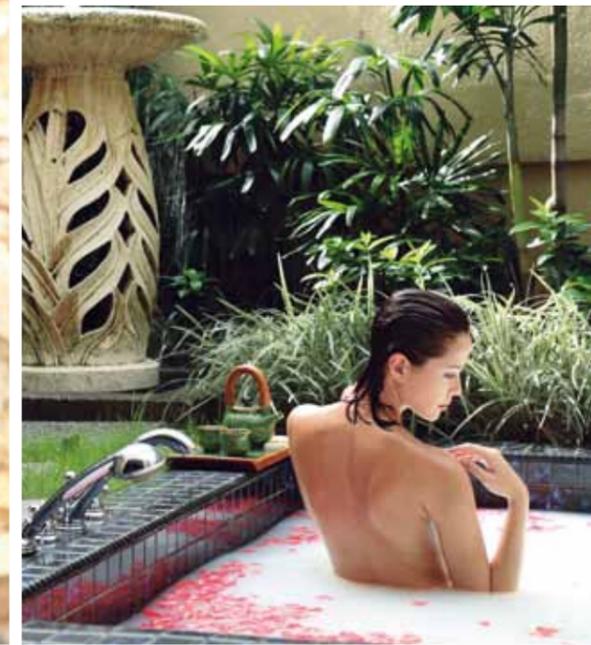
Photography **Edmund Lee** Art Direction **Yvonne Low**

There's much to be said for the gift that keeps on giving. And few live up to this catchphrase as much as Spa Village Kuala Lumpur's birthday and anniversary packages do. For just RM3,000 per package, expose that someone special in your life (or, heck, even yourself) to a slew of services that include 10 complimentary treatments at the award-winning Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, a night's stay in a deluxe room of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur with breakfast for two, a candlelight dinner for two at the renowned Shook! Restaurant at Starhill Gallery and a complimentary cake with which to celebrate the occasion.

For those among you who need convincing, do know that Spa Village Kuala Lumpur is a veritable oasis in the heart of the city's famed Golden Triangle shopping and leisure district. Located



Spa Village Kuala Lumpur is a haven of bliss set in the heart of the city's bustling Golden Triangle.



within the classic elegance of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, the spa is a perfectly-formed urban retreat surrounded by breezy *balés*, water features and aquamarine-hued pools. Offering a broad spectrum of sybaritic therapies, the package allows you to take your pick of a variety of 90-minute treatments, including scrubs and the spa's celebrated massages.

There's the Terra Timur as well as a gentle papaya (the tropical fruit has long been known for its skin-softening enzymes and its qualities have featured in Asian treatments for at least two centuries

already) body scrubs, but it is really in its massages that Spa Village Kuala Lumpur shines. Spa Villages around the region are famous for their highly trained and sensitive therapists, all of whom know exactly how to treat and soothe away any niggles your body might have with their instinctive finger and bodywork.

Choose from eight different massage options, depending on what you like or what you feel your body needs that day. Those who enjoy soothing pressure-based massage deployed with oil and using strong, long, rhythmic strokes would enjoy the classic Swedish

massage, while those who need to be blissfully transported away for that hour and a half would do well to select the aroma massage, which is designed to elicit a feeling of profound relaxation.

One of the more unusual treatments to try, however, would be the Lomi-Lomi massage. An ancient, Hawaiian massage, it takes its name from the Hawaiian word for "rub", "knead", "press" or "massage". Lomi-Lomi was traditionally used for general healing as well as a restorative and digestive therapy. This form of massage is unique in the sense that the therapist focuses on using her elbows



and forearms in long, strong strokes to administer the treatment. Guests who have experienced it described Lomi-Lomi to a *hula* dance performed on the body!

Each treatment ends with a Spa Village Kuala Lumpur signature ritual of *tiao da fa*. Inspired by the ancient Chinese method of boosting blood circulation by lightly and rhythmically beating the body along the meridian lines with rattan bundles, it is said to be extremely efficacious in unblocking energy channels and allowing *chi* (life force) to travel freely through the body. Whichever treatment you choose, do know that the tempting pools of Spa



PERFECT 10

Take your pick from these choice treatments.

MASSAGE THERAPIES

Swedish Massage – A classic Western oil massage that works on muscles using long, rhythmic strokes.

Aroma – Deeply relaxing and incorporating the use of aromatherapy oils to soothe mind and body, this massage is ideal for the highly-stressed and those who wish to seek respite from the rigours of modern-day life.

Hot Stone – Heated river rocks meet Swedish massage's long rhythmic strokes in this deeply-relaxing and stress-relieving treatment.

Lomi-Lomi – An ancient Hawaiian therapeutic massage, it is recognisable by its long, strong, sweeping strokes which people have likened to *hula*-like movements.

Malay – The ancient art of Malay healing massage is second to none and few places do it better than Spa Village. The technique consists of long, kneading strokes that focus on muscles and pressure points.

Tui-Na An-Mo – Chinese Tui-Na massage places emphasis on accu-points and the directional flow of the subtle channels in the body, mirroring the all-important Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) principle of maintaining good *chi* ("life force" or "inner energy").

Thai – Often likened to the practice of yoga, primarily due to its stretches and bends, Thai massage is ideal for those who wish to increase energy flow, while improving flexibility and suppleness. Guests are required to don loose cotton pants and a top for this treatment, both of which will be supplied by Spa Village.

Balinese – Therapeutic in nature, Balinese massages are vigorous in nature and designed to uplift and energise, rather than relax. This massage ritual uses techniques that vary in tempo comprising acupressure, rolling motions, long strokes and percussion.

BODY SCRUBS

Terra Timur Body Scrub – This Eastern body scrub, customised for men, features a mixture of red clay, ground soy, rice and papaya. It will exfoliate, smooth and refine skin texture.

Papaya Gentle Body Scrub – This natural scrub has long been the preferred treatment of Asian women seeking soft, supple skin. It combines the skin softening properties of papaya enzymes together with calamansi, which works to gently smooth and lighten skin tone.

Spa Village Kuala Lumpur is located on the fourth floor of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur at 168 Jalan Imbi, 55100 Kuala Lumpur. Opening hours are from 10am-10pm. The last treatment of the day must start at 9pm. For reservations, tel: +603 2782 9090.

“Spa Villages are famous for their highly-trained and sensitive therapists, all of whom know exactly how to treat and soothe away any niggles your body might have with their instinctive finger and bodywork.”



Village Kuala Lumpur are also at your disposal, pre- or post-treatment, where you may relax in style, accompanied by a pot of the spa's delicious lemongrass, ginger and honey tea.

You may also choose to use your 10 treatments together with friends or a loved one or even enjoy them in sets, like a 90-minute scrub, followed by a 90-minute supreme massage of your choice. If the

treatments relax you to the point of utter bliss, the good news is that you also have the choice of simply sauntering right back into the comfort of your room at The Ritz-Carlton. Not a bad offer at all for just RM3,000, isn't it? The only question that remains to be answered is: would just one package suffice? ■

Spa Village Kuala Lumpur's Birthday/ Anniversary package is priced at

RM3,000 nett and includes 10 90-minutes spa treatments of your choice (see facing page), a complimentary night's stay in a deluxe room at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, including breakfast for two at Cesar's and a candlelight dinner for two at Shook! as well as a complimentary half-kilogram cheese or chocolate cake. The package is valid for one year from the date of purchase and is available until further notice.



Left: Dinner began with the Robert Mondavi Fumé Blanc, a crisp drink that left the tongue buzzing with anticipation. Right: At the capacious cellar of Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, the evening was set for something extraordinary.



Den of Delights

The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur transforms into an oenophile's paradise through its highly rated Wine Cellar Dinner Series and cameos from blockbuster labels (and a wine expert).

Text Kenneth Tan Photography Marcus Wong

Those familiar with the wine cellar at the celebrated Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur would be surprised at what transformation has taken place at its inaugural Wine Cellar Dinner Series. A square wooden table with seating for eight becomes the centrepiece, with floral arrangements glowing in candlelight. Soft, smoky strains of big band jazz and nostalgic barbershop quartets are piped in, creating an altogether pleasant escape from the harsh world beyond.

In this enchanting space, one can quite easily drift upon a cloud of relaxation and anticipation. If you were to peruse the menu, it would appear that the hotel's Executive Chef Mohd Zaidi's mission is to sweep diners away, such is the overflowing cornucopia of delights. What's even better is that this gastronomic quintet is allied to a trio of stellar wine labels. Among the labels is the inimitable Opus One, long a reference point for California's signature reds.

Joining this dinner and lending his learned palate is Roderick Wong, president of the Sommelier Association of Malaysia (Somlay) who also wears the hat of the founder of The Wine Academy, which provides both oenophile-related consultative and educational services. Wong made his mark two decades ago, with qualifications that include the Courts of Master Sommeliers in the United Kingdom and actively working with Michelin-starred chefs on wine dinners throughout the course of his storied career. Also seated at the table was Peter Chen, General Manager of Caldbeck Macgregor, the distributor of the labels that I was about to savour.

Dinner begins with a presentation of *nigiri sushi*, roasted crispy duck, breaded chicken and a crystal dumpling with *wasabi* mayonnaise and a mild chilli sauce. This quartet of savoury bites is paired with an elegant Robert Mondavi Fumé Blanc, a 2010 Napa Valley Vintage. The crisp drink seems to elevate the freshness of the ingredients, particularly the prawn-stuffed dumpling, which suffuses the tongue with a light echo of fresh seafood and citrus.

Wong begins the night's discourse by explaining the winemaking principles behind this cool white – a method not dissimilar to the France's Loire Valley where the Sauvignon Blanc is aged in barrels to give it that toasty, smoky note (hence *fumé*). "Mondavi, despite being quite old, ingeniously predicted that a tinge of barrel fermentation on the Sauvignon Blanc would be the way to go," Wong recounts. "This twist on a conventional Sauvignon Blanc made it a European-styled white wine, slightly softer with a nice acidity to it. People went crazy for it and *fumé* became more popular."

With Wong holding court, conversation vacillated between points of interest, from the long citrus finish of the Mondavi vintage in the room, to New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, which Wong says is undergoing a phase in which it is prone to being "overly herbaceous". "New Zealand really raised Sauvignon Blanc in the world's estimate, but they now risk being too stereotypical, like how Australian Shiraz was, at one point, when they went all out for the fruit-driven flavour."

Predictability, for Wong, is his bane. He lets on that the crafty ones would be stocking up on New Zealand Pinot Gris, an underrated segment that seems poised for an upswing in popularity. With chilled glass in hand, Wong then asks fellow diners to wrap their palms around it to raise its temperature, in order to release the wine's complex, elegant aromas.

The next to grace the table was the sampler of beef carpaccio with herbed goat cheese *mousseline*. This lightly fragrant presentation is blessed with the slight chewiness of the beef slices, dovetailing perfectly with the deep red Robert Mondavi Pinot Noir Reserve, also a Napa Valley Vintage 2010. The secret, according to Wong, is to also chew your mouthful of Pinot Noir, to access the rich red fruit within: the raspberries, strawberries and a bit of cherry enhance the subtle flavours of the delicate carpaccio. Wong observed that Pinot Noir has an easy style, possessing



Clockwise from top left: The char-grilled lamb loin and lobster provided the perfect foil for the Opus One's expansive taste; The case of the Opus One bears the signatures of two wine greats, one from the New World and the other from the Old; A smoky lime sorbet to add dramatic tension to the dinner; A Hotel Chef concentrating on the next course.



“Taste the wine, taste the dish and then taste the wine again.”



a subtle astringency of tannins that enable pairing with white meat and even some forms of red. “My favourite pairing of Pinot Noir is with Peking duck, minus the plum sauce,” he claims.

For Wong, Pinot Noir is both a winemaker's dream and nightmare. “It's so hard to cultivate and doesn't travel well,” he says. Wong then proceeds to paint a picture of the persnickety Pinot Noir's habitat preferences — unfriendly to warm weather and fussy with soil types. (Warm areas will burst the grapes.) This is why the best *terroir* for Pinot Noir in the United States remain the northerly west coast states of Oregon and Washington, where cool ocean breezes meet grapes growing at an elevation for the ideal low average temperatures.

The 2010 vintage in our hands was perfectly chilled for optimal delivery of aromas. “A first nose that is pungent means the Pinot Noir has been stored in a warm place,” Wong cautions. He recalls an invitation to Switzerland to judge in the 2010 international competition of Pinot Noir. What surprised him most were the varietals representing the host country. “Swiss Pinot Noir is one of the most interesting but, unfortunately, it is not friendly to travel, being delicate, cool climate wines. The wines are unable to absorb the variation of temperatures.”

On that melancholic note, a bisque cappuccino with crab custard and black olive bruschetta was served. This foam-topped meal was

a liquid *umami* hit that segued into a hearty finish. The slightly tart olive layer on the bread added a groovy twist to the combination, sending the taste buds racing in several directions at once. To sort this out, an interlude of smoky lime sorbet efficiently refreshed the palate, teeing it up for the star of the show.

Finally, the 2008 Vintage of the Opus One Mondavi-Rothschild Oakville Napa Valley arrives, accompanied by its gastronomic pairing, a char-grilled lamb loin *noisette*, lobster *au neutral* with barbecued red peppers, braised red cabbage, sage butter and tamarind glaze. On the smoky, juicy lamb and a lobster redolent with shell and butter, the Opus One elevates the experience, conferring its earthy notes of black cherry, cassis and a hint of chocolate, serving to set receptors alight with pleasure.

“The main thing about pairing wine with food is balance,” Wong observes. “These days, chefs have become more creative than artists and food has gone from fusion to confusion,” he jokes, adding, “and because of this, the old rules of pairing wine (such as white wines to white meat) no longer apply.” What is more important, Wong emphasises, is knowing your ingredients and method of preparation. He offers the example of salmon served as *sashimi* versus a grilled version. The latter style of cooking makes the fish heavier and more pungent in taste and scent, requiring a more powerful wine to balance it out. Wong's tip on getting the best match? “Taste the wine, taste the dish and then taste the wine again. What you're looking for is a change in the structure

of the wine, a rounding of the drink's notes that hints at the food's advantageous influence on the wine, and vice versa.”

Naturally, an important wine such as the Opus One requires a cosmic intervention of sorts. History points to Hawaii's Mauna Kea Beach Hotel, circa 1970, where Robert Mondavi and Baron Philippe de Rothschild met for the first time. This led to a masterpiece collaboration between celebrated winemakers from New and Old Worlds, or, as they later decided, an opus.

In the present day, the label on the Opus One actually reflects the side profile of both its makers, a reminder of this fortuitous union of geniuses. This blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, Merlot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc was a cult wine of the 1990s that has since become the coveted star of Californian reds. Its secret lies simply in a complexity of aromas and elegance — much like how William Shakespeare's words have meant so much to so many in the literary world. “It's a very Bordeaux-style blend,” Wong notes, “with great potential for aging, even for 30 to 40 years.” At The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, guests will be pleased to discover that they need not wait that long to taste an aged Opus One, as its wine cellar boasts a collection dating back to 1980, when the second vintage was released.

For Wong, the Rothschild influence goes further back to a 1955 Château Mouton Rothschild which he describes as a “mind-blowing experience.” He remembers that it was the first wine that really impressed him to an extraordinary degree, with a softness and elegance matched by super smooth tannins. “I had it at a company dinner,” he says, adding that, “although it was only five of us.” Tasting it helped Wong appreciate how well a wine could hold itself, retaining a structure and fruit profile even after three to four decades.

Conversation then swung onto the inescapable topic of Asian food, a cuisine that Wong mentions actually goes very well with wine. His recommendation? “A rosé from Provence with chicken rice is heaven.” What actually complicates the pairing is the presence of chilli, which Wong says overpowers the subtleties of wine. Other ingredients and condiments to avoid with wine are asparagus (which emits a strong acidity), garlic, egg and vinegar.

Over a frangipane tart with vanilla *anglaise* and honey-scented mascarpone, the evening wraps up with wine stories, of Spain and its cornucopia of undiscovered and yet delicious varietals. Wong recommends Mencia and Albariño.

Chen of Caldbeck Macgregor interjects to say that the wines are great for personal consumption but have yet to attain the respectability for them to be brought to parties. The enigmatic solution, according to Wong, is to wrap each bottle so only its contents are appreciated. And, just like that, with the glorious taste of the evening on palate and lips, the convivial session draws to a close — a gastronomic and wine escape that refreshed the senses, leaving one a bit misty-eyed and longing for more. ■

Food For Life

Chef Martin Büchele of Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali serves up healthy cuisine with heart.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Leon Bin Yee**



The black volcanic sand beaches of Bali might seem a world away from Austria's pristine alpine valleys but, for Chef Martin Büchele, it would seem he has found his oasis of life at last. "My parents owned a restaurant in the mountains, in Kleinwalsertal, and I remember having to stand on a crate to be able to reach up and work the beer tap to earn pocket money," he laughs. "Ever since I could remember, I've always wanted to be a chef like my father." Naturally, it didn't surprise his parents that the young Büchele sought to sign up for hotel school once he was old enough. "From Bludenz, I went on to apprentice in Lech, a famous Tyrolean ski resort," he says. "Since then, I've always been fortunate to have worked in many five-star properties."

Slowly but surely, Büchele climbed up the corporate ladder. He has worked his way around the world – from Ireland to Dubai to Malaysia and now Indonesia, where he is the Executive Chef of the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali. "I had a most interesting 10 years or so being based in various locations all over the globe, particularly in Dubai, where I had to look after a restaurant that offered eight different cuisines. But I soon realised I was consumed by my career. I wasn't happy and felt frustrated and generally stressed out all the time. I knew then that I was living my life in the wrong direction."

Austrian-born chef Martin Büchele has found his balance in Bali.

Things came to a head not long after, with Büchele handing in his resignation papers.





"Just like that, without any options," he says emphatically. "I just wanted to get away." Büchele decided to go on a long trek through Asia, with Nepal as a required stop. "I'd always had Nepal in my mind. Some of my best memories were on a visit to the Rainbow Children's Centre in Pokhara, where the children there really opened up my heart," he says with a smile. "I actually spent quite a lot of time there, living in a monastery and studying Bon Buddhism."

It was while he was travelling through Cambodia that the call from Sharron Hopley, the Resident Manager at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, came through. "We'd met each other in Kuala Lumpur before and she asked if I could come and help out for a short spell. So, we met up and talked, and she also put me in touch with (the renowned clairvoyant and healer) Diana Manilova."

It was then that Büchele said he discovered he was a monk in a past life. He was led to believe that the path for him in his current existence was to be either a chef or a doctor. "It was a bit late for the latter, so I chose to stick with cooking – but, now, focused on health," he grins at this revelation. His new focus on creating dishes that heal and nourish has also helped Büchele enrich and hone his menus that are flavourful and bursting with goodness. "Aside from Diana (the healer), I also work with Samuel Rogalasky, an amazing nutritionist who's based in Perth and who created our juice menu. He's a veritable encyclopaedia and, together, we work on menus and recipes to ensure our guests eat well and work their way towards rejuvenation through their daily meals," he points out.

"Working with the Balinese is an amazing experience as they are like a mirror, reacting to your actions or emotions so quickly. They pick up on energies instantly!"



Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's Wantilan Restaurant offers the perfect setting for Chef Büchele's healthy, flavourful cuisine.



"Working with the Balinese is an amazing experience as they are like a mirror, reacting to your actions or emotions so quickly. They pick up on energies instantly!"

Here, I do my job but am also always aware about (the need to) work on my inner peace and compassion. Only then, I believe, can I make loving food – food with good energy."

Energy or *prana* is an element Büchele considers to be of utmost importance. "Diana has told me that my kitchen is my temple and I work hard to keep it pure. You won't hear raised voices in my kitchen and I even chant *mantras* as I cook. The staff enjoy the atmosphere and I also believe that when you cook with your heart, success will come. There's no need to push. Make space and the universe will provide."

Certainly, life as a health-minded chef seems positively idyllic at Tembok. "I am happy here as I have time for work as well

as spiritual practice," he says, smiling. "With the sea right on my doorstep, there's also the chance to dive and snorkel when I'm not working, and I do so enjoy meeting the locals and sourcing produce from them. Who knows what the fisherman might bring you in the morning? It's usually *mahi-mahi*, barracuda or Chinese mackerel but, sometimes, a swordfish or tuna turns up as well."

Büchele also finds time to work the earth, tending to his organic herb garden, which is replete with basil, lemongrass, kaffir limes, aloe vera and cacao. "I even grow *daun piduh*, which is great for juices, and *dalumen* for jelly. It really is perfect here. I see how my life is changing daily, becoming more balanced and happier along the way. Now, all I want is for our guests to experience it as well."



Raw Vegetable Urab

Ingredients A: Salad

220g shredded coconut meat
150g long beans, cleaned, julienned
150g mung bean sprouts
150g yellow or red pepper, julienned
150g white cabbage, julienned
100g carrot, peeled, julienned

Ingredients B: Sauce

150ml coconut water
1tbsp *tamari* (or any healthy sauce)
2tbsp honey
1tbsp lemon juice
1tbsp kaffir lime leaves
1 clove garlic
½ tsp fresh galangal / blue ginger, peeled, chopped
½ tsp fresh turmeric, peeled, chopped
½ tsp ginger, peeled, chopped
Sea salt and black pepper to taste

Ingredients C: Fish

200g red snapper or *tenggiri filet*
20g butter
5pc kaffir lime leaves

Method

1. Mix all vegetables in a bowl and keep covered in the fridge until used.
2. Grind all ingredients for the sauce in a mortar or spice grinder and marinate the vegetables 5 minutes before serving.
3. Clean the red snapper filet, debone and score the skin with two lengthwise cuts to keep it from curling in the pan. Season with salt, pepper and lime juice.
4. In a hot non-stick pan, add a little extra virgin coconut oil. Fry the fish on the skin side until golden brown and crispy.
5. Flip the fish, take off the head, and add the chopped kaffir lime leaves and a piece of butter. Let it rest until served.
6. Arrange the salad in a bowl or plate, with the fish on top and finish with grated coconut and coriander leaves for garnish.

Spiced Avocado

Ingredients A: Spice Mix

10g cumin seeds
50g black peppercorns whole
100g coriander seeds whole
175g sesame seeds white
50g sesame seeds black
100g corn flakes (optional)
75g organic sea salt (fleur de sel)
5g chilli flakes

Ingredients B: Sambal Mantah

4pc shallots, peeled, julienned
3pc long chilli, seeds cleaned, julienned
1pc lemongrass, washed, chopped finely
2pc lime for juice
30ml extra virgin coconut oil
Sea salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. In a dry, hot pan, individually toast ingredients A and set aside for cooling.
2. Using the spice grinder attachment of your blender or an electric coffee mill, coarsely blend the spices individually.
3. Roughly chop or pulse blend the cornflakes for extra crunch and texture on the avocado.
4. Fold in the sea salt and chilli flakes. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 months.
5. In a bowl, mix ingredients B together and finish with salt, pepper and lime juice.
6. For serving, cut wedges from avocado, peel and roll generously in the spice mixture.
7. Serve with crunchy green salad, fried chicken or pan-seared scallops.



Mango-Strawberry Salad

Ingredients A: Salad

2pc ripe mango, peeled, diced 1cm
500g strawberry, washed, cleaned, cut into half
1 bunch mint leaves, washed, plucked
2pc limes for juice
1pc limes for zest

Ingredients B: Basil and Lime Sorbet

220ml fresh lime juice
250g honey
800ml water
1 bunch fresh basil, washed, plucked, cut, julienned

Method

1. In a bowl, carefully combine ingredients A and sprinkle some finely sliced mint and lime zest into the mixture. Fill the mix in bowls or rock glass and refrigerate until used.
2. Boil the lime juice with water and add some honey. Stir and cool to room temperature.
3. Add the sliced basil and make sorbet in a household ice cream maker or in a bowl in the freezer. Stir every one hour.
4. Form round shapes with an ice cream scoop or scrape from the bowl and arrange them on top of the salad.
5. Garnish with fresh basil leaves.

Seaweed and Crispy Tofu Salad

Ingredients A: Salad

5g *wakame* seaweed, dried
150g carrots, peeled, grated roughly
2pc spring onion, washed, cut, julienned
100g bean sprouts, washed, dried on paper towel
1 bunch green coriander, washed, plucked
Sea salt, black pepper and sesame seeds to taste

Ingredients B: Sesame Dressing

10g sesame seeds, roasted
50ml rice vinegar
2pc limes for juice
50ml ice water or 3 ice cubes
80ml extra virgin coconut oil
20ml dark sesame oil
Sea salt and black pepper to taste

Ingredients C: Tofu

500ml vegetable oil for frying
300g silky tofu
50ml *tamari* or soy sauce
20ml sesame oil
100g rice flour

Method

1. Soak the seaweed in cold water for 30 minutes and mix all the other vegetables. Season with salt and pepper, marinate with the dressing before serving and finish with coriander leaves and roasted sesame for garnish.
2. Combine ingredients B in a household blender cup and blend until smooth. Keep in fridge until used.
3. Cut the tofu into bite-sized squares and marinate with *tamari* and sesame oil for 30 minutes.
4. Heat the vegetable oil to 180°C.
5. Roll the tofu in rice flour and deep fry until golden brown. ❖



TRULY TERENGGANU

Blessed with a long sandy coastline and an abundance of green landscapes, Terengganu has so much more to offer than just its natural tropical beauty. Discover the state's hidden spots, mesmerising nature and cultural wealth as celebrated artist **Chang Fee Ming** shares his favourite sites in this coastal haven he calls home.

GREEN BLISS

Located in Dungun, there is no better place that captures the beauty of a shoreline of palm-fringed golden sands than **Tanjong Jara Resort**. The resort's architecture is inspired by 17th-century Malay palaces and blends elegantly with the natural surroundings of lush green landscapes and pristine beaches. The view from the rooms overlooking the South China Sea is really a sight to behold. Overall, a perfect place to retreat to, combining luxury, tranquility and cultural exploration through numerous activities available at the resort.



A DAY AT THE MARKET

If you're after a bit of culture and tradition to bring away with you, **Pasar Payang Kuala Terengganu** offers just that. Here, one can easily find a variety of stalls that offers local delights like *dodol*, *tapai* and *lekor* as well as traditional colourful hand-painted *batik*. This local market is a one-stop for all the bits and pieces of what Terengganu has to offer at an affordable price.



Shop for local delights and snacks at Pasar Payang Kuala Terengganu.



ALL-TIME FAVOURITE

Keropok lekor (local fish rolls or sausages) is the ultimate snack in Terengganu. Fried or boiled, it tastes scrumptious both ways. The coastal road to and from Dungun, where Tanjong Jara Resort is located, is lined with numerous *keropok lekor warungs* (stalls).



A PYRAMID OF FISHY GOODNESS

Pak Nor is a great stopover for *satar* and *otak otak*, which are Terengganu's specialties. *Satar* is sweet and succulent, made out of fresh fish and wrapped in banana leaves and grilled to perfection. *Otak otak*, on the other hand, contains chunks of fish and has a more smouldering flavour. Both capture the essence of Terengganu perfectly and are an ideal tea-time snack that is addictive but not too filling.



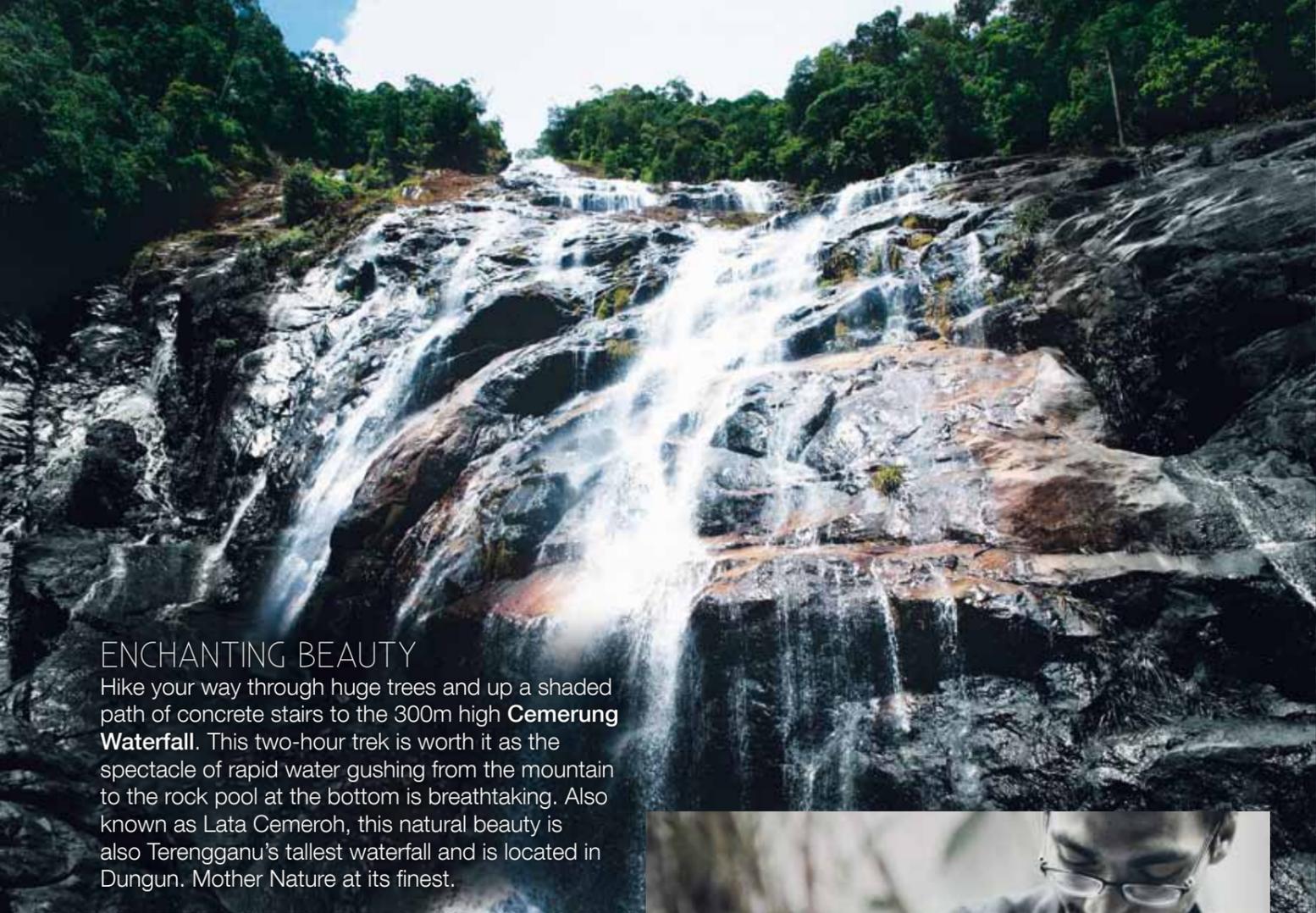
A TASTE OF TERENGGANU

Inject yourself with a dose of cultural vibrancy with authentic Terengganu delicacies and cuisine at its best in this *kampung* style restaurant, **Meka**. This humble store is one of my favourite places to dine in as it offers not only a wide range of dishes but also the freshest in terms of ingredients and cooked in the most authentic *kampung* style flavours. I particularly recommend the local fish soup, *kuah singang*, which combines a mixture of sweet, sour and spicy flavours that come together just right.



HISTORIC BEAUTY

The Terengganu State Museum is nestled amidst beautifully landscaped gardens and covers a total area of 27 hectares. The museum offers a glimpse into the rich history and cultural traditions of the state. It is touted as the largest museum complex in South-East Asia, housing four main blocks, an adjacent **Maritime Museum** and five traditional houses of architectural marvel.



ENCHANTING BEAUTY

Hike your way through huge trees and up a shaded path of concrete stairs to the 300m high **Cemerung Waterfall**. This two-hour trek is worth it as the spectacle of rapid water gushing from the mountain to the rock pool at the bottom is breathtaking. Also known as Lata Cemeroh, this natural beauty is also Terengganu's tallest waterfall and is located in Dungun. Mother Nature at its finest.



BATIK BEAUTY

Learn the art of **batik painting** offered exclusively for guests of Tanjong Jara Resort. A great way, indeed, to spend time in the beautiful surroundings of the resort while learning about the local culture.



BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

Nasi dagang is a traditional Terengganu breakfast food made out of rice cooked in coconut milk and drenched with fish curry. A must-have!



Born in Dungun, Kuala Terengganu, Chang Fee Ming is one of Malaysia's most celebrated names in art. He has also published a book with YTL Hotels, titled *Journey to Tembok* with Chang Fee Ming.



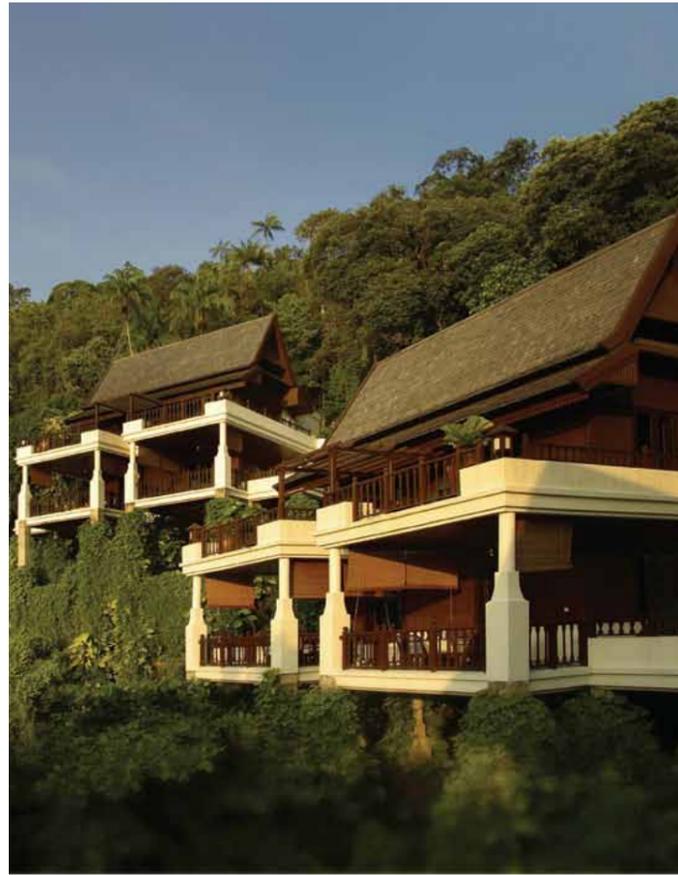
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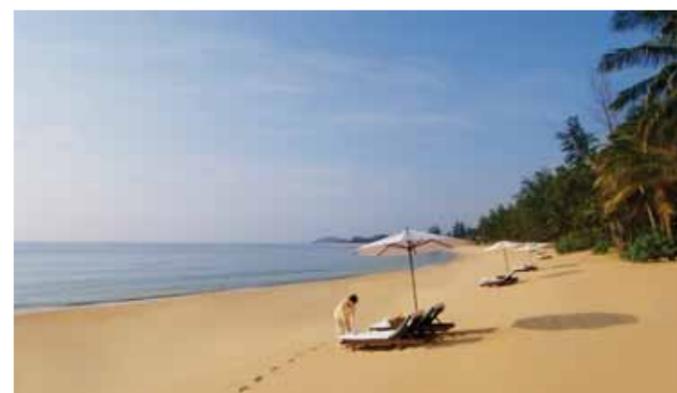
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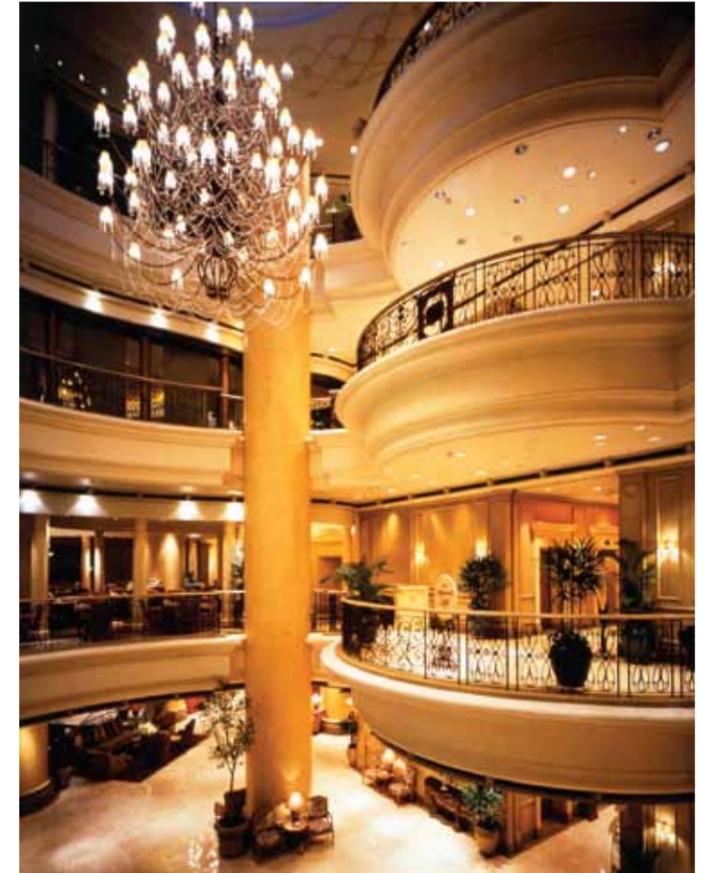
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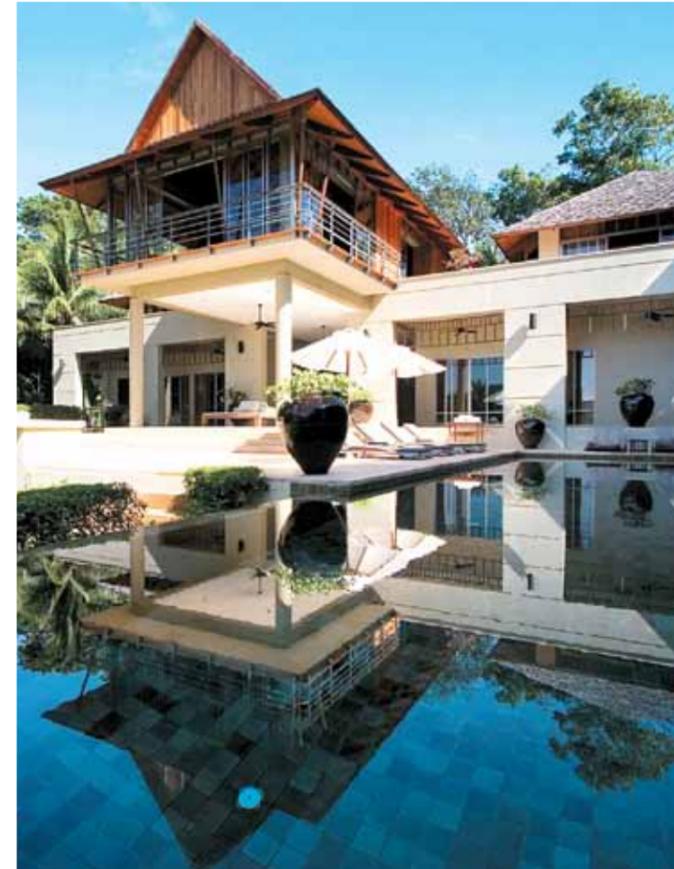
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SPA VILLAGE KUALA LUMPUR



SPA VILLAGE HANGZHOU

THE SPA VILLAGES HONOUR THE HEALING CULTURE OF THE REGION IN WHICH EACH IS BUILT. EACH SPA VILLAGE IS THUS UNIQUE TO ITS LOCALE: THE FLAGSHIP SPA VILLAGE PANGKOR LAUT IS INSPIRED BY THE VARIOUS HEALING TRADITIONS OF MALAYSIA'S DIVERSE CULTURES, SPA VILLAGE CAMERON HIGHLANDS' THERAPIES ARE BASED ON THE RESTORATIVE PROPERTIES OF TEA, SPA VILLAGE GAYA ISLAND REFLECTS THE HEALING PRACTICES OF SABAH'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WHILE SPA VILLAGE MALACCA IS UNIQUELY PERANAKAN IN ITS OFFERINGS.
WWW.SPAVILLAGE.COM

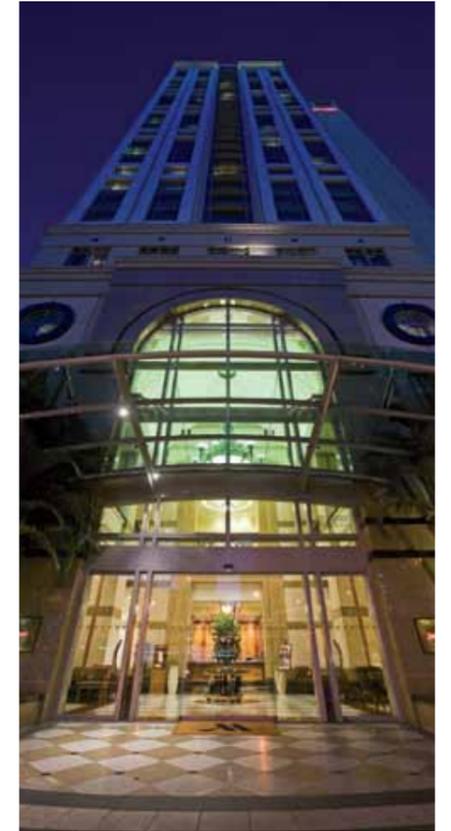
EACH SPA VILLAGE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTER AND AUTHENTICITY, WORKING WITH LOCAL HEALERS AND TRADITIONS. SPA VILLAGE TANJONG JARA FOCUSES ON MALAY THERAPIES HANDED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS, SPA VILLAGE KUALA LUMPUR SEAMLESSLY BLENDS ANCIENT AND MODERN PRACTICES WHILE SPA VILLAGE HANGZHOU FEATURES NEW TREATMENTS WITH EACH CHANGING SEASON.
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CHOICE IS THE KEY WORD WHEN IT COMES TO DINING AT SHOOK KL AND LOT IO HUTONG. THE FORMER OFFERS FOUR CUISINES FROM FOUR LIVE KITCHENS, INCLUDING ITALIAN, JAPANESE, CHINESE AND THE GRILL, WHILE THE LATTER IS THE DE FACTO DESTINATION WHEN IT COMES TO ENJOYING THE BEST OF MALAYSIAN STREET FOOD UNDER ONE WELL-FORMED ROOF. WWW.STARHILLGALLERY.COM WWW.LOTIOHUTONG.COM

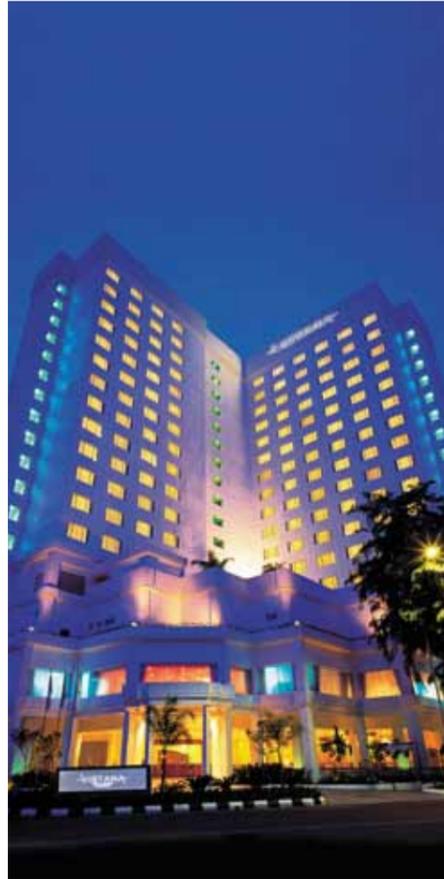
EACH AUSTRALIAN MARRIOTT HOTEL IS SITUATED WITHIN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT OF ITS CITY AND IDEALLY POSITIONED TO SERVE BOTH BUSINESS AND LEISURE TRAVELLERS ALIKE. THE 563-ROOM SYDNEY HARBOUR MARRIOTT IS SET IN THE HEART OF CIRCULAR QUAY, OVERLOOKING ICONIC LANDMARKS THE HARBOUR BRIDGE AND OPERA HOUSE. THE 186-ROOM MELBOURNE MARRIOTT IS CLOSE TO THE CITY'S THEATRE PRECINCT, THE SHOPPING DISTRICTS AND CHINATOWN. THE BRISBANE MARRIOTT, WITH 263 ROOMS AND 4 SUITES, IS SITUATED BETWEEN BRISBANE'S CBD AND THE FORTITUDE VALLEY HUB, CLOSE TO SHOPPING, RIVERSIDE DINING, AND THE CITY'S CORPORATE AND CULTURAL LOCALES.

WWW.MARRIOTT.COM

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