

# YTL *Life*

TREASURED PLACES, TREASURED MOMENTS



## 12 THINGS

Discover new adventures  
Down Under with Marriott

## SPRING INTO STYLE

Fashion meets paradise at  
Pangkor Laut Resort

## PRIMATE POSSIBILITIES

Inside Monkey Island Estate's  
eclectic Monkey Room



A photograph of a man in a blue suit standing in a grand, dimly lit room. The room features ornate wood paneling and a chandelier with four lit candles. The man is looking at a large, dark, textured object on the floor. The overall atmosphere is elegant and sophisticated.

# roberto cavalli

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62  
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EL/





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**CORPORATE CLUB**

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**The Leica Q2 Reporter**  
With special armoring

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**T**his issue of *YTL Life* is centred on spring, which brings to mind a quote by Irish poet and philosopher John O'Donohue: "When one flower blooms, spring awakens everywhere." Thus, our cover story is dedicated to one of the crown jewels in the YTL Hotels portfolio, Pangkor Laut Resort. Here on this private island retreat, spring blooms eternal in the two-million-year-old rainforests enveloping the resort, where guests have enjoyed many a treasured moment over the decades. On this slice of paradise that moved a dear friend to tears—the late and great tenor Luciano Pavarotti—guests reconnect with nature at their own pace, from the healing therapies at the opulent Spa Village to the exquisite luxury of feeling sand between their toes as they take in kaleidoscopic sunsets at Emerald Bay.

The island was also the recent stopover for the talented chef Luca Binaschi of Muse Saint-Tropez, who starred in a one-of-a-kind Treasured Places Dining Series at Pangkor Laut Resort's Fisherman's Cove restaurant.

While the northern hemisphere celebrates spring, the southern hemisphere sees the golden advent of autumn. The coming months Down Under offer plenty of outdoor pursuits across our three Marriott properties in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. Using these well-situated hotels as starting points, you can enjoy unique experiences such as the Vivid Sydney arts festival, shuck freshly picked oysters, sample curated flights of Australian whiskies and, for the adventure-inclined, go wreck-diving to marvel at the beauty of Moreton Island's coral ecosystem off the coast of Brisbane.

Over in the United Kingdom, YTL Hotels continues to charm guests with our diverse offerings of accommodations steeped in history. Monkey Island Estate, located on the Thames,

traces its millennia-old origins to an abbey for monks—hence monkey, a corruption of monk—which many believe gave it its present-day name. At The Gainsborough Bath Spa, the hotel's history stems from Roman Britannia where, in 43AD, the conquering Romans built a temple to Minerva, the goddess of arts and, latterly, war, on the site of its hot springs. And in London's The Academy, enjoy a guided walking tour of the rich neighbourhood to re-live 17th-century London, when the arrival of theatres in the Bow Street area ushered in all manner of undesirables, leading to London's first police force.

Meanwhile, in Niseko Village, the world-famous sakura season will doubtless provide many Instagram-perfect moments. As will, of course, the continuous flower calendar that brings forth tulips, narcissus, wisteria, roses, sunflowers and the iconic lavender fields. I'm sure you'll agree with me when I say that these flowers have a restorative power that embodies the magic of nature. As Hollywood legend Audrey Hepburn once described so elegantly: "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis", with a long horizontal line underneath it.

# SAVOURING SAINT-TROPEZ

GUEST CHEF LUCA BINASCHI BRINGS THE  
ENCHANTING FLAVOURS OF THE FRENCH RIVIERA  
TO PANGKOR LAUT RESORT.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN. Photography by LAW SOO PHYE

Celebrated chef  
Luca Binashi from  
Muse Saint-Tropez.



In January, YTL Hotels & Resorts launched its Treasured Places Dining Series to provide its guests with one-of-a-kind gourmet dining experiences. Diners at Fisherman's Cove in Pangkor Laut Resort were treated to a taste of Saint-Tropez by guest chef Luca Binashi from Muse Saint-Tropez. Italian chef Binashi, 27, is a man who extols the style, elegance and sophistication of French cuisine. Having built impeccable credentials working at the iconic Michelin-starred restaurants of eminent chefs such as Pietro Volontè, Eric Canino, Pierre Gagnaire and Arnaud Faye, Binashi's epicurean creations are defined by a creative multitude of flavours, textures and colours that are harmoniously balanced and elegantly presented.

For A Taste of Saint-Tropez, Binashi curated a four-course menu, starting with an *amuse-bouche* in the form of a simple and light leek terrine. It was a visually arresting work of art, evoking the patterns and colours of a seascape. The rectangular portion of well-cooked, neatly trimmed leeks from Cameron Highlands was set in the middle of the plate, surrounded by playful patterns of piquant horseradish vinaigrette.

The sabayon of the starter was incredibly rich, thick and creamy, and was tempered by zesty lemon drops and generous dashes of paprika. Lightly seasoned and fired, the pieces of rock lobster from Sabah were succulent and firm, complemented by strips of bok choy. The butternut veloute that followed was intensely flavourful, buttery and velvety smooth, with hints of hazelnut and celery cress, topped with sprinkles of Sungai Manik-harvested puffed rice.

With each course served, a sense of anticipation and high expectation was steadily built for the main course – and it did not disappoint. The red snapper served with bouillabaisse was utterly delectable. The fish, caught from the Straits of Melaka that surrounds Pangkor Island, was fantastically fresh. Lightly cooked, the tender flesh was firm and moist. The sweetness of the caramelised fish skin was balanced by refreshing lemon drops and the peppery flavour of rocket leaf, while the bed of finely diced courgettes on which the fish lay provided a lovely textural contrast. The *piece de resistance* was the bouillabaisse, which was poured

LIFE ON THE COVER

by Binaschi at the table. It was truly exceptional – a deeply flavourful and fragrant broth, built on layers of aromatics that included earthy, sweet floral saffron; liquorice-reminiscent fennel and subtle notes of zesty orange.

In a nod to his roots, Binaschi offered the traditional Italian dessert of panna cotta to round off the meal. The mango panna cotta that was presented in elegant concentric circles set on a base of white chocolate was tangy, creamy, silky smooth and delicately firm. Slender blades of tarragon on the mango cubes surrounding the panna cotta added a fresh spring taste that countered the sweetness of the fruit.

Binaschi's gastronomic offering was a winning combination of the finest and freshest local produce, transformed through French culinary techniques to evoke the tastes, textures and colours of the French Riviera. The Taste of Saint-Tropez at Fisherman's Cove was truly a complete feast for the senses.

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



Clockwise from above right: Fisherman's Cove at Pangkor Laut Resort; mango panna cotta; BBQ Sabah rock lobster sabayon; Straits of Melaka-caught red snapper on a bed of finely diced courgettes and served with a bouillabaisse.



# GETAWAY GLAMOUR

AT THE PRIVATE ISLAND RETREAT OF  
PANGKOR LAUT RESORT, THE TREASURED  
MOMENTS ARE EMBELLISHED WITH THIS  
SEASON'S COLOURFUL OFFERINGS  
FROM A HOST OF FASHION LABELS.

Location: PANGKOR LAUT RESORT  
Producer: EZRA T  
Photography: CHINTOO  
Styling: ETHAN CHU  
Hair: MEI CHOI  
Make-up: YUAN  
Models: JOAO FILIPE AND ERIKA BARLETA/  
ICON MODEL MANAGEMENT

MORNINGS AT PANGKOR LAUT RESORT OFFER ROSE-TINTED SCENIC VISTAS OF SKIES MIRRORED BY THE SEA, WITH CALMING SEA BREEZES FROM THE STRAITS OF MALACCA.

On her: PHILIPP PLEIN  
shoulder pad tank top Hawaii  
and crystal mini skirt Hawaii

AT PANGKOR LAUT RESORT'S HILL VILLAS, GUESTS ENJOY SWEEPING VIEWS OF THE TWO-MILLION-YEAR-OLD RAINFOREST CANOPY AND OBSERVE THE MAJESTIC FLIGHT OF HORNBILLS.



PHILIPP PLEIN shoulder pad shirt  
and Cady short trousers;  
BALMAIN B II rose gold sunglasses



On her: PHILIPP PLEIN T-shirt dress Hawaii;  
BALMAIN Mono folded shopping bag  
On him: PAUL&SHARK knitted T-shirt, trousers and slippers  
Left  
BALMAIN B II rose gold sunglasses  
PHILIPP PLEIN bikini stones skull with crystal swimsuit bra

AT SPA VILLAGE PANGKOR LAUT, IN-HOUSE EXPERTS ON AYURVEDIC, MALAY AND TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE OFFER CONSULTATIONS AND THERAPIES TO REJUVENATE AND REVITALISE. MEANWHILE, THE SIGNATURE BATH HOUSE EXPERIENCE INVITES GUESTS TO ENJOY A JAPANESE *ROTENBURU* POOL, MALAY CIRCULATING BATH AND SIGNATURE SHANGHAI SCRUB BEFORE TREATMENTS COMMENCE.

ON THE NORTH OF PANGKOR LAUT ISLAND, ONE FINDS EIGHT PRIVATE SANCTUARIES, EACH UNIQUE IN DESIGN AND OFFERING A COMBINATION OF THREE- AND FOUR-BEDROOM CONFIGURATIONS WITH ITS OWN POOL, DINING SPACE, IN-HOUSE CHEF AND PERSONAL BUTLER TO OFFER UNFORGETTABLE STAYS IN THE SECLUSION OF YOUR OWN ESTATE.



LIFE STYLE



On her: ROBERTO CAVALLI  
kaftan natural green  
On him: PAUL&SHARK  
swim shorts

THE YTL LUXURY MAGAZINE

On her: PHILIPP PLEIN shoulder pad tank top Hawaii and skinny denim trousers; BALMAIN Officier black/brown sunglasses and B-Army shopping bag  
On him: PAUL&SHARK vacation shirt and Bermuda shorts



DAY EXCURSIONS AT PANGKOR LAUT RESORT INCLUDE A PEEK INTO MALAYSIAN HISTORY, WHEN THE HISTORIC PANGKOR TREATY WAS SIGNED IN 1874 THAT SIGNALLED THE OFFICIAL BEGINNING OF BRITISH COLONIALISM IN WHAT WAS THEN MALAYA. ON THE ADJACENT PANGKOR ISLAND, COLOURFUL TOWNS, TRADITIONAL MALAY HOMES AND FISHING VILLAGES OFFER A GLIMPSE OF THE COMMUNITY AND THEIR DAILY LIVES.

OTHER ISLAND-HOPPING ADVENTURES TAKE YOU ON A DISCOVERY OF SECLUDED BAYS WITH PERSONALISED GOURMET PICNIC BASKETS.



On her: PHILIPP PLEIN silk short dress  
On him: PAUL&SHARK zipped sweatshirt  
and knitted jogging trousers



On her: PHILIPP PLEIN mini dress monogram  
On him: PAUL&SHARK cotton shirt and trousers

AS THE SUN SINKS INTO THE HORIZON, HEAD TO THE ISLAND'S STUNNING EMERALD BAY, WHERE YOU WILL BE WELCOMED BY A BRILLIANT SKY BATHED IN PINK AND GOLD AS WELL AS A PRIVATE CANDLELIT TABLE FOR THE MOST ROMANTIC OF DINNERS.



The Writers' Room is the perfect place to enjoy afternoon tea as it once hosted such literary greats as Graham Greene and William Somerset Maugham.

# AS W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM WOULD

SAVOURING THE TRADITIONAL REPAST AMID OLD-WORLD  
CHARM IN THE WRITER'S ROOM AT THE MAJESTIC HOTEL  
KUALA LUMPUR IS AN UNDERRATED DELIGHT.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN

**N**estled in a corner towards the back of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's historical wing is the Writers' Room. Its location is an assurance of privacy and exclusivity as the Writers' Room exudes old-world charm and quiet understated luxury. A pair of rattan peacock chairs takes centre stage in the foyer, with worn leather travel trunks stacked against a nearby wall. Framed vintage prints of exotic birds and botanicals hang on the cream-coloured walls, while tropical plants and palm leaves in tall brass vases provide refreshing green accents.

A variety of collectibles in display cabinets and on the long sideboard at the end of the room tells stories of travels and adventures. But it is the old leather-bound books that take pride of place on the open shelves, appropriately so, as the Writers' Room pays tribute to famous authors, including William Somerset Maugham and Graham Greene, who found rest and inspiration at the hotel in years past.

Plush sofas with scatter cushions in red and gold and comfortable armchairs are arranged in cosy clusters around Persian rugs, a striking contrast against the dark wooden floorboards. Ceramic table lamps cast a warm glow over the room, while high above, wooden ceiling fans rotate and white muslin curtains dance gently in the breeze.

The Writers' Room is the perfect space for the very definition of a luxurious pastime – afternoon tea. The experience begins with a cup of optimally infused tea, chosen from a curated selection of exquisite teas. Afternoon tea delights are presented on a three-tier stand in the shape of a moon gate. On the bottom tier are petite open-faced sandwich squares topped with salmon and a variety of delicate finger sandwiches (egg, cucumber, chicken with cranberry); in the middle, freshly baked scones (plain and raisin) with home-made jam and clotted cream; and on the top, mouth-watering sweet pastries and cakes. Separately, hot savouries (spring rolls, Scotch eggs and quiche tartlets) are presented in a single-tier metal tiffin box.

White linen napkins, silverware, and bone china tea cups and saucers decorated with whimsical floral patterns complete an opulent, enticing afternoon tea service.

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



# AN URBAN OASIS

WITH ITS AMBIENCE OF TRANQUILLITY AND JOIE DE VIVRE,  
THE POOL AREA OF JW MARRIOTT KUALA LUMPUR  
IS A HAVEN FROM THE CARES OF THE WORLD.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN

**T**he pool area on the sixth floor of JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur is an oasis of calm and relaxation. A cool breeze blows gently as you step out onto the large open terrace surrounding the 20m-long swimming pool. Bordered by lush tropical greenery, the concrete paved tiles of the pool deck function as a smooth segue to the pool, with its clear blue water an irresistible invitation for a morning swim, or to simply float the day away. Recline on a lounge and bask in the warmth of the tropical sun while savouring refreshing cocktails or light snacks served from the adjacent outdoor bar. Alternatively, enjoy a languorous lie-in on one of the capacious daybeds shaded by a large patio umbrella. If seclusion is preferred, you can retire to a cabana, which has curtains for added privacy.

Steps away from the swimming pool are the Cabana Poolside guest rooms, a retreat that feels anything but ordinary. Generously sized at 55 square metres, they come with a choice of a king or twin beds. The stylishly luxurious rooms are elegantly appointed, and include a freestanding bathtub as the centrepiece of an opulent marble bathroom.

The pool area also offers ample space for outdoor entertaining. Private events at the poolside, from intimate gatherings to weddings or birthday celebrations, can be specially curated. And for a unique melding of outdoor and indoor experiences, simply make your way down a few steps from the pool terrace into the charm of the Bayu Ballroom.

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

LIFE FEATURE



Elevate your stay in Kuala Lumpur's Bukit Bintang district by booking one of the Cabana Poolside rooms at JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur.

# A SANCTUARY FOR DISCERNING GUESTS

THE RITZ-CARLTON, KUALA LUMPUR'S CLUB LOUNGE IS A PLACE  
FOR TRAVELLERS TO CALL HOME BEYOND THEIR SUITE.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN



The Club Level of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is a building separate from the hotel, with its own street-level entrance for drop-offs or pick-ups, and a private ground-level reception for its guests. Around the corner from the reception, a short flight of steps leads to The Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge, an area reserved exclusively for Club Level guests above the age of 12, with features and amenities thoughtfully curated for travellers on business or leisure. The Lounge is a tastefully appointed space, bathed in natural light from a wall of glass on one side, while a pair of French doors open out to a patio the length of the Lounge. Tucked away towards the back of the Lounge are individual work cubicles that provide a high level of privacy, a meeting room, and a Business Centre fully equipped to meet the needs of the business traveller. With its contemporary comforts and dark wood-panelled walls that convey a warm, refined ambience, the Lounge is the ideal space for guests to work, meet, or simply unwind and enjoy some respite.

Dinettes for two to four persons each are carefully spaced throughout the room so guests can enjoy quiet conversations while savouring the gourmet offerings and beverages available throughout the day. In addition, the ladies and gentlemen of the Lounge stand discreetly in the background, waiting to extend the finest personal service to their guests.

The Lounge offers its guests six complimentary culinary presentations per day: breakfast; light lunch; afternoon tea that includes The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's blend of tea; cocktails featuring The Ritz Fizz, a signature concoction of blue curacao, amaretto, sparkling wine and lemon juice; evening *hors d'oeuvres*; and a selection of desserts and cordials to end the night on a sweet note.

The Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge experience is defined by exceptional service and style that discerning cosmopolitan travellers can be assured of at every visit.

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



Above and left: the distinguished and bespoke service afforded to guests at The Ritz-Carlton Club Lounge is an experience in itself and will leave indelible memories.

LIFE FEATURE

# YOUR FAIRY TALE TOLD YOUR WAY

WEDDINGS AT HOTEL STRIPES KUALA LUMPUR MAY BE SMALL,  
BUT THEY ARE BIG ON STYLE AND ATMOSPHERE.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN



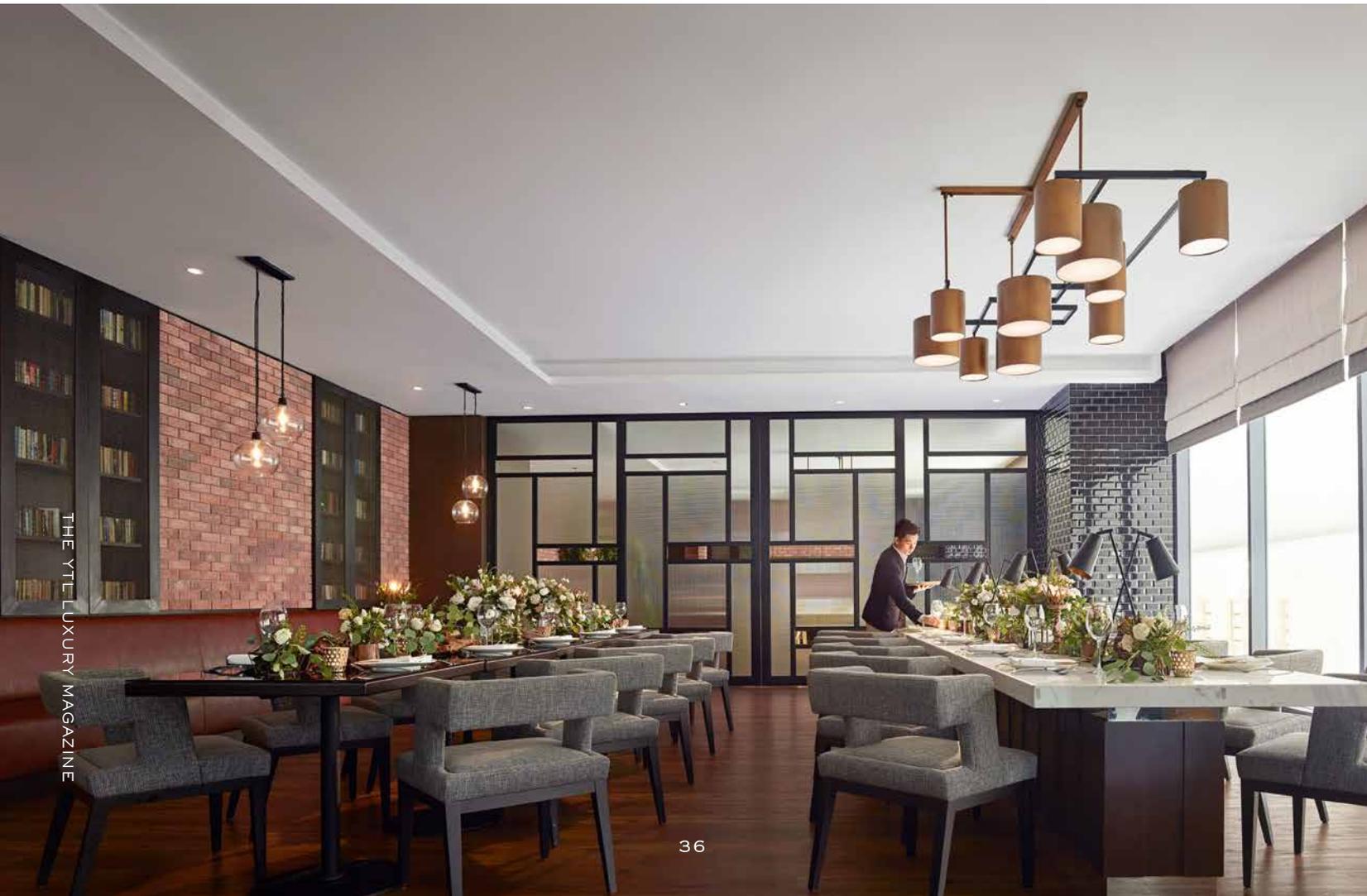




**T**here is something relaxed and wonderful about small weddings. Surrounded by your closest loved ones, you can interact with each guest and build deeper connections, making your guests feel more valued, and creating more personal and memorable experiences. However, a small wedding doesn't mean having to compromise on style or the type of day you want.

The Snug on Level 2 of Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur is a cosy, inspiring venue for new beginnings. It offers options of combining spaces to create a unique environment in which to enjoy tailor-made experiences, exquisite food and exceptional service. Here, you can create your unforgettable occasion and celebrate the day of your dreams. Spanning almost the full breadth of the hotel, The Snug is a blend of contemporary design and urban chic, with its stripped-back walls giving it an industrial edge. It is a distinct multifunctional space that is striking in bold originality, rich in character and uncommon details—perfect for stylish, one-of-a-kind events.

At the same time, it is an incredibly personal place, with a warm and inviting ambience of intimacy and exclusivity that can be accentuated with flowers, candles, fairy lights and any other elements in keeping with your chosen aesthetic. Bespoke menus and mouth-watering cuisine that combines creativity and gastronomic flair elevate your special occasion into a sensory experience for you and your guests.



## LIFE FEATURE

The Snug is completely flexible and can accommodate up to 120 guests for wedding ceremonies and sit-down receptions. There is also room to dance the night away! Alternatively, you may opt for a smaller *al fresco* ceremony and celebration with up to 50 guests at the rooftop by the pool that provides unobstructed vistas of the stunning Kuala Lumpur skyline.

For a unique melding of indoor and outdoor experiences, consider hosting your reception at Brasserie 25 on Level 1 that opens up to a covered outdoor terrace the length of the restaurant. There, up to 80 guests can sip champagne, wine or cocktails and mingle. With its red brick arcades, mid-century copper sputnik chandeliers and dark wood floors, it exudes a rustic charm.

The friendly, professional team of event coordinators at Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur stand ready to help you design and create the celebration of your dreams, with all the little touches that make a difference, making the planning process easy and stress-free. They will also be able to provide a list of tried and trusted suppliers who can assist in creating the ideal celebration for you and your guests.

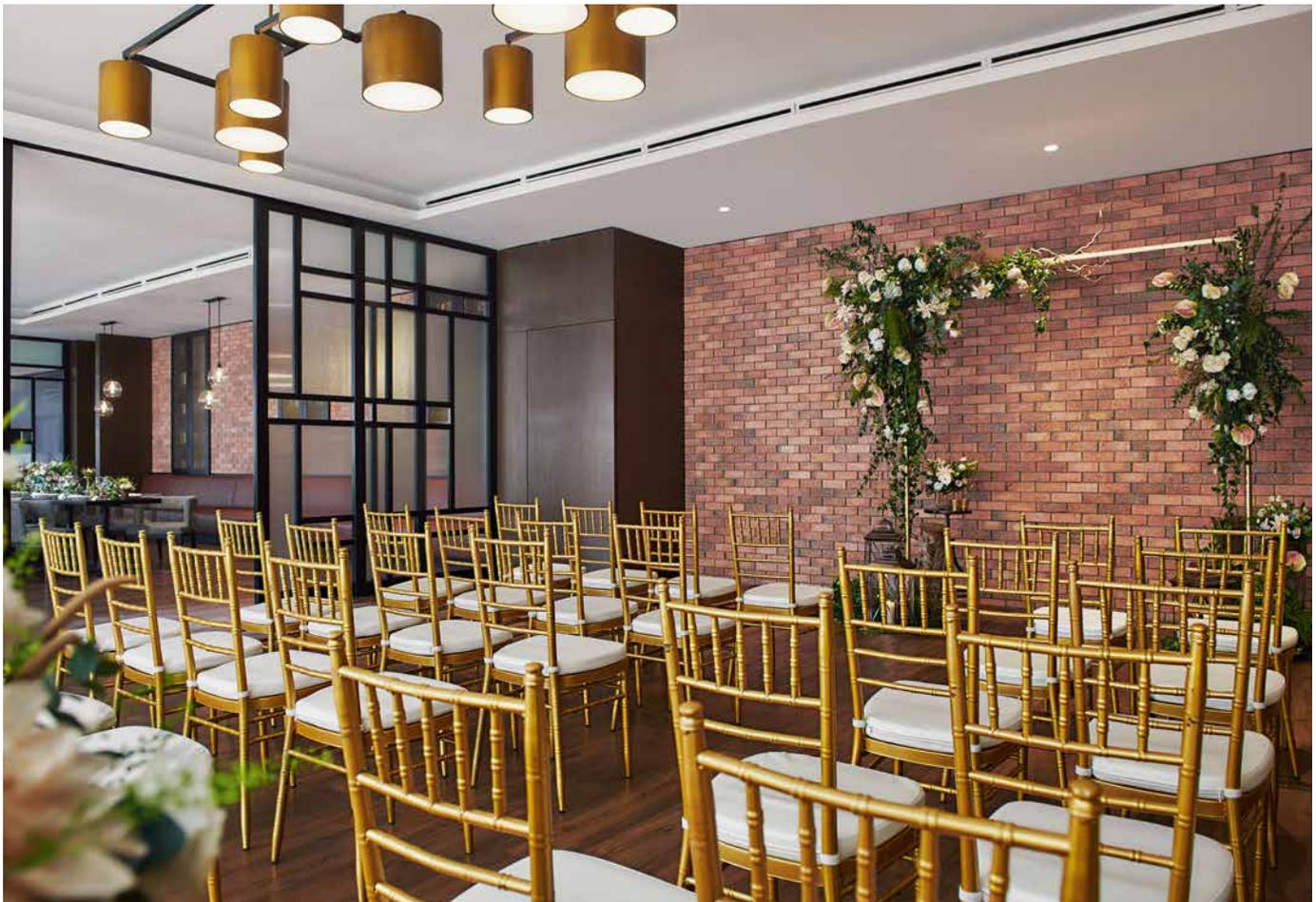
At Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur, you can celebrate the most momentous occasion of your life just the way you imagine it to be: intimate, joyful, romantic and fun.

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



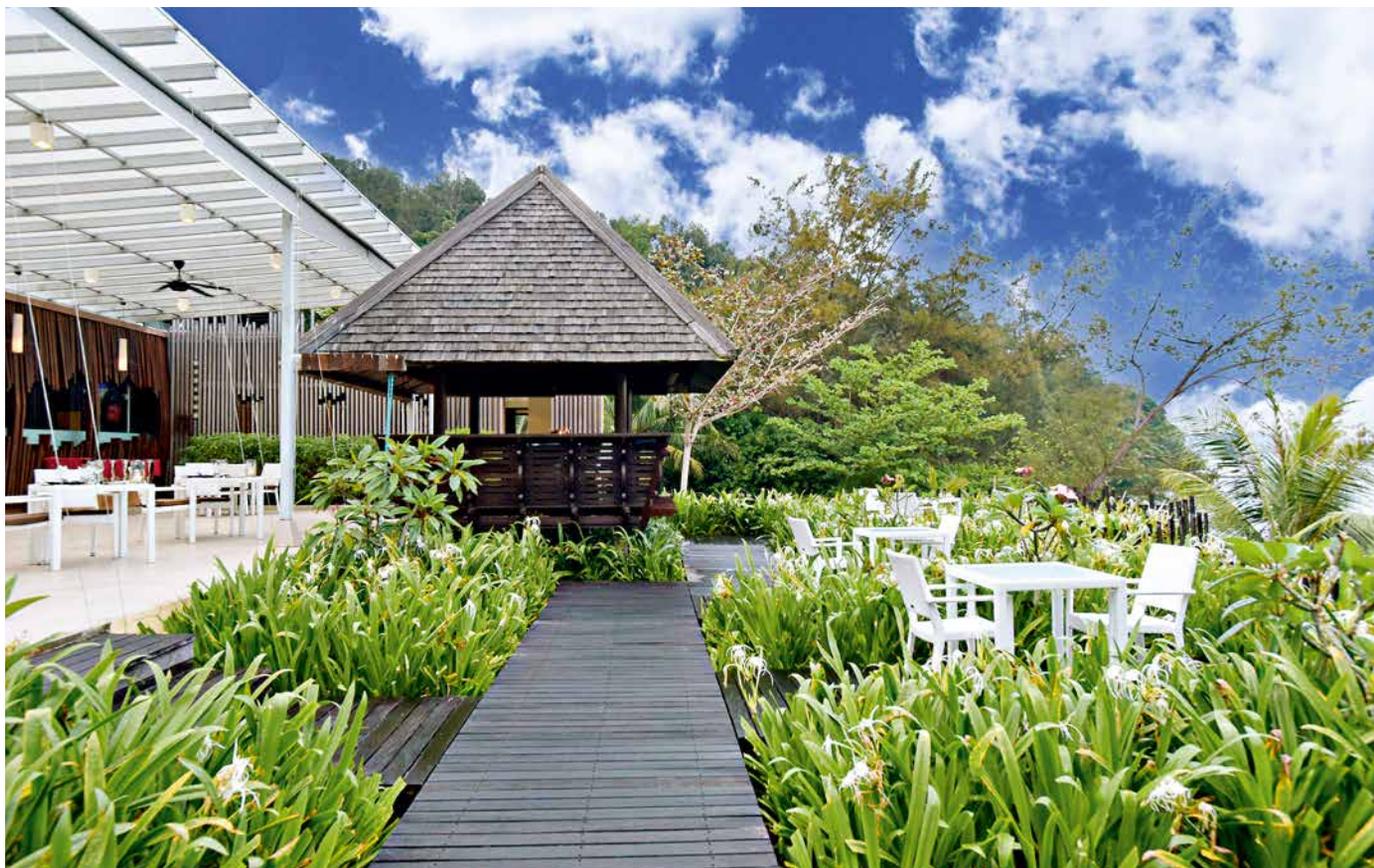
This and facing pages: cosy with stripped-back walls giving it an industrial edge, The Snug on level 2 is a unique and inspiring multifunctional space for one-of-a-kind events.

Previous spread: Man Tao Bar is a relaxing space with unobstructed views of downtown Kuala Lumpur.





The Gayan Bouillabaisse is a thoughtfully curated seafood menu featuring a much-loved French Provençal-inspired seafood bouillabaisse made from the freshest locally sourced ingredients.



# THE GAYAN BOUILLABAISSE

AT GAYA ISLAND RESORT, INDULGE IN AN EXCLUSIVE PRIVATE DINING EXPERIENCE FEATURING THE TASTES OF SABAH, FROM A TRADITIONAL RICE WINE TO ITS TAKE ON THE CLASSIC PROVENÇAL BOUILLABAISSE.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN

**I**nspired by the abundance and variety of fish, crustaceans and mollusks found in the waters surrounding Gaya Island, the team at Gaya Island Resort's Fisherman's Cove decided to create its own version of the classic Provençal bouillabaisse. Using locally sourced produce and indigenous ingredients, and subtly influenced by the culinary culture of the local communities, the result is a seafood broth that is unique in colour, aroma and flavour. Quintessentially Gayan.

The Gayan Bouillabaisse at Gaya Island Resort is a sensory feast, featuring craft cocktails and a thoughtfully curated seafood menu, experienced in an equally distinctive space – the Gazebo at Fisherman's Cove. Situated on the rooftop, the wooden Gazebo offers panoramic views of verdant tree tops, an open sea and the majestic Mount Kinabalu in the distant horizon, while evoking an ambience of intimacy and exclusivity. A private paradise that truly befits the gourmet dining experience.



In the air, the heady aroma of the bouillabaisse wafts, gently awakening your appetite for the gastronomic journey ahead. But first, savour a couple of *lihing*-infused cocktails. *Lihing* is an artisanal rice wine, brewed according to unique family recipes by the Kadazan-Dusun community of Sabah. It is produced from a mixture of glutinous rice and yeast, fermented for one to two months in a traditional jar called the *tajau*. A light shade of amber gold, the *lihing* tastes like sherry, making it a delightful *aperitif* on its own. The pale golden-hued White Shangria is a concoction of *lihing*, white wine and pineapple, with hints of sweet citrus and tangy lime. It is light, smooth and crisp, a perfect long drink to enjoy as you unwind and watch the sun set. Alternatively, savour the Monkey Pea, its bright blue liquid calling to mind tropical blue skies. A blend of tequila, blue curacao and *lihing*, complemented by muddled banana and splashes of calamansi, it is aromatic and flavourful, with an edge.

Dinner begins with an *amuse-bouche* of tuna tartare, crusted with black and white sesame seeds and served with roasted sesame dressing and alfalfa sprouts. The appetiser that follows is an array of crispy fried, grilled and blanched calamari pieces, sprinkled with paprika and Cajun spices.

Dashes of pesto and succulent cherry tomatoes complete the plate. A refreshing calamansi-lime sorbet cleanses the palate in preparation for the evening's *entree* that is served over three courses.

The first course features shellfish and black tiger prawns set on a bed of ribboned zucchini in an aromatic bouillabaisse. The second course stands out with generous portions of Sabah rock lobster and freshly caught local grouper in a deeply rich bouillabaisse, accompanied by lightly charred fennel and leek, with nuances of orange zest. Closing off the *entree* is the bouillabaisse, robust and intensely flavourful, served with garlic bread.

Complementing the courses are a delectable rouille of anchovy, garlic and potato, and a spicy tangy sauce of bird's eye chilli, shallots, mustard seed and lime juice. The epicurean journey ends on a decadent note, with an offering of luxuriant chocolate fondant and vanilla ice cream.

The Gayan Bouillabaisse at Gaya Island Resort is an intimate experience of a sumptuous meal, prepared the Gayan way – with passion and heart.

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



This and facing pages: from freshly caught seafood and unique *lihing*-infused cocktails such as Monkey Pea, to the stunning scenery afforded by the *al fresco* Fisherman's Cove Gazebo, the private Gayan Bouillabaisse dining experience is simply spectacular.



# HOT FOR HOTPOT

NO VISIT TO CAMERON HIGHLANDS IS COMPLETE WITHOUT A HOTPOT DINNER. HERE'S HOW GONBEI RESTAURANT AT CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT ELEVATES THE EXPERIENCE.

Words by MUNA NOOR. Photography by LAW SOO PHYE

This and facing pages:  
cooking around a heated  
hotpot at the semi-*al fresco*  
Gonbei restaurant is a great  
Asian favourite as it provides  
a warming meal during rainy  
days and cool weather.





**L**ike boba tea before it, hotpot is the Asian culinary craze that's taken the world by storm. The Malaysian dining scene is no exception. Although not one to follow frivolous trends, Cameron Highlands is well ahead of the curve. The hilltop retreat has been dishing up hotpot for almost two decades. For the uninitiated, hotpot is a do-it-yourself dining experience where diners commune around a cauldron of piping hot broth to collectively cook an array of raw proteins and vegetables. Considered a cold weather comfort food, it may seem an unlikely pastime for the sweltering lowlands of tropical Malaysia – but it's perfectly suited to the cooler climate of Cameron Highlands.

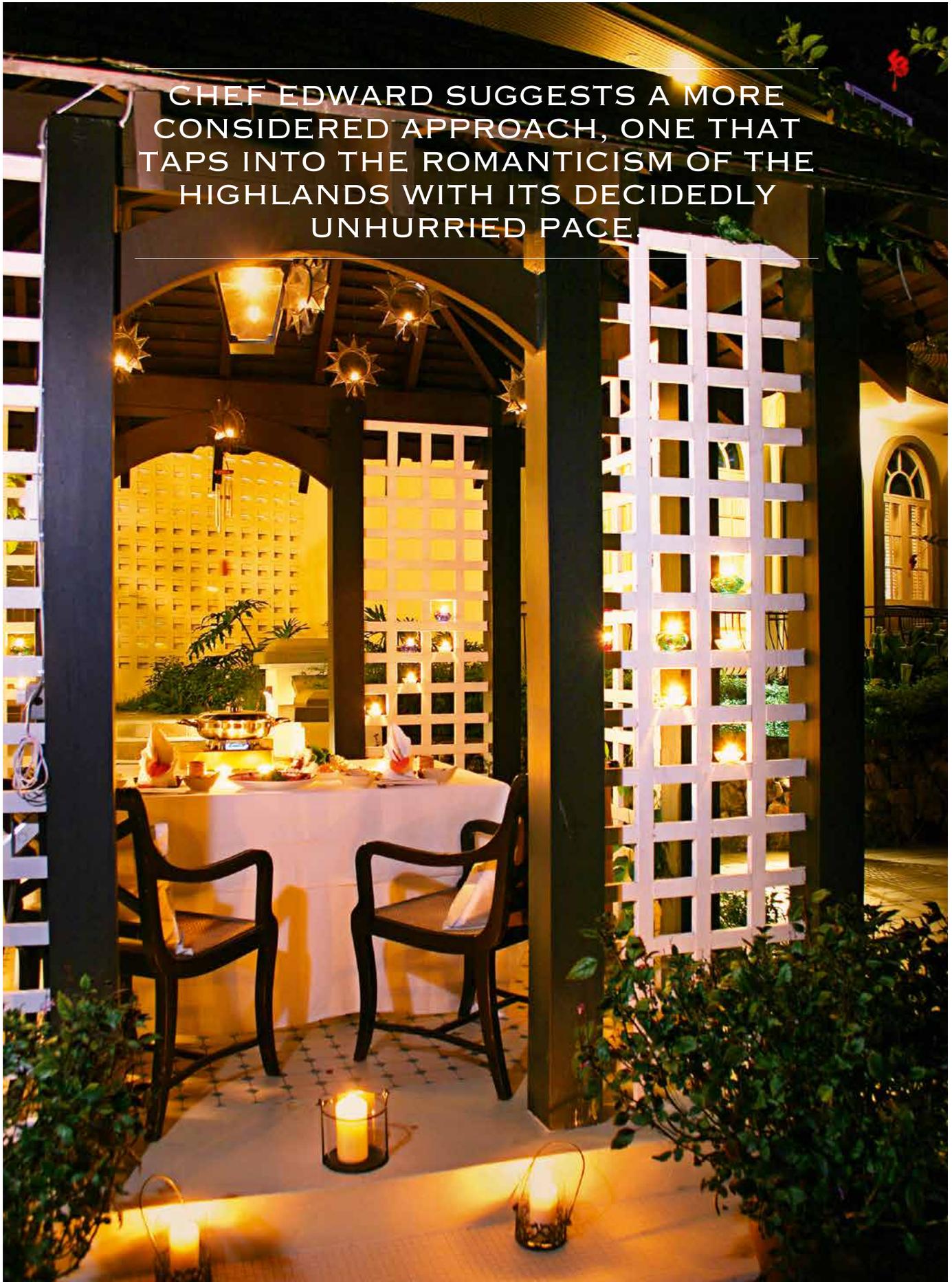
Located around a three-and-a-half-hour's drive away from the capital city, the former colonial hill station sits more than 1,200 metres above sea level. Cameron Highlands is also the salad bowl of Malaysia and a source of hotpot's prized ingredients. Little wonder that next to the colonial tradition of taking afternoon tea with finger sandwiches and freshly baked scones, hotpot has emerged as a Cameron Highlands delicacy. After the sun goes down and the temperature takes a dive, it's the go-to dinner here.

The cooking style is said to have originated in China more than 2,000 years ago. In Malaysia and Singapore, gourmands use the term hotpot and steamboat interchangeably to describe the same thing. To be pedantic, it's not: the receptacles differ. Steamboat refers to the ring-shaped receptacle with a funnel at its centre; hotpot is, well, a steel or ceramic pot, often subdivided to accommodate more than one broth at a time.

This and facing pages:  
dining at Cameron Highlands  
Resort allows guests to  
enjoy meals in a variety of  
settings, from an open-  
dining concept restaurant  
that merges seamlessly into  
the lush jungle to a candlelit  
private gazebo.



CHEF EDWARD SUGGESTS A MORE  
CONSIDERED APPROACH, ONE THAT  
TAPS INTO THE ROMANTICISM OF THE  
HIGHLANDS WITH ITS DECIDEDLY  
UNHURRIED PACE.





This and facing pages: personalise your hotpot broth complemented by the freshest local produce featuring farm vegetables, succulent seafood, prime meats and noodles to dip into the simmering fragrant broth of choice.

Gonbei restaurant at Cameron Highlands Resort has been serving hotpot since 2016. Its elegant semi-*al fresco* setting and stellar reputation have made it the most sought-after table here. Reservations are required, particularly on weekends. Gonbei's version lies squarely in the realm of hotpot. A basic serving for two is a lavish spread of bottomless vegetables, raw proteins and noodles served with a choice of broth, all of which can be replenished upon request.

To be clear, broth is the foundation of any hotpot and differs according to region and country. The fierce mala pepper heat of Szechuan, pickled cabbage of north-eastern China, simmered lamb of Mongolia, or Japan's *kombu dashi*-based *shabu-shabu* or sweet soya sauce and *mirin*-based *sukiyaki* are a sampling of the variety out there. It's also matched by a mind-boggling array of dipping sauces that can be mixed in an infinite number of combinations: Chinese barbecue sauce, sesame paste, chilli, soy sauce and even raw egg yolk. In a nod to local palates, Gonbei turns out an addictively moreish anchovy paste (*belacan*) sambal.

The broths at Gonbei are a labour of love, and diners can select any two from a choice of vegetable, chicken and *tom yum*. Even as breakfast service is under way in the Dining Room, Cameron Highland Resort's Chef De Hote Edward Chung and his team are busy preparing the resort's signature dinner experience. Chickens are blanched before their skin

and bones are boiled with fresh ginger for eight hours to tease out their rich flavour, after which they are seasoned to taste. Nothing is wasted. Trimmings from fresh Cameron Highlands vegetables are simmered for six hours to create a surprisingly flavourful base, while the fragrant *tom yum* incorporates chillies for punch and aromatics like lemongrass and galangal to create the sweet, mildly spicy flavours of this Thai soup.

The use of vegetable broth, abundance of locally grown vegetables and fungi, and inclusion of soy proteins such as soy skin and silken tofu make hotpot an easy dish to veganise. For those otherwise inclined, there are generous ribbons of Australian striploin, firm pink chicken breast, and glistening slivers of seabass and succulent prawns. Special requests such as crab, lobster or Wagyu can also be arranged with enough advance notice.

Although the mounds of produce, expertly cut and sliced to cook quickly and evenly, can be overwhelming for first-timers, Chef Edward and Gonbei's wait staff are on hand to offer guidance. A good place to start is to turn the heat all the way up on the portable butane burner and once the broth has come to a boil, turn it down to a simmer.

If you choose, you can plonk all the ingredients in at one go. No fuss, no muss. It sounds like a recipe for mushy vegetables and rubbery meats, but in this instance the phrase 'too many

cooks spoil the broth' doesn't apply – the more mouths to feed, the more eyes on the pot. With open communication and cooperation, no minced chicken-and-chive-stuffed dumpling or fish ball will be forgotten. Everyone can take their turn at plopping their favourite ingredient into the bubbling vat or ladling it out when done, to be divvied out or dunked in the dipping sauce of their desire. Hotpot is often likened to Asian fondue for that reason. That description better suits *lok lok*, a Malaysian street food that involves dunking skewered ingredients into a vat of roiling soup and smothering it in a buffet of sauces before consuming, usually late at night from a food truck. Hotpot, on the other hand, is a seated, skewer-free affair.

The expediency that the one-pot cooking style affords is another reason for its meteoric rise. In households in China, families can congregate around a communal pot to partake in a quick, nutritious meal before rushing off to their respective workplaces. In Taiwan, it can be a convenient act of self-care, as time-starved office workers can sidle into a restaurant booth, devour a solo portion and return home knowing a healthy, hearty meal is warming their insides.

Chef Edward suggests a more considered approach, one that taps into the romanticism of Cameron Highlands with its decidedly unhurried pace. Bathing one ingredient at a time in the scalding soup – a minute for the slivers of bright orange pumpkin and Cameron Highlands' famed corn, seconds for the beef and prawns until they turn opaque – is a healthier way to dine. It retains the inherent sweetness and rich nutrients of farm-to-table produce and allows you time to digest your food. Chef Edward also has some tips:

vegetables first, then proteins, with eggs and noodles to finish. Every ingredient has the capacity to alter the flavour of the broth, he explains. Fat from the meats cloud the soup, eggs if stirred into the bubbling soup create an egg drop consistency, and the starch from the noodles changes the consistency of the broth.

By slowing down, you'll enjoy those in your company as you animatedly recount that last round of golf you had together, or conspiratorially trade theories surrounding the mysterious disappearance of Jim Thompson after spending a day on the trails with the resort's resident naturalist and local guide, Madi.

The very things that make hotpot a convivial, typically communal enterprise – the sharing and co-cooking duties – are also what makes it a surprisingly insightful date night dish. Whether it's agreeing on the broth base or deciding the order in which the raw ingredients are cooked and distributed, hotpot is an exercise in seeking consent and compromise, and of care and consideration. A hotpot night can reveal a lot about your dining partner. Ultimately, hotpot is savoured in so many ways that there can't possibly be hard and fast rules, merely recommendations. Perhaps this is why hotpot is so beloved. It's a dynamic, choose-your-own-adventure gourmet experience that's interactive, illuminating and an act of love. Happy hotpotting.

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





Secrets of a Malay Kitchen takes you through all the steps, from purchasing ingredients right up to preparation and cooking.

# KITCHEN CONFIDENCE

RELIVE MEMORIES OF TANJONG JARA RESORT  
BY RECREATING THE MOUTH-WATERING AROMAS AND  
EXOTIC FLAVOURS OF MALAY CUISINE AT ITS  
SECRETS OF A MALAY KITCHEN EXPERIENCE.

Words by MUNA NOOR



**H**olidays aren't limited to exotic settings and lazy days by the pool being waited on hand and foot – not that we don't approve of such things. In the past decade, there's been a rise in demand for experiential holidays that allow you to immerse yourself in the storied artistic and cultural tapestry of your destination. At Tanjung Jara Resort, in the beautiful coconut-tree and beach-lined state of Terengganu, the Secrets of a Malay Kitchen experience is a hands-on private cooking class for two or more culinary-curious guests that lets you do just that.

Imagine the wonderful aroma of a curry you savoured during your stay wafting through your kitchen long after you've returned home to the drudge of work and dull weather. Thanks to the way the human brain is wired, nothing is as evocative of memory as smell. Learning how to whip up a dish or two unique to your vacation destination confers other benefits too. It's a useful skill to master, one that can win friends and influence people. A dinner party serving authentic Malaysian cuisine? Who can resist?

Tanjung Jara Resort's Secrets of a Malay Kitchen experience begins with a trip to the wet market. An easy 10-minute journey across the wide Dungun River, it's particularly bustling on a weekend, which in Terengganu is a Friday and Saturday to reflect the cultural practices of the East Coast state's Muslim majority populace.

This is no sterile, Styrofoam- and Saran-wrapped supermarket run. Once you've gotten over the initial assault on your senses, the market is an eye-opening window into Malaysian life. The abundance and variety of produce is

staggering – freshly butchered meats to one side, newly harvested fruit and vegetables on the other, much of it only grown in Southeast Asia and cultivated in back gardens and private orchards. The benefits of the town's position facing the South China Sea is on full display here. Crab, whole garoupa, stingray, cuttlefish, squid, prawns, cockles and clams are stacked up in a raw or preserved state.

The resort's chef is on hand to navigate the market's maze of stalls and to bargain on your behalf. Should you desire to work with a particular mystery ingredient, don't be shy to enquire. Between their loud exhortations of price and quality assurance, traders will willingly pause to explain where their produce comes from and proffer a sample. This is Terengganu hospitality.

The second half of your Secrets of a Malay Kitchen experience takes place on the verandah at Di Atas Sungei, the resort's premier restaurant and the location of breakfast and dinner. Blackboards and stern teachers are noticeably absent in this culinary classroom as jovial chefs Dolis and Hadi gently guide you through the ins and outs of Malay cooking.

Malaysia's food is globally celebrated and for good reason. Its ethnic and cultural diversity – and complicated history – are reflected in its cuisine. The influence of colonialism and the spice trade is apparent in the Portuguese, Chinese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Indonesian and Arab flavours and flourishes. This includes the Malay delicacies of Terengganu.

You can select two main course dishes from Di Atas Sungei's menu. As is usually the case in Asian dining, these are usually designed for sharing. *Rendang*, a slow-cooked meat dish of reduced coconut milk and spices, is the resort's most popular



choice and is as ubiquitous a Malay dish as *satay*. Usually made with beef but increasingly with chicken, it's traditionally reserved for special occasions such as Hari Raya Aidilfitri (Eid) to mark the end of Ramadhan and a month of fasting; and *khatam* Quran, which celebrates one's completed cover-to-cover recitation of the holy Quran. Meanwhile, *ikan bakar* (barbecued fish) makes the best use of the area's freshly landed tropical fish. Dressed in a piquant chilli-based garlic, galangal and tomato marinade, then wrapped in banana leaf or foil and grilled, this sweet and succulent parcel of protein will enliven any outdoor gathering. *Assam pedas* is a sweet-sour southern speciality that is little known outside Malaysia. Made with fish or prawns, it's sure to showcase your culinary chops and impress the most demanding foodies. Best of all, the dishes can be customised to accommodate dietary restrictions and tastes.

Although Malay cooking is complex in flavour, kitchen novices will be pleasantly surprised to discover how simple it is to execute. The base ingredients are often the same. There are the spices: star anise, cinnamon, cardamom and clove, collectively known as *empat kawan* (four friends); and the aromatics such as garlic, galangal, shallots, onions (red are preferred), red chillies (large, small, fresh and dried), lemongrass and torch ginger. Thanks to global supply chains, all can be found in any good Asian supermarket. Only the ratio of the ingredients is modified according to the dish and location. States in Peninsula Malaysia's north-east like Kelantan and Terengganu, for example, prefer their dishes sweeter; those in the south such as Negeri Sembilan and Johor like it hot.

Besides learning how to cook a prized dish from scratch, you'll also get to grips with handed-down Malay cooking techniques. Cantankerous celebrity Gordon Ramsay was famously introduced to the concept of *agak-agak* when he was in Malaysia filming his TV show *Gordon's Great Escape*.

The term literally means estimate and is used by seasoned cooks. After all, who needs spoon and cup measurements when you've been conjuring a slap-up Malay feast on a regular basis. At *Secrets of a Malay Kitchen*, you'll learn the divine wisdom of *pecah minyak*. Used in the preparation of dishes like *rendang* and curry, it's the key to perfecting Malay dishes and occurs when the oil separates from the ingredients.

As Malay dishes can sometimes be laborious in nature, some liberties must be taken for the sake of convenience. The peeling, slicing, dicing and deveining of prawns and filleting of fish are done for you. Traditionally, a *batu lesung* (pestle and mortar) or *batu giling* (stone pin and trestle) are used to pound and blend ingredients; these are whisked away and blitzed for you in a blender. This may be a shortcut, but you're on holiday after all and probably have a massage booked for 4pm. None of the flavour is lost, and it's more likely that you'll recreate these dishes at home this way.

Assailed by the appetite-inducing sounds of sizzling and the throat-catching aroma of chilli and spices, there's little chance of being distracted by the disarmingly rustic scenery that surrounds you. After barely toiling over a hot stove, you're savouring the authentic fruits of your labour, with nary a bit of washing up or cleaning required.

You'll graduate from *Secrets of a Malay Kitchen* with a full stomach, a sense of achievement and a gift bag laden with the tools of your trade: an apron, headkerchief and a copy of the recipes that you've made. Thank yourself that you did. Your friends and family will, when you treat them to a spread that recreates your holiday memories and the warm and convivial communal dining culture that made your *Tanjong Jara* escape so special.

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

This and facing pages:  
savour authentic dishes  
at an equally authentic  
ambience which recalls  
the palatial settings of  
Malay rulers of yore.





Imaginations are coaxed to wander back to the past with meandering 600-year-old narrow pathways and red-brick Dutch colonial buildings.

# WHERE HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

TAKE IN THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SITES OF  
MALACCA WITH THE RESIDENT HISTORIAN FROM  
THE MAJESTIC MALACCA AS YOUR GUIDE.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN. Photography by MARCUS WONG

**M**alacca was a thriving trading port from the 15th to 19th centuries thanks to its strategic position in the Straits of Malacca, which connected the maritime routes between Asia and Europe. For more than 500 years, a succession of trade and cultural exchanges flourished and evolved under the colonial rule of the Portuguese, Dutch and British, resulting in a unique and rich tapestry of multicultural heritage and tradition. This facet of the city was duly recognised when it was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 7 July 2008.

There's no better way to gain deeper insights into a place than by personally experiencing it, soaking in its atmosphere and engaging with its residents. The Majestic Malacca has specially curated programmes that will allow you to do all this and more, providing you with a unique experience of Malacca's fascinating history and culture. With its Resident Historian as guide, you will be treated to an enriching and entertaining journey through the historical and cultural sites of the city.

On foot or bicycle, visit the cultural and historical enclaves and go behind the scenes to experience and learn their significance. Explore ancient monuments, historic landmarks and age-old places of worship. Be captivated by architectural splendours and cultural treasures, from traditional arts, crafts and trades to delicious local cuisine.

Your excursion concludes with afternoon tea in the Library of The Majestic Malacca. The Kristang Afternoon Tea features the best of local tea delights that also reflect Malacca's multicultural influences. Enjoy delectable culinary offerings that include sweet Portuguese egg tarts; bunga telang (blue pea flower) glutinous rice with home-made kaya (coconut jam); and sago pearls in coconut milk with melted gula Melaka (palm sugar syrup).

**THE MAJESTIC MALACCA CYCLING TOUR**

Take in the most interesting sights and landmarks of Malacca from the seat of your bicycle.

The journey begins at the entrance of The Majestic Malacca, a restored Straits Settlement mansion, complete with its original porcelain tile flooring and teakwood fittings.



The two-hour bicycle ride from The Majestic Malacca takes guests to the old city of Malacca.





Then, make your way to Bukit Cina, where the 15th-century Hang Li Poh's Well (also known as King's Well) can be found next to Poh San Teng Temple, built in 1795.

From there, cycle past picturesque shophouses and townhouses that line both sides of Jalan Bunga Cina and Jalan Temenggong. Continue past the Church of St Francis Xavier towards Red Square, which is dominated by the red-walled Stadhuys, Southeast Asia's oldest Dutch building built in the 17th century; the 18th-century Anglican Christ Church; and the stately Dutch-style Clock Tower constructed in the 19th century.

Take a breather and enjoy a bowl of cendol, a local dessert of shaved ice topped with coconut milk, gula Melaka and green rice flour jelly, from a stall located opposite the Clock Tower. Refreshed, continue your journey across Tan Kim Seng Bridge into the core zone of the Malacca heritage site.

Ride along the narrow Jalan Hang Jebat (Jonker Street), the thoroughfare of Chinatown, past Cheng Hoe's Cultural Museum and onto Jalan Tukang Emas (Goldsmith Street). Also known as Harmony Street, this is where you will find the oldest places of worship of three different faiths: Cheng Hoon Teng Chinese Temple, established in 1645; Kampung Keling Mosque, built originally in wood by Indian Muslim traders in 1748; and Sri Poyyatha Vinayaga Moorthy Hindu Temple, founded in 1781.

Then, cycle along Jalan Kampung Pantai, passing by Hang Jebat Mausoleum and shophouses where small family-owned businesses still operate. Soon, you'll go over Chan Koon Cheng Bridge and head to Jalan Bunga Raya, lined with coffee shops, old-fashioned sundry shops, traditional medicine halls, goldsmith shops and textile retail outlets, among others.

The tour ends back at The Majestic Malacca, where you'll enjoy a delectable Kristang Afternoon Tea in the Library as you recount your adventure to fellow travellers.

#### THE MAJESTIC MALACCA WALKING TOUR

Alternatively, explore Malacca on foot and make the most of your time discovering the built and living heritage attractions in this historic city.

The journey begins at The Majestic Malacca, where you will be regaled with a fascinating account of the history of the 1920s Straits Settlement mansion. Walk out the front gates of the hotel onto Jalan Bunga Raya, vibrant with the warmth and noise of trade and commerce, and continue to Jalan Kampung Jawa. Cross Java Bridge to Bridge Lane, once a hub of opium dens, gambling houses and brothels. Stroll along Jalan Kampung Pantai before making a turn onto Jalan Hang Kasturi (Second Cross Street), where traditional trades still thrive and local artisans practise their crafts, serving locals and tourists alike.

Venture into the workshop of a third-generation signboard carver and maker, and learn about the dying art of handcarving Chinese wooden signboards. After that, continue to Jalan Tukang Emas (Goldsmith Street) and feast your eyes on the distinctive architectural styles and details of the places of worship of three different faiths.

Next, pop into one of only three shops remaining where



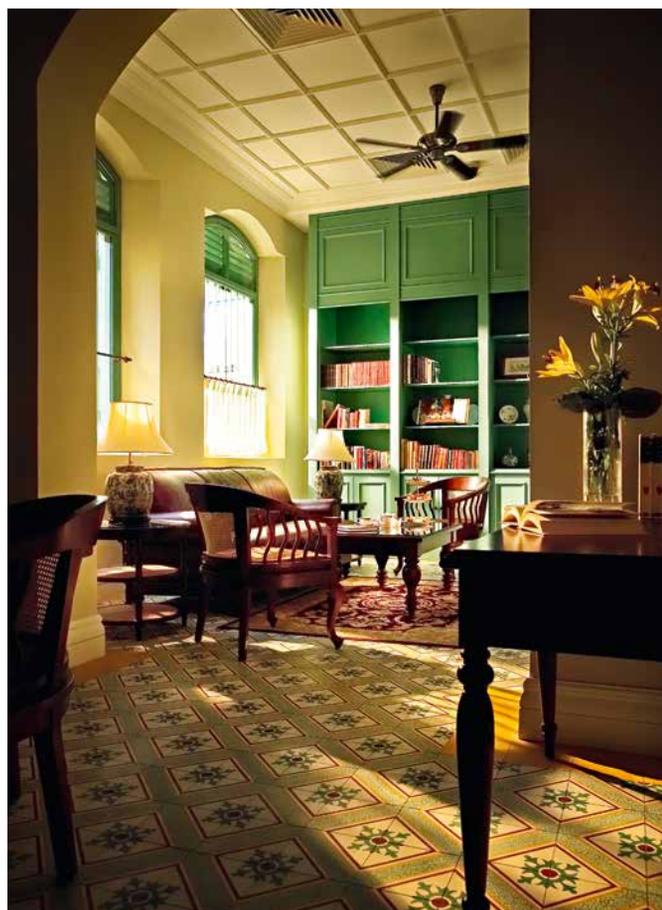
This and facing pages: guests of The Majestic Malacca can spend an experiential two hours exploring prominent historical landmarks and sampling the local dessert, cendol, before returning to the hotel for a unique and delectable Kristang Afternoon Tea.

you can see the art of handcrafting beaded shoes (kasut manik) being practised. This type of footwear is a cultural pride of the Peranakan community, particularly the women, known as Nyonyas, who would wear the shoes with their kebayas. Continue on to Jalan Hang Jebat (Jonker Street), the heart of the historic enclave, which was the commercial centre during the colonial Dutch era. From there, turn into Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock (Heeren Street) and be charmed by the beautifully conserved shophouses and townhouses that used to be the family homes of the wealthiest tradesmen of the time.

Walk past the Baba & Nyonya Heritage Museum before crossing the river towards Red Square, where the red-walled Stadhuis, Anglican Christ Church and the stately Dutch-style Clock Tower stand. Sample a delicious local dessert, cendol, at a stall opposite the Clock Tower, and enjoy a short respite before resuming your journey.

Finally, wind your way down Jalan Bendahara and Jalan Bunga Raya back to The Majestic Malacca, where your ramble ends with a Kristang Afternoon Tea in the Library.

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



# TWO DECADES OF HONOURING HEALING TRADITIONS

IT IS SAID THAT IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD. IN THE CASE OF SPA VILLAGE, IT HAS TAKEN MANY VILLAGES TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE IT TO THE SUCCESSFUL BRAND IT IS TODAY. WE SPEAK TO LAI PING CHIK, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SPA DIVISION, YTL HOTELS, ABOUT THE FACTORS BEHIND THE BRAND'S SUCCESS AND ENDURANCE.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN

**T**raditionally, particularly in Asia, matters of health, wellness and beauty were kept in the domain of the home or the village. Families relied on age-old recipes or the local apothecary for physical, emotional and mental well-being. Therapeutic massages, home-brewed tonics, freshly picked botanicals pounded into pastes, and homespun salves for cuts, sprains and the like, were part of day-to-day healthcare.

So, when the idea of a spa was proposed for the luxurious Pangkor Laut Resort, Dato' Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Hotels, was firm that it was not going to be a Western-style spa. It had to be one that would reflect the locale and its community – in this case, Malaysia, with her multi-ethnic population, each with its own rich heritage of traditional healing. There would be a hut each, dedicated to the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia – Malay, Chinese and Indian – with authentic practitioners offering treatments from their individual cultures.

This was the genesis for the ethos and name of the spa brand that came to be known as Spa Village. Spread over four acres, Spa Village Pangkor Laut looks and functions like a village, offering healing and wellness treatments that honour the cultures and traditions of the respective local communities.

The Spa Village brand has stayed true to its core purpose even as it expanded into new markets. From the flagship Spa Village Pangkor Laut, opened in September 2002 by the late Luciano Pavarotti, to the additions of Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, Tanjong Jara, Cameron Highlands, Gaya Island and Malacca, as well as the destination Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, each property has been conceptualised to celebrate the healing culture of the locale in which it resides.

**EXPERIENTIAL INDIGENOUS HEALING AND WELLNESS**

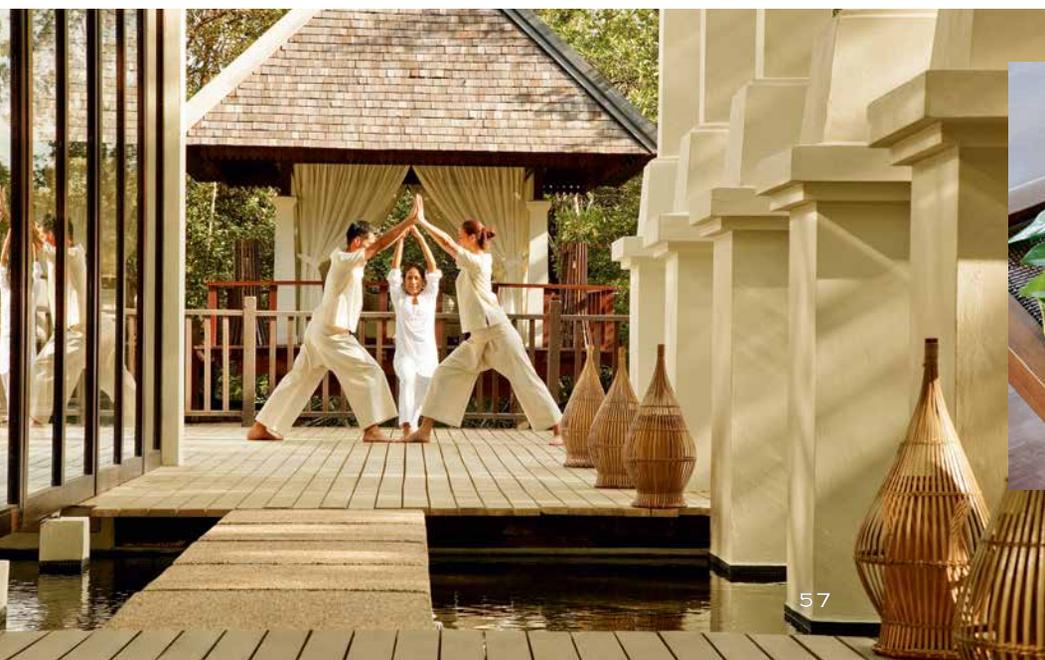
“Spa Village is a pioneer of the concept of experiential indigenous healing and wellness,” says Lai Ping Chik, Senior Vice President, Spa Division, YTL Hotels. Through its specially curated healing treatments and wellness programmes, guests are introduced to an authentic experience of each locality in which a Spa Village is located. “For example, in Spa Village Cameron Highlands, guests can look forward to treatments



Above: Lai Ping Chik is Senior Vice President of the Spa Division at YTL Hotels.

Below: Spa Village Gaya Island's treatments utilise only the finest local ingredients, while its spa programmes reflect the cultural healing traditions of Sabah's many indigenous peoples.

Facing page: Spa Village Pangkor Laut comprises a number of specially built structures designed to facilitate an extensive range of treatments from Bali, China, India, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand.



## LIFE FEATURE

based on the traditions of the indigenous people (Orang Asli) who live in the jungles of the Highlands. Spa Village Majestic Malacca is the only centre in the world dedicated to the Peranakan (mixed Malay and Chinese heritage) healing culture. In Bali, Spa Village Resort Tembok is a standalone retreat devoted exclusively to promoting Balinese therapies.”

Ancient healing practices of local communities, combined with the therapeutic properties of ingredients found in the surroundings, are delivered in beautifully designed properties in some of the region’s most gorgeous locations. The result is an experience that is one-of-a-kind and unforgettable.

### BRAND APPEAL, SUCCESS AND ENDURANCE

Spa Village’s brand appeal, success and endurance can be attributed to its philosophy of honouring local healing cultures and spa traditions through imaginative healing and wellness treatments in unique, stunning locations.

“From the beginning, Spa Village sought out healers and practitioners to fulfil its quest of providing authentic spas and spa treatments to deliver holistic wellness,” says Lai Ping, a

member of the pioneering team behind the Spa Village brand. “It was not easy at first to get them to share their knowledge and secrets, but in the end, they were convinced of Spa Village’s passion and genuine desire to promote traditional healing and wellness, as well as indigenous natural products, to a wider audience.”

To ensure authenticity and efficacy of its treatments, a lot of time is spent on carrying out in-depth research, including exploring and studying the local surroundings, its botanicals, understanding the treatment processes, recording the recipes and regularly meeting with the elderly healers. “We don’t just scratch the surface. And if something is not good enough for our guests, we’ll omit it,” Lai Ping declares. Following this extensive, and intensive, exercise, unique healing and wellness treatments are innovated for the respective spas, driven by the firm belief that Spa Village guests deserve only the best. In Lai Ping’s view, however, the most important factor behind it all is the Spa Village people, who work together to serve the guests and each other. “To ‘serve with our hearts through our hands’ is the spirit and guiding



This page: Spa Village Malacca is the world’s only spa to base its therapies on the healing heritage of the Baba-Nyonya or Peranakan culture – a unique combination of Chinese and Malay influences.

Facing page: Spa Village incorporates various international and local healing and wellness traditions, as is the case of (clockwise from top left) the bathing pools at Spa Village in Pangkor Laut Resort, jamu at Spa Village in Bali, massage pavilions in Cameron Highlands Resort, and aqua massages at The Ritz-Carlton Koh Samui’s Spa Village.



principle behind the training programmes for our people and is built into the Spa Village DNA."

#### **BUILDING A LEGACY, MAKING AN IMPACT**

"As much as the well-being of our guests is very important to Spa Village, the well-being of our people is equally, if not more, important," Lai Ping states. "This is because if our people are well taken care of, they will, in turn, take excellent care of our guests." The Spa Village personnel's inherent talent for healing is honed by modern training programmes run by the YTL International College of Hotel Management, the educational arm of YTL Hotels. These programmes aim to help the personnel deliver the best possible experience for their guests. At the same time, they provide the employees with opportunities for career growth.

"For many of Spa Village's personnel, such opportunities to receive training and have a career are life-changing, not just for themselves, but also others around them," Lai Ping adds. "They are able to contribute financially to improve the lives of their families and communities, or become visible role models who inspire others to aspire."

#### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Two decades on, Spa Village has expanded and thrived, with five Spa Villages across Malaysia, one at The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, Thailand, and a luxury destination Spa Resort in Bali, Indonesia. Also in its portfolio are luxury spas in the UK and Japan. On the horizon are plans to establish more Spa Villages and destination Spa Resorts to complement its current sole property in Tembok, Bali. It will continue to research and develop more unique healing and wellness treatments and experiences that remain true to their roots. And it will also continue to invest in building a strong, well-trained and motivated team – the hands that heal with heart.

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



LIFE FEATURE

# HEALING WITH HEARTS AND HANDS

HONOURING THE HEALING TRADITIONS OF  
THE BALIAN AT SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN. Additional reporting by KENNETH TAN





This and facing pages: situated in the tranquil, coastal environment of northeast Bali, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali provides the perfect holistic retreat.

**S**ituated in an environment that is at once peaceful, beautiful and yet untouched by the frenetic development of Bali's southern regions, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali on the island's northeast coast is the perfect holistic retreat. Sink your feet into the mineral-rich black volcanic sand warmed by the tropical sun. Take deep breaths of the fresh air as gentle sea breezes cool your skin. Be lulled into a state of calm by the hypnotic rhythm of the rolling waves.

From the bucolic resort, you can easily walk along the shores or village roads to the nearby village of Tembok, with its exquisite temple complex. Majestic coconut groves and

palm forests line the way. Melodic birdsong intermittently breaks the silence, while the scents of frangipani, jasmine and ylang ylang perfume the air.

In the distance, the majestic Mount Agung looms. It is here where you discover the ideal place in which to immerse body and soul in the pure spirit of Bali.

Balinese spirituality is strong and omnipresent. It takes the form of faith merged with an ancient belief in the spirits of the natural world. It is manifested in the many customs, rituals and ceremonies that ensure the delicate balance of the spiritual, mental, physical and emotional.

In keeping with this deep-seated sense of spirituality,



the Balinese are therefore more inclined to seek out the services of a *balian* than a medical doctor when they are feeling out of sorts, have any aches or pains, or are ill. A *balian* is a healer who acts as spirit medium, diviner, caster of spells and *masseur*. Possessing massage skills and relying on ancient knowledge of healing handed down through generations, the *balian* will first determine the nature of the ailment. Once that is ascertained, he will decide on the massage techniques, modifying them accordingly during the process. Using his hands, sometimes complemented by other elements from nature, the *balian* instinctively begins working on the problem areas.

Long strokes. Vigorous pushes. Painful squeezes. Gentle rubs. The massage styles are dynamic, therapeutic and



Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's programmes introduce guests to healthy, sustainable life practices, tools and strategies to enhance their health and well-being.

uplifting. The hands of the *balian* gradually take away the aches and pains. In the end, balance is restored and rejuvenation is complete.

In honour of Balinese culture and traditions, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali offers its guests a tailored programme of wellness that combines the therapeutic properties of natural local ingredients and the age-old healing practices of a *balian*. In short, rejuvenation through hearts and hands.

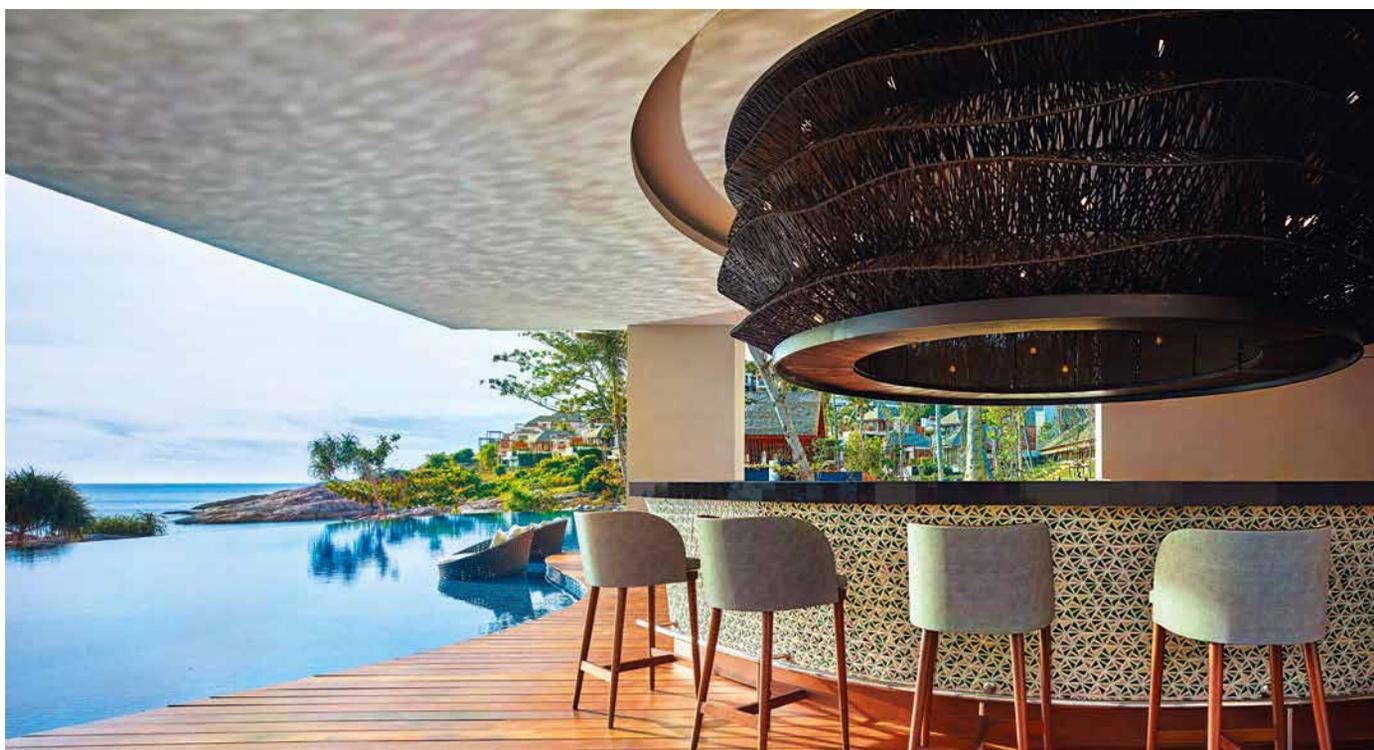
For more information, visit [www.spavillageresort.com](http://www.spavillageresort.com)



# TALES OF THE ISLAND

FROM SPEEDBOAT ADVENTURES TO COCONUT SPA TREATMENTS, A STAY AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, KOH SAMUI OFFERS LAID-BACK YET LUXURIOUS WAYS TO ENJOY THE PLEASURES OF THIS ISLAND.

Words by KATE KU



**K**oh Samui, Thailand's second largest island, is known to visitors around the world for its friendly locals, white-sand beaches that seemingly stretch forever, and a way of life that has stayed much the same for decades. Part of a collection of 42 islands in the Gulf of Thailand, Samui is a calmer and more peaceful haven than its livelier counterparts, Phuket and Krabi. This idyllic getaway, which is just an hour's flight from Bangkok, is known both in its past and present for bounties of coconuts of which Southern Thailand has in abundance.

At The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, a resort that sprawls across 58 acres from cliffs to shore, the island's coconut-producing heritage is best appreciated at Tides, the pool-fronting *al fresco* bar where guests sip on freshly prised coconuts and a rotation of cocktails blended by creative mixologists. It's a place to enjoy cool refreshments and citrus-cured specialities while getting a signature Samui tan. On the other hand, guests seeking educational pursuits—while getting wet—head to the resort's swim reef, the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia. The reef has more than 50 species of marine fish in the thousands that can be fed during specific times each day. Artificial coral reefs create an environment in which clownfish and corals flourish.

But if you'd prefer to experience the sea up close instead, The Ritz-Carlton Speedboat is available for half- and full-day charters. Zip through the Gulf of Thailand's waters on the elegant craft to nearby destinations such as Koh Phangan, Koh Tao, Koh Nang Yuan and Angthong National Marine Park. The marine park, located northwest of Koh Samui, is composed of 42 islands and spans 100 square kilometres. Here, you'll discover exotic wildlife and sea creatures,



This page, from top: Tides' centrepiece bar is the perfect spot for an afternoon drink; the Swim Reef is the largest of its kind within a resort in Southeast Asia.

Facing page: The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, located on the northeastern part of the island, is a stunning 58-acre oceanfront hotel built on the site of a former coconut plantation.



hidden mangroves, waterfalls, secret coves and lakes. Pack a picnic lunch and take in the location's marine wonders by snorkelling, hiking, kayaking, diving and sailing. Alternatively, enjoy an exciting time of ocean fishing or dolphin spotting.

For those wishing to enjoy the laid-back luxury of the resort instead, there's Pak Tai, an open-air pavilion that serves southern Thai delicacies prepared according to the recipes of the chefs' mentors – their mothers. And if tasting Pak Tai's delicately nuanced dishes makes you crave more Thai flavours, the Southern Thai Gastronomic Journey is for you. The experience begins bright and early with a visit to a local market to select the freshest produce. A chef is on-hand to offer tips and pointers on selecting the best ingredients. Immerse in the bustling market's cacophony of sights and sounds as friendly islanders introduce their home to you. Grab a chance to buy local snacks or fruits, each of which is prepared or sliced in front of you. Then, head back to the resort where your culinary immersion becomes hands-on. The resort's chef will educate you on the ways in which to prepare Southern Thai dishes, ranging from zesty salads to delicious curries.

Another way to savour the island's relaxing vibes is through the resort's spa. The cocoon-like Spa Village Koh Samui

comprises eight treatment suites, three massage pavilions, a yoga pavilion, lap pool with cabanas, and a relaxation sala to maximise precious post-treatment me-time. Here, ingredients specific to the location – such as coconut, healing herbs and fresh flowers – are used in therapies, such as Samui's Coconut Heritage, for instance. The treatment begins with the spa's famed revitalising Songkran Shower, followed by a coconut scrub and a relaxing coconut flow massage that lasts an indulgent 90 minutes. The spa experience is capped with a nurturing coconut hair masque. The Blessed Flowers treatment, on the other hand, focuses on the magic of flowers and begins with a gentle exfoliation using a blend of raw flowers, aloe vera and fruit enzymes. Then, a warmed flower poultice is used to hydrate skin, which is followed by a flower balance massage that works along a person's energy meridians to create a sense of harmony from within and without.

At The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui, it's easy to fall in love with the island's natural beauty and palatable sense of peace.

For more information, go to [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)

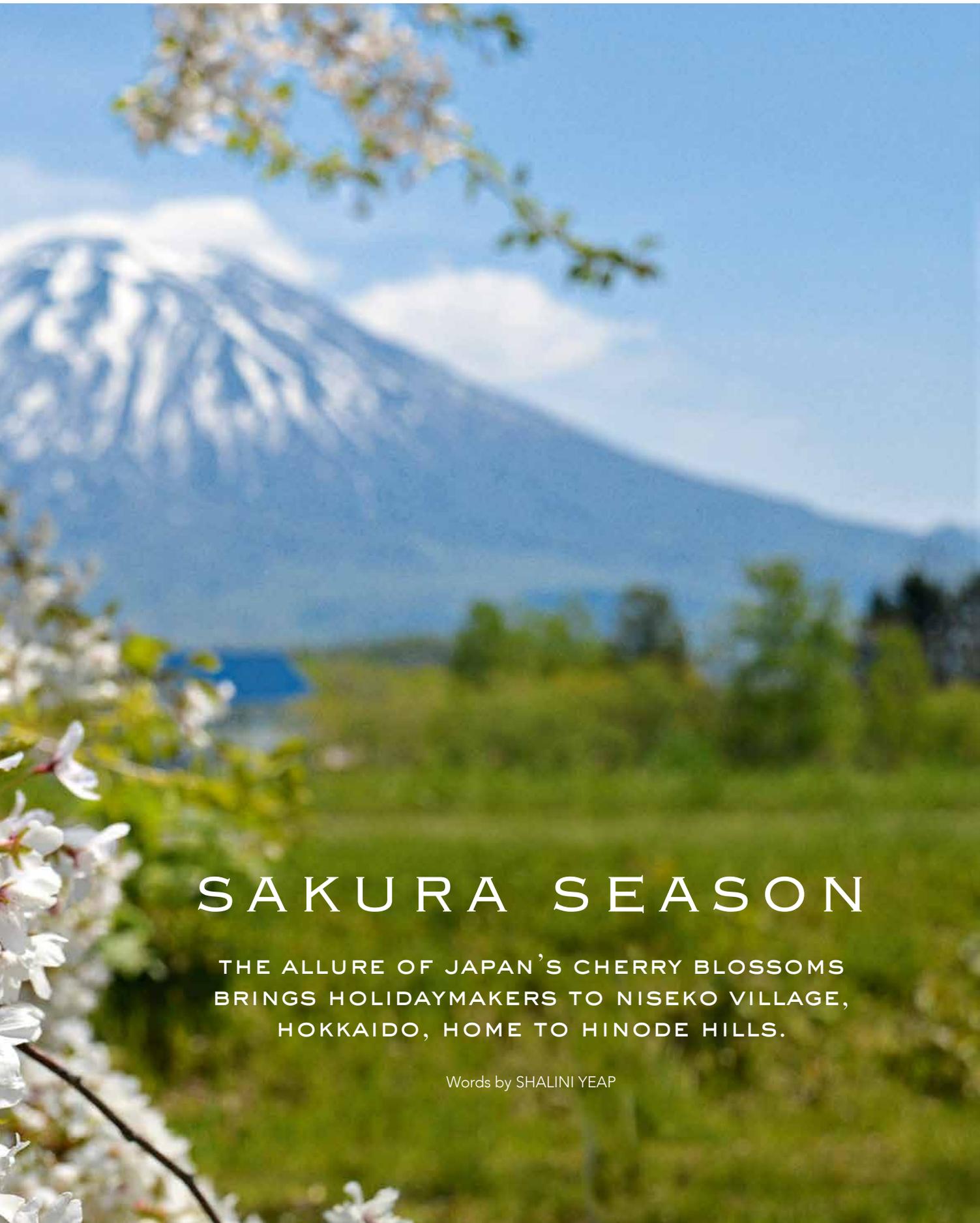


This page, clockwise from above: Pak Thai's private dining alcoves face the resort's unique reef pool; Spa Village Koh Samui's signature pre-spa Songkran Shower ritual is inspired by the annual Songkran festival involving the joyful throwing of water; Spa Village Koh Samui's lap pool with cabanas.

Facing page: Angthong National Marine Park is just an hour away by speedboat from The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui.







# SAKURA SEASON

THE ALLURE OF JAPAN'S CHERRY BLOSSOMS  
BRINGS HOLIDAYMAKERS TO NISEKO VILLAGE,  
HOKKAIDO, HOME TO HINODE HILLS.

Words by SHALINI YEAP



Come spring, Japan's landscape is covered in pink as nature puts on a spectacular show. Clusters of soft pink and white-petalled flowers blooming on leafless branches mark the start of *sakura* or cherry blossom season.

In true *hanami* spirit – a centuries-old custom of flower viewing – locals and visitors plan their entire holidays around the flowering schedule. They hurry and gather to admire the beauty of the cherry blossoms, which have a remarkably brief lifespan.

It is almost a shame that these delicate petals fall at the peak of their beauty, but therein lies the symbolism of the Japanese *sakura* – a metaphor for the fragility and ephemeral nature of life. Even before the first leaves form, the cherry blossoms are already in full bloom and they wave delicately in the wind before falling to the ground with the promise that they will be seen again next spring.

Cherry blossoms appear around February in Okinawa and move north leaving a pretty trail of pink. By April or as late as May, the blossoms would reach Hokkaido, home to Niseko Village and YTL Hotels' latest luxury accommodation, Hinode Hills, whose name pays homage to the rising sun.

This unique residential development with luxury hotel services sits at the heart of Niseko Village and at the base of Mount Niseko Annupuri. The skiing cognoscenti know this place as the powder mecca of Japan.

Inside, contemporary styles and Japanese aesthetics co-exist, with the latter's *wabi-sabi* philosophy – that celebrates the acceptance of imperfection – providing relief and respite from the obsessions of the modern world. Instead, authenticity, natural forms and an appreciation for nature meld beautifully within the walls of Hinode Hills.

When one thinks of the all-season alpine destination that is Niseko Village, its champagne powder would likely first come to mind. Not far from here is the Makkari Shrine where cherry blossoms abound. With the backdrop of Mount Yotei – dubbed the Mount Fuji of Hokkaido – still capped in snow, blue skies and cherry blossoms in full bloom, it is a postcard-perfect picture that won't be forgotten.

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



Named to pay homage to the rising sun, the luxuriously appointed apartments of Hinode Hills embrace *wabi-sabi* aesthetics, backgrounded by the majestic Mount Yotei.





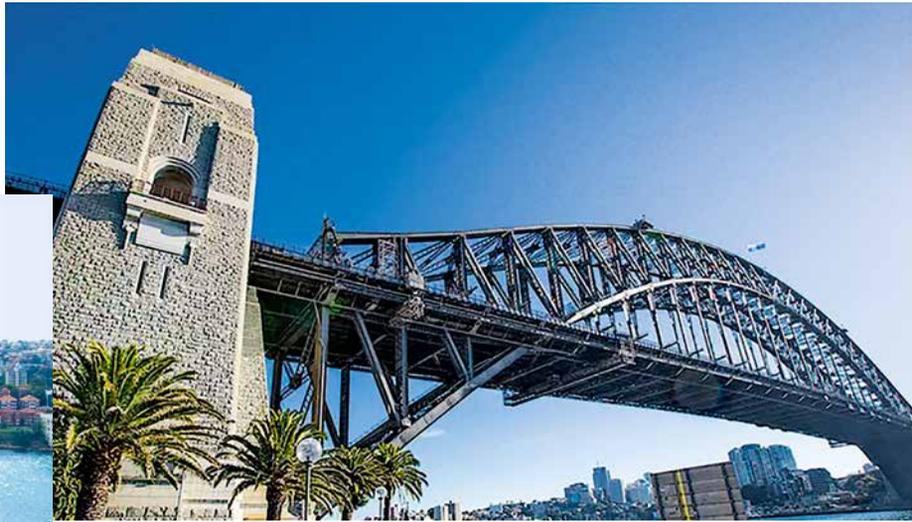
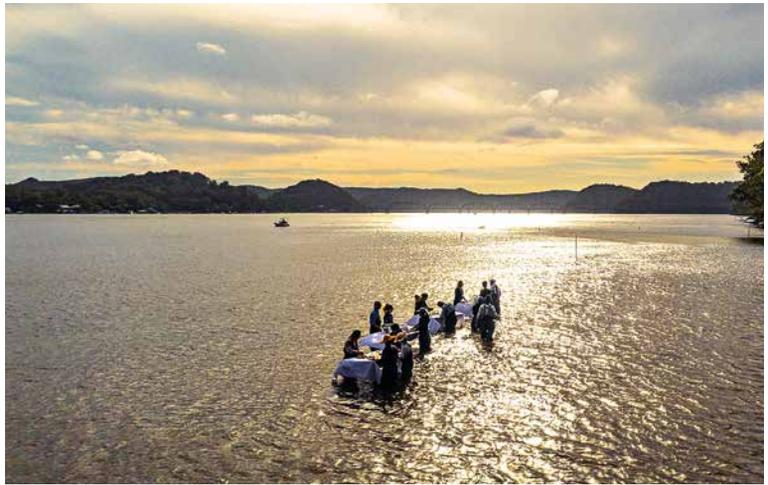
# AUTUMN ADVENTURES IN SYDNEY, MELBOURNE AND BRISBANE

AUTUMN IN AUSTRALIA, WITH ITS CRISP, FRESH AIR AND COOL BREEZES, IS A PERFECT TIME TO ENJOY LEISURELY STROLLS AND INDULGE IN LUXURIOUS EXPERIENCES. HERE ARE 12 UNIQUE, UNFORGETTABLE AUTUMN ADVENTURES FOR YOU TO ENJOY IN THESE AMAZING CITIES.

Words by LAE-HOON TAN



From top: Vivid Sydney; Sydney Opera House.



Clockwise from left: chef Luke Mangan; Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel; Sydney Oyster Farm Tours; Harbour Bridge.

## SYDNEY

### IMMERSE YOURSELF IN A VIBRANT FESTIVAL OF LIGHT, MUSIC, IDEAS AND FOOD

Vivid Sydney is an annual festival that brings together some of the most brilliant, boundary-pushing artists, thinkers and musicians to showcase the soul of the city. From 26 May to 17 June 2023, Sydney comes alive with mesmerising art displays and 3D light projections, exhilarating live music performances, thought-provoking debates, and deep-dive discussions by some of the world's brightest minds.

### DISCOVER SYDNEY'S OLDEST BAR

Custom's House Bar is a historic gastro pub and sun-drenched beer garden located in Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel at Circular Quay. Built in 1826, the historic venue successfully blends tradition with innovation, retaining its original marble bar counter that is now heritage-listed. It serves more than 20 international and craft beers from its iconic chrome beer tap, as well as classic to inventive cocktails, wines and spirits. Delicious hearty gastropub fare completes the experience.

### ENJOY A UNIQUE DINING EXPERIENCE 87 METRES ABOVE SEA LEVEL

Savour a three-course menu on the Harbour Bridge South-East Pylon, served by leading Australian restaurateur and chef, Luke Mangan. Luke's Table at the Pylon Lookout seats up to 20 guests at a long, communal dining table, with stunning views of Sydney Opera House, Harbour Bridge and sunset over Sydney Harbour. Also included is a short, customised tour of the Pylon Lookout & Museum as you make your way up 200 steps to the Lookout level, where you'll enjoy this elevated gastronomic experience.

### GET A TASTE OF LIVING ON AN OYSTER FARM

Sign up for Sydney Oyster Farm Tours' Immerse Yourself package to visit the Sheridan family's farm in Broken Bay for an authentic oyster farm experience. You'll get to meet second- and third-generation oyster farmers, visit the oyster leases on Hawkesbury River, and learn how to open the molluscs. Cap the tour with a sampling of the famous Broken Bay Oysters at your private in-water table.

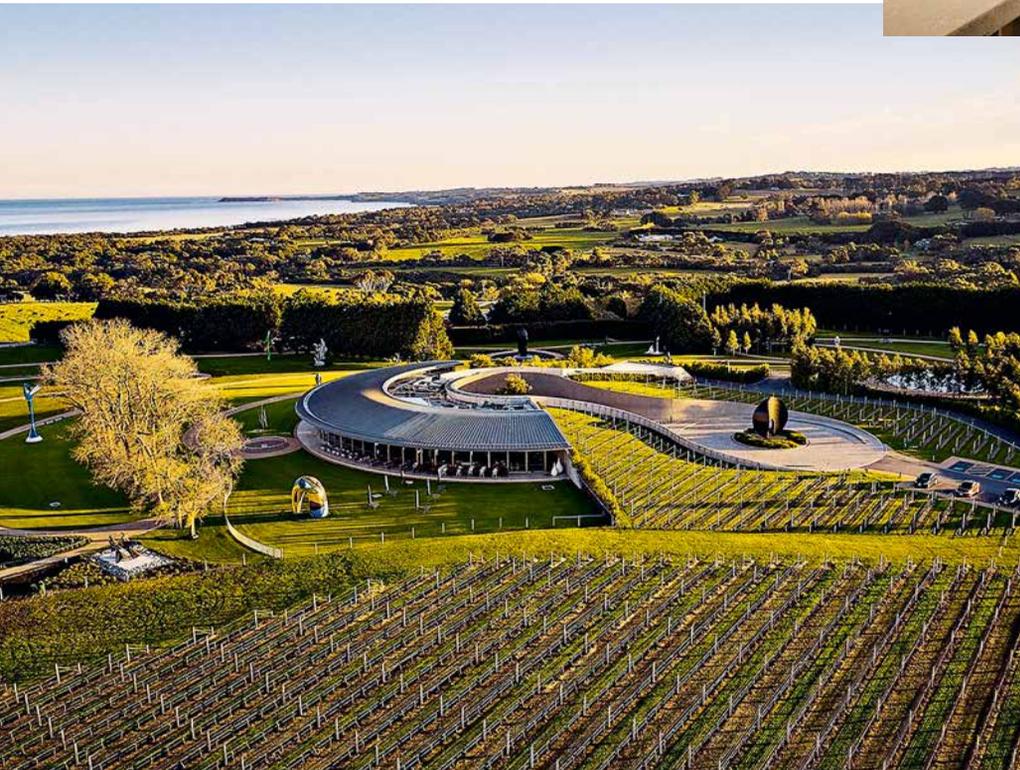


## MELBOURNE

### SAMPLE CURATED FLIGHTS OF AUSTRALIAN WHISKIES AND GINS

A bustling spot in the heart of Melbourne's central business district, the stylish M Bar, Melbourne Marriott Hotel's new lobby bar and lounge, features an extensive selection of whiskies, spirits, signature cocktails, champagne, fine wines and craft beers. Pair the drinks with delicious appetisers and sharing boards. And on Friday evenings, enjoy acoustic performances by talented local artists who bring a touch of soul and melody to the atmosphere.





This page, clockwise from left: Pt Leo Estate; Alba Thermal Springs & Spa; TarraWarra Estate; wine tasting at Pt Leo Estate.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Melbourne Marriott Hotel; Farmer's Daughters restaurant; provenance-based cuisine at Farmer's Daughters restaurant; M Bar at Melbourne Marriott Hotel.

**EXPLORE A THREE-STORY LOVE LETTER TO GIPPSLAND AND ITS PRODUCE**

Farmer's Daughters offers a unique approach to provenance-based cuisine and a creative culinary experience that combines retail, dining and grazing. Spread over three levels, the Farmer's Daughters restaurant, delicatessen and rooftop bar at 80 Collins Street transport visitors on a seasonal journey from the city of Melbourne to the rolling hills, mountains, rivers and beaches of the region. It sources its produce directly from farms in Gippsland, the food bowl of Victoria and home to artisan farmers, producers, growers and agrarian thought-leaders.

**DISCOVER THE RESTORATIVE POWER OF WATER**

An hour's drive from central Melbourne, the serene Alba Thermal Springs & Spa on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula is dedicated to offering a luxurious spa experience while respecting the natural environment. Located on a beautifully

landscaped 37-acre property, it provides an array of spa services and bathing experiences to renew, repair and recalibrate. Its on-site restaurant, Thyme, presents meals designed by award-winning chef, Karen Martini, using locally sourced, seasonal produce. You can plan to spend a relaxing day here with the entire family as children are welcomed.

**DRINK AND BE MERRY**

There's no autumn activity in Australia that could be more quintessential than exploring its wine regions. East of Melbourne is Yarra Valley, the state's oldest growing region. Visit unique cellar doors such as TarraWarra Estate, where you can enjoy a stunning tasting experience beneath a grassy hill; or Pt Leo Estate, home to single-vineyard, hand-harvested wine, and the iconic Laura and Pt Leo restaurants, where you can expect meticulously created dishes, complemented by incredible 180-degree views of the stunning Sculpture Park and Western Port Bay.



## BRISBANE

### LIVE BRISBANE LIKE A LOCAL

Stay at Brisbane Marriott Hotel, located in the central business district next to Brisbane River, and discover the city by ferry while enjoying the amazing vistas. Visit nearby sights such as South Bank, Brisbane Showgrounds and Queen Street Mall. Venture out to Howard Smith Wharves, Brisbane's newest restaurant and entertainment precinct, which is home to local breweries, fine-dining restaurants, bars, live entertainment and even yoga by the river. After a full day out, retreat to your luxurious guest room and soak up scenic views of Brisbane River by night.

### HOP ON AN ELEVATED WINE TOUR

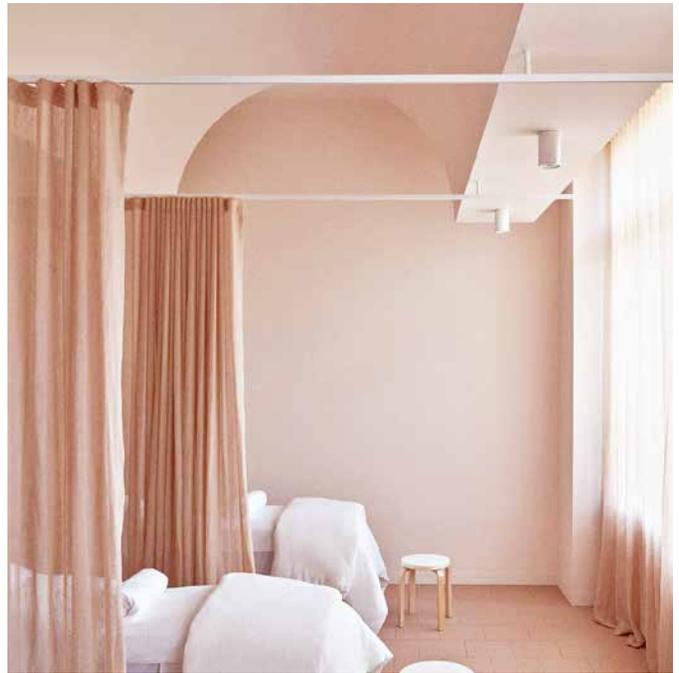
Elite Helicopters Wine Tour will take you on an unforgettable journey of some of the most beautiful wineries in the greater Brisbane area. With an experienced pilot at the controls and a delicious lunch provided, all you have to do is sit back and



relax as you take in the breathtaking views of the region's top wineries and unparalleled sky-high vistas between your premium sip-stops. You will also get to select a bottle of wine from each winery to take home.

### FIND SANCTUARY IN A WELLNESS HAVEN

Kailo Wellness Medispa is a private and peaceful retreat for those looking for premium treatments and products. Combining a strong holistic wellness philosophy with the latest world-class techniques, Kailo gives its clients the confidence to look and feel their best via its skin health, medical aesthetics and lifelong wellness services. From advanced corrective skin treatments to vitamin therapy and unique spa rituals, Kailo offers something for everyone in a calming and minimalist space.



**EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC OF TANGALOOMA WRECKS**

River to Bay's new high-speed boat tours from Brisbane to Tangalooma Wrecks take less than an hour, allowing adventurers more time to explore the coral ecosystem of Moreton Island. The iconic Tangalooma Wrecks is a favourite snorkelling spot, featuring sunken ships and a marine wonderland of turtles, dugongs, dolphins, more than 200 species of fish and 130 species of coral. You'll also learn about the wrecks, Moreton Island, Moreton Bay and their importance to the locals and the region.



From top: Kailo Wellness Medispa; snorkelling with River to Bay; River to Bay's fast tour boats travel at high speed with minimal impact to the environment and other river users.

Facing page, clockwise from left: Brisbane Marriott Hotel; The Overflow Estate 1895 and Kooroomba Vineyard and Lavender Farm, two of the wineries that guests will visit with Elite Helicopters Wine Tours.

# ALL THAT GLITTERS

THE WESTIN PERTH IS THE  
JEWEL IN THE CITY THAT GOLD BUILT.

Words by MUNA NOOR

**T**he chilled out, sun-drenched capital of Western Australia, Perth has the egregious reputation of being one of the most isolated cities in the world. Its revenge response has been a fetching glow-up that has transformed it from gold rush town to 2023's must-visit destination.

The East End of Perth is representative of this change. Recently revitalised, the historic heart of Perth was once an industrial area. Today it's one of its most exciting postal codes. It's also home to Hibernian Place, a 2,000-square-metre central plaza that has fashioned itself as a magnet for beautiful people, fantastic food and creative events.

The 368-room, five-star Westin Perth sits at the centre of Hibernian Place. A striking metal-and-glass monolith amid a concentration of heritage-listed buildings, The Westin Perth

has garnered plaudits for its chic design and stellar service. Connected by the free CAT (Central Area Transit) bus service and nearby railway line, it's a convenient jump-off point for meetings in the central business district, body surfing in Fremantle, or café and boutique trawling in the leafy suburb of Subiaco.

Setting the tone for your stay, the portraiture of homegrown street artist Rone on the hotel's stone artifice shrugs off any perception that this is a cookie-cutter corporate hotel.

Rooms are light-filled, spacious and designed by Melbourne-based design firm BAR Studio. Stylishly furnished with contemporary flair, its soothing neutral palette is the perfect showcase for the bold artwork that hangs in the rooms and common areas. They're inspired by the hues and textures of the state's dramatic oceanic and desert landscapes.





All rooms come with the usual bells and whistles. Breathtaking vistas of the city are revealed upon entry by a nifty feature: automatic blinds and curtains. The corner rooms, in particular, benefit from the floor-to-ceiling windows; while suites have exclusive access to the Executive Club Lounge and its private haven for breakfasts and evening canapés.

The Westin hangs its success on your happiness, and staff will go above and beyond the call of duty so that you leave feeling more invigorated than when you arrived. Thanks to Westin's signature Heavenly® Beds, a night of restorative sleep is guaranteed, while the highly rated Bodhi spa, located on the fifth floor of the hotel, extends your sense of well-being thanks to its tranquil setting and pampering face and body treatments.

For those who like their dopamine hits harder, The Westin's Fitness Studio is open 24 hours a day and has fresh gear on loan in case you forget yours. With numerous parks close by, why stay indoors when you can run the curves of Swan River and across the Matagarup and Causeway bridges or through Elizabeth Quay to King's Park? A low-impact swim in the hotel's gloriously heated, infinity pool is your reward upon return.

Balance is essential, and Perth delivers on Australia's reputation as a gourmet paradise. At The Westin Perth, you can wake up to breakfast at Garum. The Roman Osteria, presided over by celebrity chef Guy Grossi, is nestled inside the restored Hibernian Hall and serves a decadent first meal. Its *aperitivo*, that quintessential Italian pastime of libations,

sets Hibernian Place alive in the evenings, and on weekends, the seasonal high tea experience at Haven Lounge has become a sensation for its tiered tower of confections that can be paired with glasses of Moët & Chandon.

There's more at your doorstep. Wander the historical quarter to discover the town that gold built – The Perth Mint (still in operation) and Old Treasury Building stand testament to Australia's frontier years. Then take in the impressive aboriginal art at the nearby Art Gallery of Western Australia.

For retail therapy, check out the upscale thoroughfare of King Street, where multi-label store Cult Status and luxury brands like Gucci trade. Your good taste deserves a toast; Goody Twos, the Japanese basement bar that serves award-winning whisky and izakaya titbits is just the place. For gifts, Perth City Farm is a treasure of good vibes and ethical and sustainable local produce. And if you can resist the temptation, Sue Lewis Chocolatier's incorporates native ingredients like saltbush and lemon myrtle into her coveted chocolate bonbons.

You've barely travelled more than one kilometre from the hotel. Beyond this distance lies silvery ribbons of sand, sapphire waters and emerald wine valleys to explore. With The Westin Perth poised to be your comfortable and exquisitely stylish base, all that this Western Australian oasis has to offer is yours.

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



# TAKING THE PATH LESS TRAVELLED

UNUSUAL LONDON WALKS FROM THE ACADEMY

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



Situated in the heart of Bloomsbury in London's West End, The Academy comprises five Georgian townhouses combined into one charming luxury hotel.



Guests of The Academy can walk four minutes to the British Museum (above) or take a slightly longer stroll of 15 minutes to the Royal Opera House (below).

**L**ocated in the beating heart of Bloomsbury in London's West End, The Academy was transformed from a collection of five Georgian townhouses into a charming luxury hotel that is a proud member of the prestigious Small Luxury Hotels of the World club. After a multi-million pound transformation overseen by New York-based designer Alexandra Champalimaud, this 50-room-and-suite property is the perfect address to take you from tranquil Georgian squares to all the culture that this English capital has to offer.

As a Malaysian who's lived in London for 17 years, let me guide you on two different half-day walks from The Academy

to Covent Garden, with seven unusual stops along the way that will take you from ancient Egypt to an English ballet and onwards to an immersive Monopoly board experience.

If you walked from The Academy to Covent Garden, it would take a brisk 20 minutes. You'd get there in less time than it takes to read the morning paper, but where's the pleasure in that?

### THE KINGS, PICKPOCKETS AND ROUTEMASTERS WALK

Our first stop would be the British Museum, one of the oldest museums in the world, with a wondrous collection of Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek, Roman, European and Middle Eastern galleries. See ancient mummies and learn the true story about Cleopatra in The Egyptian Room. In The Middle Eastern Rooms, marvel at the extravagant hunting rituals of the last great Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal, who reigned from 669 to around 631 BC.

Guided tours for our next stop, the Royal Opera House, are back, offering visitors a chance to step into the stunning Covent Garden site. But we're not going to do that today. We're going on the Stages & Cells of Covent Garden Tour to learn about crime and theatre in this part of London. In the 17th century, the arrival of theatres in the Bow Street area ushered in pickpockets, highwaymen, murderers, sex workers and gin palaces, leading to London's first police force – the notorious Bow Street Runners. Some of the stories you'll discover on





Chez Antoinette is highly regarded for its artisanal French cuisine and is just two minutes away from the London Transport Museum.



this tour include the tale of the infamous Charles Macklin, who used his acting skills to get away with murder, as well as how the Bow Street Runners tried to blend in with the chorus on the Royal Opera House stage to foil a diamond heist.

It will be time for lunch right about now, so we're going to Chez Antoniette, a French café in Covent Garden's famous Market Building, for its gourmet tartines (French organic open-faced sandwiches), which come courtesy of chef Marion Bohe who trained at the renowned Institut Paul Bocuse.

One of my favourite places is the London Transport Museum, which is housed in a former fruit and flower market. It features buses, trolleybuses, railway carriages and locomotives from across the history of transport in London. It packs in a lot more than you might expect given the limited space available.

### THE SUN DIALS, SCI-FI, BAZAARS AND MONOPOLY WALK

Another half-day walk from The Academy for some surprising experiences is this one, which takes you into the Seven Dials neighbourhood. The area is known for its collection of independent shops, restaurants, bars and heritage buildings. Seven Dials is located at the intersection of seven streets: Neal Street, Earlham Street, Shorts Gardens, Monmouth Street, Mercer Street, and the two sections of Covent Garden. Right smack in the centre of the seven streets is the Seven Dials Monument, a column topped with a sundial, that serves as a landmark for the neighbourhood.

The Forbidden Planet London Megastore is the world's largest and best-known science fiction, fantasy and cult entertainment retailer. It is 929 square metres of floor space with 25,000 action figures, books, comics, graphic novels, toys, games and all the best merchandise from your favourite series. Even if you're not a geek, the sheer amount of paraphernalia is a sight to behold. And if nothing else, you could get cool gifts for friends and family.

After an Indian lunch at Cinnamon Bazaar, whose chef is inspired by old-world marketplaces, you might be ready for some real-life Monopoly. Experience the game come to life as you roll the giant dice and move around the interactive board at Monopoly Lifesized. Be entertained by 80 minutes of

immersive gameplay as you attempt exhilarating challenges and build your London empire. Just don't end up in jail!

If you're a guest of The Academy, we also recommend discussing with their Guest Services team for more ideas on things to do. They can also connect you with the expert team at Travel Curious to tailor experiences just for you. And be sure to pre-book before you check-in at the hotel.

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



Left: Forbidden Planet's famous London Megastore on Shaftesbury Avenue.

Below: Cinnamon Bazaar's modern Indian menu is inspired by bazaar market cuisine.

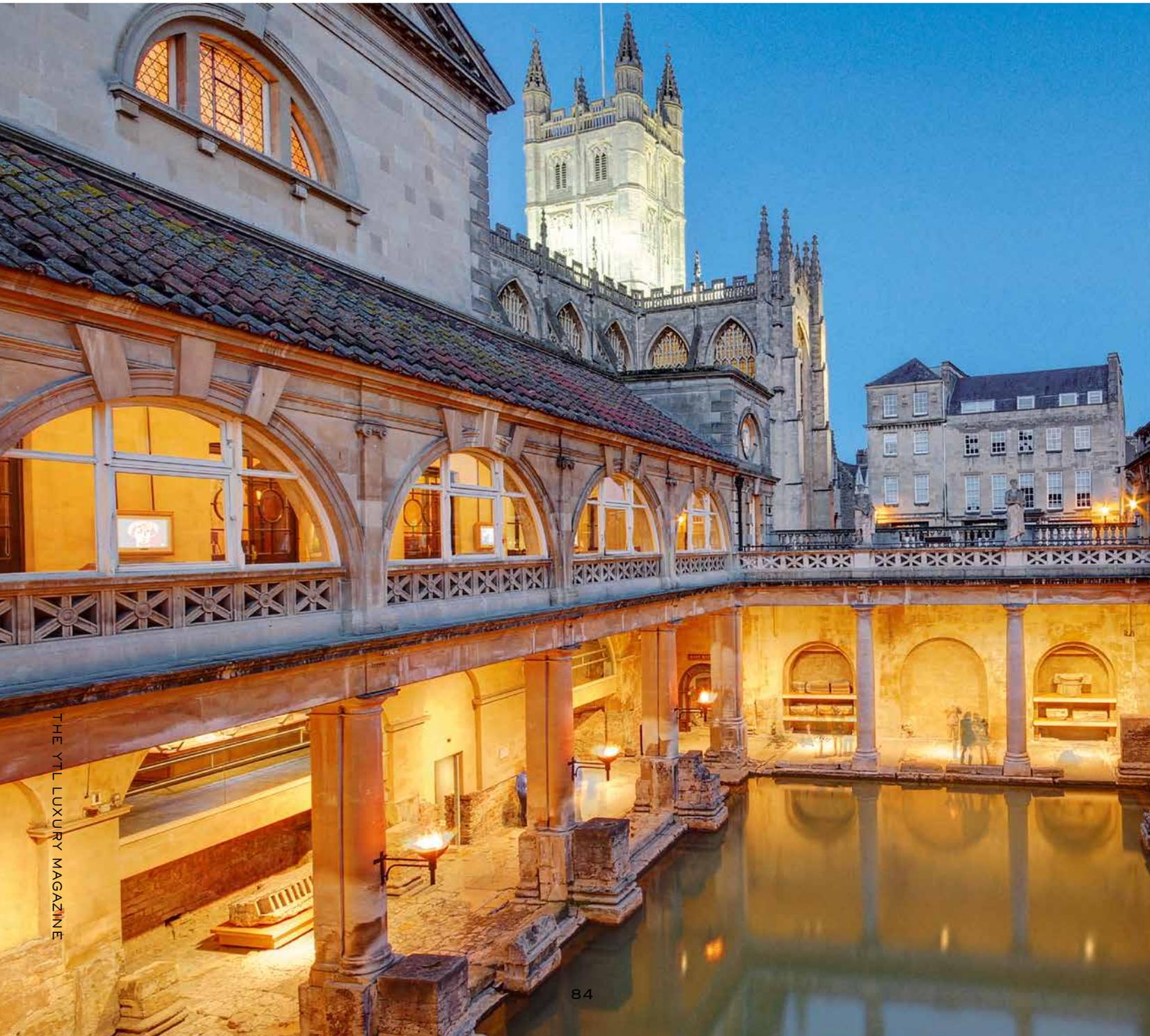


LIFE FEATURE

# CELTIC GODDESSES AND ROMAN TEMPLES

HOW A SACRED THERMAL SPRINGS INSPIRED  
THE SPA VILLAGE AT GAINSBOROUGH BATH.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



The Romans constructed their extensive spa complex in Bath in 43AD. That is how long there has been a bathhouse culture in this elegant city in the valley of the River Avon. The first guardians of the sacred hot springs at Bath were the Dobunni, an Iron Age Celtic tribe. They were already living in the British Isles when Rome invaded Britannia in 43AD. The Dobunni worshipped Sulis, a sun deity and goddess of the thermal springs at Bath. When the Romans arrived, they built a temple to Minerva, their goddess of war, wisdom and medicine near the hot springs. They also built a great bathhouse complex called Aquae Sulis. But how did the Celts and Romans reconcile the worship of two goddesses

in one sacred site? Well, local Celtic beliefs prevailed, and the two merged into one to become Sulis Minerva. Sacrifices were likely made to the goddess at the temple as more than 1,000 Roman coins were discovered in the waters along with inscribed tablets and other personal items such as jewellery.

The baths were a huge draw and people travelled across the country to bathe in the waters and worship at the religious temple. After the Romans withdrew from Britain in the early fifth century, the baths were neglected and later destroyed by floods. Aquae Sulis lay dormant and forgotten for 1,300 years until the 17th century, when English doctors began to prescribe the drinking of the thermal waters to cure illnesses. The first Pump Room opened in 1706, allowing patients to access water directly from the spring. It eventually became the centre of the Georgian social scene, visited by Jane Austen and later Charles Dickens. The Pump Room today is still the place to be seen for afternoon tea and dinner.

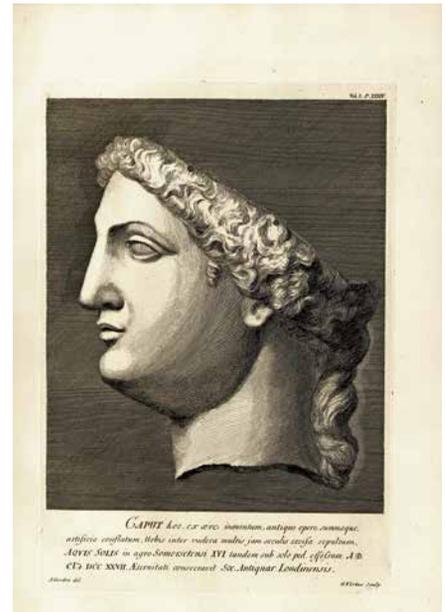
In 1878, the city surveyor, architect Major Charles Davis, discovered the Roman remains of the baths and endeavoured to excavate these over the next few years. The site was opened to the public in 1897 and has been excavated, extended and conserved throughout the 20th century. In 2011, a huge £5.5 million redevelopment project restored the Roman Baths to its present glory.





The Georgian Pump Room has been the social heart of Bath for more than two centuries, and boasts among its previous patrons Jane Austen and Charles Dickens.

Below, far right: the gilt bronze head of the goddess Sulis Minerva is one of the best known objects from Roman Britain.

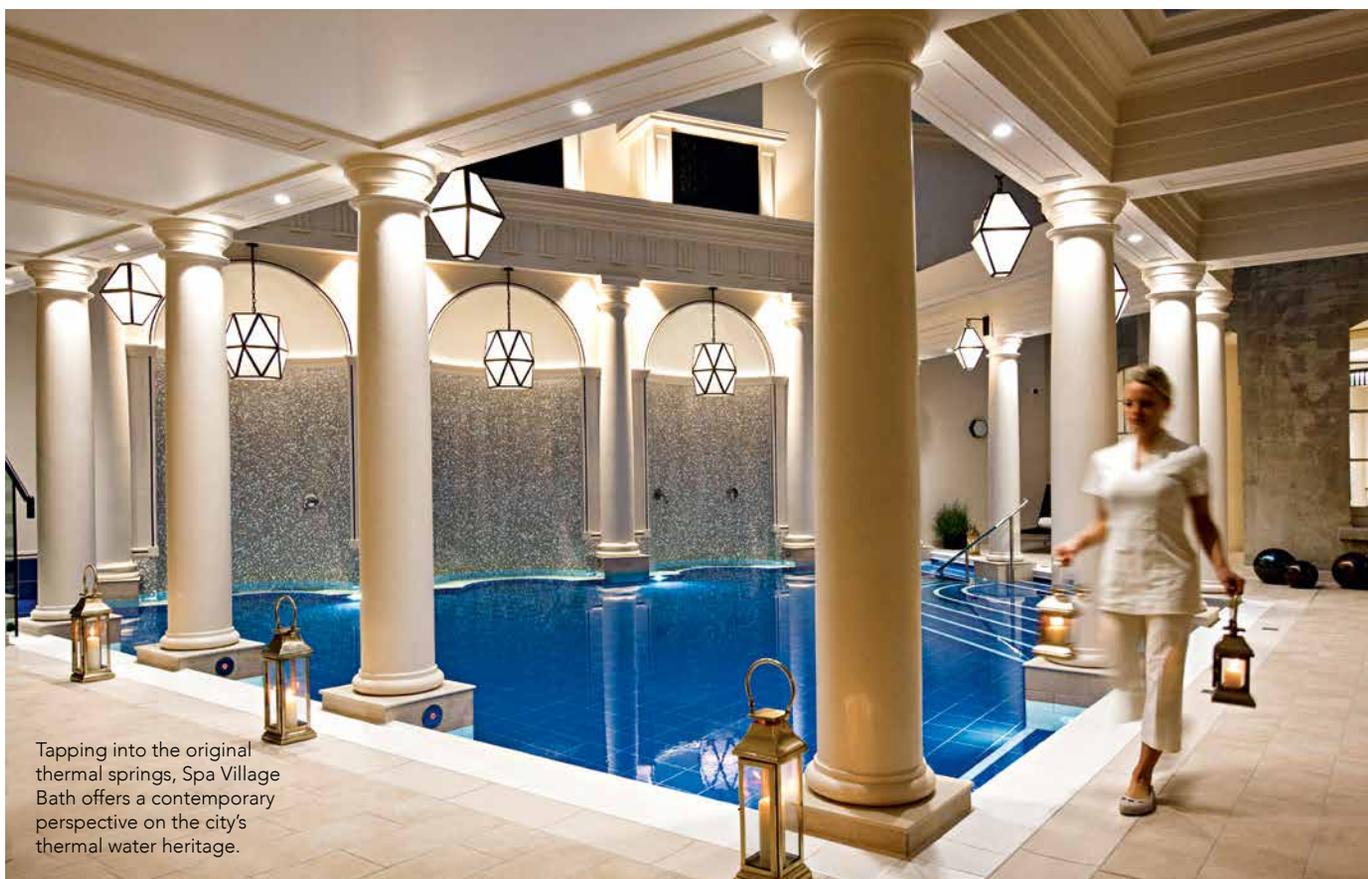


For a thermal spa experience that is a little more special and private, book yourself into an exclusive spa guest room at The Gainsborough Bath Spa hotel to enjoy the in-bathroom access to the thermal waters. The luxury hotel occupies two Grade II Listed buildings, with distinguished Georgian and Victorian façades in the heart of the city and is centred around the healing treatments of Spa Village Bath. The Gainsborough is the only hotel in the UK to have the exclusive privilege of having access to the natural thermal, mineral-rich waters.

Spa Village Bath honours the Roman thermal water heritage as well as the healing traditions inspired by select

signature therapies of the original Spa Villages in Malaysia. The Bath House experience invites guests to take the spring waters in the privacy of the hotel spa. Guests will begin their visit with a spa circuit that includes dipping in two natural thermal pools of varying temperatures, visiting a traditional and an infrared sauna, a steam room and an ice alcove. There are elegant relaxation areas for reading, meditating, engaging in quiet conversation or just enjoying the delicious hot chocolate made from a Georgian recipe.

To enjoy a stay with a Roman vibe, I highly recommend Roman Renewal, which layers three different treatments throughout your 85-minute experience. It starts with a salt,



Tapping into the original thermal springs, Spa Village Bath offers a contemporary perspective on the city's thermal water heritage.



lime and ginger scrub to soften the skin, followed by a body massage using Vitamin E, almond oil and camellia oil. While the body hibernates in the after-glow of your massage, you'll enjoy a facial of uplifting rose essential oils to restore radiance to your complexion. You'll leave the treatment room glowing like the Roman Empress Livia.

After a long, exhilarating, but tiring day of sightseeing, there can be no better salve for your limbs than to pop down to the Spa Village. Book the 50-minute Re-Energising Bamboo Massage, a technique from Southeast Asia that uses warm bamboo sticks to knead away muscular tension and to release stress using peach oil. The rolling and kneading of

bamboo stimulates and heats the body, enhances circulation and dissipates toxins. In China and Japan, the bamboo has long been believed to have healing properties. Another unique body treatment is the hour-long Thermal Candle Massage. A special oil-infused candle is melted to release the aroma of rose, aloe vera and cotton oils, and is then gently poured over the skin to melt away tension and to relieve tired, aching muscles.

Whether you embrace the Roman philosophy of healing or dabble in the Southeast Asian therapies of bamboo massages, your visit to the thermal springs of Bath will be following royal footsteps. The wife of King James II, Mary of Modena, was unable to conceive an heir, but after taking the waters in The Cross Bath, she promptly became pregnant with a son. It was either the thermal waters or the effect of the waters that, according to Roman historian Tacitus, encourages bathers to be a little flirty!

Queen Anne, who ruled England from 1702 to 1714, visited Bath to take the waters regularly, seeking a cure for gout. Her visits prompted the renaming of The New Bath to The Queen's Bath.

Once you're back in your room, light a scented candle and say a word of thanks to the gorgeous Celtic Roman goddess Sulis Minerva.

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



At Monkey Island Estate, there are several artworks featuring monkeys, which are also known as *singerie* paintings.



LIFE FEATURE

AN  
ENGLISH  
QUEEN,  
A POPE  
AND LOTS  
OF MONKEY  
MISCHIEF

WHEN GOSSIP AND POLITICS  
MEET AT MONKEY ISLAND ESTATE.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

**T**here are many islands on the River Thames in Berkshire, a small well-to-do county on the western edge of London. Most are small and uninhabited, but one boasts a luxury hotel and a long, remarkable history. That island is Monkey Island, near the village of Bray. There are no live monkeys on the islet, but the paintings of these primates in various poses in the pavilion are quite infamous. They were commissioned from the French artist Andien de Clermont in the 18th century and are called *singerie* paintings, as the word for monkey in French is *singe*.

There are several explanations for why it's called Monkey Island, but let's start with the one that's heavy on political gossip and light on historical fact.

It's been said that the island was used by Elizabeth I as a refuge from plots to kill her during her reign. After the queen was excommunicated by Pope Pius V in 1570, there were three attempts on her life. The name of the island may have evolved from a superstition that if you were touched by a monkey you would turn into one to keep papist assassins away. Although these Elizabethan intrigues occurred 200 years before the monkeys were painted, it has not prevented mischievous political satirists from using the paintings to mock the Catholic church.

In the painting about fishing, the angling monkeys represent Queen Elizabeth I's rule subduing the submissive emissaries of the pope, who is represented as a fish. Another picture shows an animal eating a snake, while the pope's coat of arms has a snake symbol; again, this has been read as Elizabeth I demonstrating her power over the Vatican. The painting with a languid monkey reclining with a pipe represents Elizabeth's courtiers, and they are being rowed by a subservient smaller female monkey dressed in the pope's colours.

Elizabeth I may or may not have visited the island, but historical records do confirm that use of the island goes all the way back to 1197. There was an abbey on the island called Monk's Eyot, with the word 'eyot' being archaic English for 'island', and corrupted into Monkey Island today.

In 1723, the island was bought by Charles Spencer, the 3rd Duke of Marlborough who was a keen angler. He set out to build his private fishing idyll by commissioning two buildings from Palladian architect Robert Morris: a two-storey Fishing Temple and an octagonal Fishing Pavilion. It is in the pavilion that the Monkey Room can be found, where de Clermont painted monkeys punting, hunting and fishing.

In the 19th century, the island did enjoy royal visits from King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, as well as celebrities such as opera singer Dame Nellie Melba, poet Siegfried Sassoon, composer Sir Edward Elgar, and author HG Wells and his on-and-off lover Rebecca West. As Monkey Island can only be reached by bridge, boat or helicopter, you should plan your own unique, full-service luxury stay before your next visit to the UK.

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







# A PUB CRAWL THROUGH FIRES, PLAGUES AND WARS

STAY AT THREADNEEDLES HOTEL FOR A LESSON IN HISTORY  
WITH PUBS AS YOUR TEXTBOOK.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

**T**he French have their cafes, Americans their sports bars and the British have their pubs. Alehouses, inns and taverns in Britain were known as public houses, which is where the word 'pub' hails from. It's where village, parish or town residents gather to relax, drink and forget their worries. History tells us that the British pub actually started life as an Italian wine bar and dates back almost 2,000 years. Alcohol has been drunk and served throughout the British Isles in one form or another since the Bronze Age. However, the origins of what we now recognise as the pub started to appear during the Roman occupation of Britain and were known as *tabernae* or shops that sold wine.

Many of these wine shops were quickly built in AD43 alongside Roman roads and towns to help quench the thirst of the Roman legions. While Romans drank wine, it was ale that was the early Briton's tippable of choice and these *tabernae* (where we get the word 'tavern' from) quickly adapted to provide the locals with their favourite drink. These taverns survived after the Romans left Britain in AD410 and catered to

an evolving client base of invading Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Scandinavian Vikings.

Taverns as early military recruitment centres? Not such a barmy idea, actually. In 1189, Richard the Lionheart used an inn called Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem in Nottingham to recruit soldiers for his crusade to the Holy Lands. Some taverns also offered rooms for weary travellers such as merchants or pilgrims, as written about by Geoffrey Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales* around the 1380s.

Threadneedles Hotel, an elegant Autograph Collection property, is brilliantly located in the heart of the City of London, making it an excellent choice if you want to immerse yourself in the history of the City's pubs that have survived fires, plagues and wars over the centuries. Threadneedles Hotel is a former Victorian bank that has been transformed into a discreet, boutique-style property, less than a kilometre from Tower Bridge and The Shard. Start this historic pub walk from the hotel and it will take you to six of the oldest and most evocative pubs in the Square Mile, all of which have inspired Chaucer, Shakespeare and Dickens.



## THREADNEEDLES HISTORIC PUB WALK



### 1. JAMAICA WINE HOUSE ST MICHAEL'S ALLEY, CORNHILL, EC3V 9DS

Start at Jamaica Wine House. It's not easy to find, but that makes the challenge more tantalising. Look out for a red stone facade with dark green-and-black metal window supports. It was built on the site of London's first coffee house frequented by Samuel Pepys in 1652 amid a labyrinth of medieval courts and backstreets near Monument. Affectionately known as the Jampot, the pub has historic links with the sugar trade and plantations of the West Indies.



### 2. THE GLOBE 83 MOORGATE, EC2M 6SA

The second pub is located north of Jamaica Wine House. The Globe is near Moorgate and Liverpool Street underground stations as well as the Barbican Centre. The pub is special as it runs along the line of the ancient Roman wall and has a breathtaking rococo exterior. The Globe is run by Nicholson's, which has been managing ale and gin establishments since 1873.



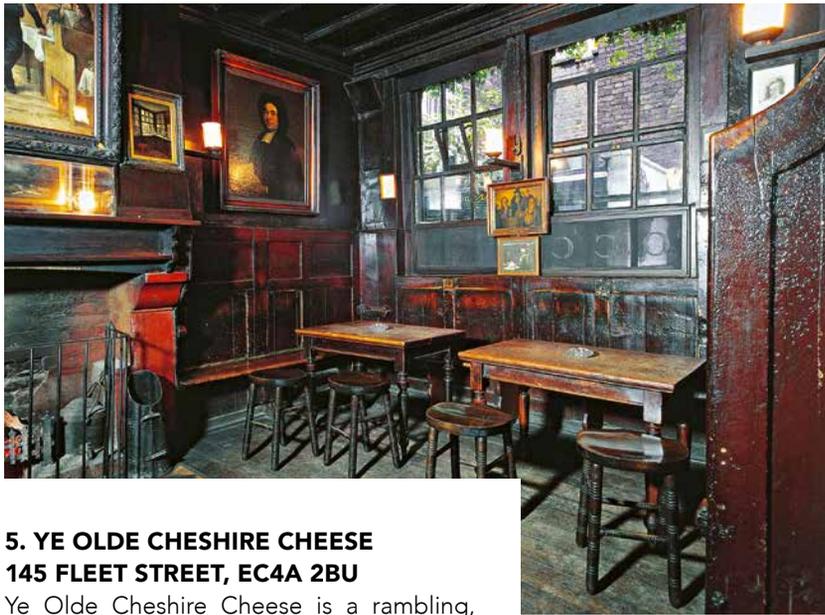
### 3. YE OLDE MITRE 1 ELY COURT, ELY PLACE, EC1N 6SJ

Ye Olde Mitre is often described as the hardest pub to find in London but here's a clue, it's near Hatton Garden. It was built in 1546 for the servants of the bishops of Ely. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have once danced around a cherry tree in its back garden with Sir Christopher Hatton, her Lord Chancellor and a royal favourite.



#### 4. CITTIE OF YORKE 22 HIGH HOLBORN, HOLBORN, WC1V 6BN

Tucked in the heart of London's legal quarter, the historic Cittie of Yorke pub reminds one of a pirate's galley. Inside you'll find a wooden-beam ceiling and a great iron fireplace in the centre of the room. The Welsh poet Dylan Thomas apparently composed an impromptu ode to the pub when it was called Henneky's Long Bar. This has been a pub site since 1430 and was reconstructed in Victorian times to its original design.



#### 5. YE OLDE CHESHIRE CHEESE 145 FLEET STREET, EC4A 2BU

Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese is a rambling, twisting 17th-century institution and is probably London's most famous pub. Since it was founded, it has hosted literary greats like Charles Dickens, GK Chesterton and Mark Twain. Although the inside is unassuming at first glance, the unique interior sprawls out over at least four levels, and customers discover new areas at each visit. Be sure to head down the narrow stairs to the lower vaults, which are thought to be even older than the 17th-century upper storeys. Sadly, the saucy pictures on the tiles around the fireplace are no longer there.

#### 6. YE OLD WATLING 29 WATLING ST, EC4M 9BR

Your historic pub crawl ends at Ye Old Watling, which basks in the shade of St Paul's Cathedral on Watling Street, one of Britain's greatest arterial roads of the Roman and post-Roman periods. The pub was burnt down in the Great Fire of London but was rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren in 1668 to house his workers and provide somewhere for them to drink. The plans for St Paul's Cathedral were drawn up in what is now the dining room of the pub.



Finally, make sure you've booked a table at Socialize, the modern British brasserie at Threadneedles Hotel, as you're not likely to want to wander far for dinner after 'researching' all these pubs.

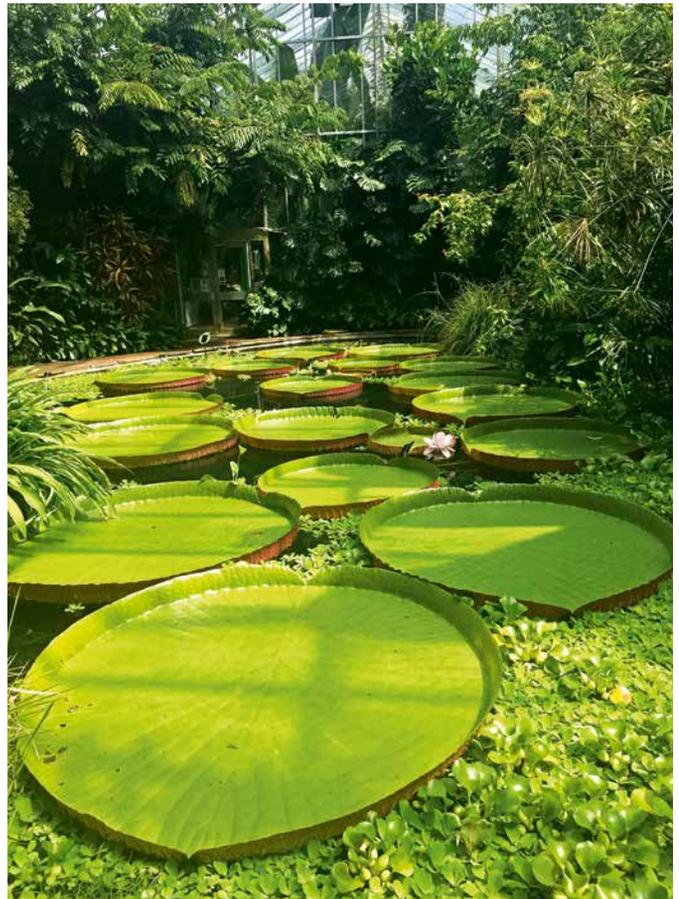
For more information, please visit [www.hotelthreadneedles.co.uk](http://www.hotelthreadneedles.co.uk)



# APRIL SHOWERS AND SAKURA BLOSSOMS

SPRINGTIME STROLLS IN EDINBURGH.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



**E**very April, a drowsy Edinburgh stirs gradually from its winter slumber. The days are longer, springtime bulbs poke their heads out of the earth, pink sprinkles of cherry blossoms cascade down, and the city celebrates Easter traditions and holidays. It's the perfect time to visit the Scottish capital. At other times of the year, a visitor notices the elegant, formal neoclassical lines of Edinburgh. But spring softens the city's Georgian architecture and paints it with a watercolour wash.

The earliest Scottish flower to bloom in spring is the blackthorn, with its froth of white blossom. Then, furry silver-grey catkins start to appear on goat willows, followed by the star-shaped flowers of the wood anemone. In the woodlands,

bluebells create cerulean carpets. In local folklore, bluebells that are white and not blue are said to have been visited by fairies, and they are called fairy flowers. As you would imagine, the most likely places to see these spring flowers are in the woods. However, it is possible to enjoy them in the city as well, even if you're staying at the centrally located Glasshouse Hotel. This Autograph Collection property, converted from the 170-year-old Lady Glenorchy Church into a 77-bedroom hotel, is nestled between Edinburgh's historic Old and New towns.

#### **URBAN BLUEBELL DELLS**

Take a walk down to the Royal Botanic Garden 30 minutes away to see its annual daffodil and bluebell displays. Even



closer to The Glasshouse Hotel and a mere 15-minute walk away is Dunbar's Close, a wonderful oasis of peace, just off Edinburgh's Royal Mile. Dunbar's Close was designed in the style of a 17th-century garden and its formality is a delightful canvas to springtime blooms.

To really enjoy all the delights of the 37 acres of the Princes Street Gardens, allow yourself at least half a day. The gardens are divided into two parts by The Mound, a man-made hill that connects Edinburgh's New Town with Old Town, and where the Scottish National Gallery is located. First designed in 1777, it only took on its current shape in 1820 when the New Loch, or lake, was completely drained.

Although bluebells are the start of the springtime show in these urban gardens, there is lots to hear as well. Listen out for woodland birds singing from the branches. The blackcap, wood warbler, nightingale and chiffchaff would have migrated thousands of kilometres to the UK to breed. Do also look out for other woodland wildflowers among the bluebells, such as the delicate white stars of stitchwort and the nodding pink spikes of early purple orchids. And there's more than just colour as the flowers have a subtle sweet scent as well.

#### **CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN EDINBURGH**

If you think Japan has cornered the market on cherry blossoms, think again. Edinburgh has its share of sakura



This page: The Glasshouse Hotel's 77 bedrooms include the Calton Hill Suite, which has direct access to the hotel's roof garden.

Facing page, from top: Dunbar's Close; Princes Street Gardens; gorgeous cherry blossoms in Edinburgh.

Previous spread: Calton Hill and Royal Botanic Garden.



beauty as well. One of the things that stands out the most when spring arrives in Edinburgh is the pink buds that take over the bare trees around the Old and New towns.

For some Instagram-worthy photographs, I recommend going to Princes Street Gardens to get shots of Edinburgh Castle and New College on the Mound with a frame of pink blossoms. Then, head to the Royal Mile at Canongate Kirk for voluminous cherry blossoms. This 17th-century church is framed by two tall, mature cherry trees.

One of the most spectacular spots to view the blossoms is The Meadows, where long rows of cherry trees create pink tunnels. The best spot to be is just in front of the green street sign of Coronation Walk. And if you're lucky enough to get access to one of the many private New Town gardens, there are glorious standalone blossoms to behold.

For great views of cherry blossoms in New Town, look out for the 46-metre-tall Melville Monument and the buildings around North St David street in St Andrew Square.

### GETTING TO THE GLASSHOUSE HOTEL

If you arrive in Edinburgh by the Caledonian Sleeper, the hotel is a short walk from Waverley Rail Station via the Calton Road exit. If you are arriving by tram, the hotel is just across the road from the final tram station at York Place. And if you're a theatre lover, you will be pleased to find the Playhouse Theatre right next to the hotel. For those who love shopping, St James Quarter, a retail galleria on Princes Street that opened in 2021, is located directly across the road from the hotel.



### SPRING WEATHER IN EDINBURGH

The springtime weather in the city is a constant surprise, so pack both your wool hat as well as your sunscreen. The temperature can dip to -2° Celsius but then rise to a comfortable 15° Celsius with little warning.

For more information go to [www.theglasshousehotel.co.uk](http://www.theglasshousehotel.co.uk)



# MY GIRL WITH A PEARL

A 350-YEAR-OLD LOVE STORY WITH  
A DUTCH GIRL IN THE HAGUE.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



**T**he painting *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is probably one of the most visited pieces of art in The Hague, making it the Dutch *Mona Lisa*. It was the inspiration for a bestselling historical novel by Tracy Chevalier, which in turn was adapted into a film in 2003. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was painted around 1665 by Johannes Vermeer, one of only 36 paintings (approximately) by one of the masters of the Dutch Golden Age. However, Vermeer's reputation languished after his death for two centuries until the French rediscovered him in the 1870s.

And just as Vermeer's work was being appreciated again from the 19th century onwards, this painting of his walked onto centre stage at the end of the 20th century. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was chosen as the image for the poster for the blockbuster Vermeer exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington in November 1995. Since then, she has never looked back.

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* was at the famous Rijksmuseum Amsterdam from 10 February to 4 June 2023 as part of the largest Vermeer exhibition in history. No major Vermeer exhibition would be complete without *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. The British art historian Alastair Sooke has described the painting in this way: "Swivelling to her left, she glances suddenly in our direction, her soft face as luminous as the moon in the night sky. She wears a voluptuous blue and yellow turban on her head, while an improbably plump pearl hangs from her earlobe. A speck of bright moisture adorns the corner of her mouth, which is open as though she is about to speak."

To the viewer, it looks as if the girl is about to address you, but as she does not say a word, the spell remains unbroken. And the viewer remains enchanted forever.



This page,  
from above:  
*Girl with a Red Hat*  
by Johannes Vermeer  
(circa 1665).

Vermeer's *Girl with a  
Pearl Earring*  
(1664 to 1667).

Facing page,  
from top:  
Rijksmuseum  
Amsterdam presents  
a journey through art  
and history, from the  
Middle Ages  
to Mondrian.

Of Vermeer's 37  
paintings, 28 could  
be seen at the  
Rijksmuseum's  
exhibition dedicated  
to the artist.





From February to June 2023, successful entries from the Mauritshuis' #MyGirlwithaPearl open call are shown in a digital frame in the famous gallery where *Girl with a Pearl Earring* normally hangs.

Emilie Gordenker, the former director of the Mauritshuis museum, explained that 17th-century viewers would have looked at Vermeer's painting and recognised a type of picture known as a '*tronie*'. During the Dutch Golden Age and in Flemish baroque art, a *tronie* is a study of a head and shoulders dressed in exotic clothing. The exotic element in this painting is the turban, which gives an oriental frisson to the canvas, suggesting places far away from western Europe. It's worth remembering too that the great Dutch Maritime Empire began in the early 1600s and lasted until 1750. Malacca was ruled by the Dutch from 1641, while Indonesia was colonised by the Dutch East Indies Company in the 1600s, so the exotic was always going to be mysterious and alluring in their art.

To fill the pearl-shaped hole in its heart while *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is on loan in Amsterdam, her home at the Mauritshuis museum in The Hague is featuring art inspired by *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and created by fans, which will be displayed until her return from the Rijksmuseum.

In 2022, the Mauritshuis sent out an open call to reimagine the 1665 masterpiece with a fun, personal twist. The My Girl with a Pearl exhibition is the result, and it attracted 3,482 submissions from art lovers everywhere who recreated the famous painting in various mediums and materials—from textiles, glass beads, balloons and flower petals, to buttons, wood, clay, ceramics, vegetables, shells, Lego bricks and even tattoos. Mauritshuis has curated 170 of these recreations, which made their way to The Hague, and they're

## LIFE FEATURE



From left:  
The Gallery of Honour within the Rijksmuseum showcases masterpieces by the great artists of the 17th century.

The Hague Marriott's premier location in the International Zone allows the hotel to cater to both business and leisure guests.

The Hague Marriott's Family Room suite is the perfect choice for a family break in the city.

now on rotation via a digital frame where their muse usually hangs. My Girl with a Pearl is also a clever extension of the Mauritshuis' long-running Instagram series of the same name, where it collects and showcases all sorts of tributes to the alluring yet relatable painting.

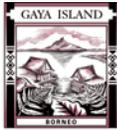
The Mauritshuis website states: "The presentation My Girl with a Pearl shows that the girl is recognisable in everything and everyone. In a son or daughter, in buttons, an iron or just a few swipes of a brush."

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* may have a huge reputation around the world, but it's actually quite diminutive in size, measuring only 44.5cm by 39cm. However, if you're staying at The Hague Marriott, neither your style nor love of space needs to be cramped. This modern hotel offers the comforts of a second home, while being located close by to all the city's major attractions, including the Mauritshuis and Scheveningen Beach.

The Hague Marriott's Family Room suite is the perfect choice for a family break in the city. Measuring 46 square metres, this accommodation features one bedroom with a king bed and a separate living area completely furnished with a sofa bed. Spacious in design, the Family Room accommodates a maximum of four guests. What's more, cribs are available upon request.



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



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**THE RITZ-CARLTON**

KOH SAMUI



**THE RITZ-CARLTON**

KUALA LUMPUR



THE YTL LUXURY MAGAZINE

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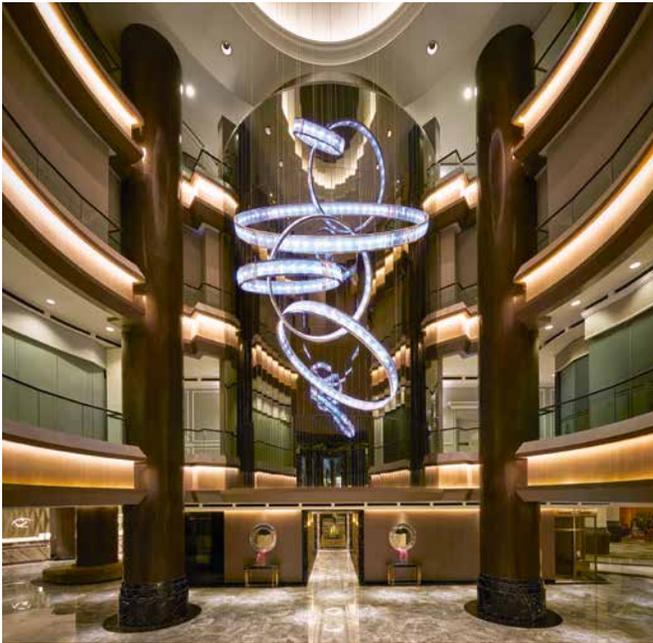




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HOTELS



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

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

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



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



S  
THE  
STARHILL



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

THESTARHILL.COM.MY



**S**  
THE  
STARHILL  
DINING



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

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



# THE SURIN

PHUKET



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

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



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

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





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

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

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



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



## THE GLASSHOUSE

EDINBURGH



## THREADNEEDLES

LONDON



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

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



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

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



# THE ACADEMY

LONDON



MONKEY ISLAND ESTATE  
BRAYON-THAMES



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

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

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



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



# THE GAINSBOROUGH

BATH SPA



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

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



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

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



# THE WESTIN

PERTH



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

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





MARRIOTT  
MELBOURNE



MARRIOTT  
SYDNEY HARBOUR



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

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



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

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





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

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



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

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



*Higashiyama*  
NISEKO VILLAGE A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE



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



**NV Niseko Village**  
*Always in Season*



HINODE HILLS  
NISEKO VILLAGE

THE  
GREEN *gb* LEAF  
Niseko Village

  
**Hilton**  
Niseko Village

KASARA  
NISEKO VILLAGE  
TOWNHOUSE



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

[NISEKO-VILLAGE.COM](http://NISEKO-VILLAGE.COM)





AC Hotel Kuala Lumpur.



AC Hotel Kuantan.



AC Hotel Penang.

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

AC-HOTELS.COM





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

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

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



# Q & A: ANDREA DESTEFANIS

THE ITALIAN ARCHITECT SHARES SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE STARHILL'S RENOVATION PROCESS UNDERTAKEN BY HIS ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN FIRM, KOKAISTUDIOS.

Words by EUGENE PHUA



**WHAT INSPIRED YOU AND KOKAISTUDIOS DURING THE RENOVATION PROCESS FOR THE STARHILL?**

The main inspiration was a conservatory or a winter garden. It's an open space with a lot of natural light. We wanted The Starhill to be strongly connected to the city and we wanted to bring as much natural light into the space as possible, to make it a more lifestyle space not only for shopping but also

to spend time with friends and family. Then, we designed the interior to be cosy. We used materials and items that are connected to the hospitality industry, instead of being purely for commercial use.

**YOU MENTIONED THAT THE STARHILL IS MORE OF A LIFESTYLE SPACE. WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?**

Lately, online shopping has become popular. For example, in China a lot of people come to malls not to shop but to meet their friends and to go to nice restaurants. So that's why malls need to become lifestyle places, and to do that, they need to have a different relationship with the city. In all our projects, we always try as much as possible to fight the concept of a traditional mall. We call it the mousetrap: a small entrance, everything is closed off, you don't know what time it is, you shop shop shop, and then you leave. We don't like that.

**HOW WAS YOUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH YTL DURING THE RENOVATION PROCESS?**

It wasn't really working *for* somebody but working *with* somebody. There wasn't a traditional architect-client relationship. We often do renovation projects, and the client is always very important in these kinds of projects. They know the building better, all the history and all the secrets. They know the soul of the building. And right from the beginning, we were all working together, with other companies as well. It was clear to everybody that The Starhill needed to change. And we all agreed that The Starhill should be a place for community, a place to welcome as many people as possible. We wanted to create a completely different feeling for people—almost like it's their home. It's more of a place to relax, spend time with friends and family, and enjoy life.

**WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF, NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE SEEING THE STARHILL AFTER THE RENOVATION?**

We design for the people. When you see everybody wandering around, taking photos or enjoying their time in your project, that's what makes me the most proud.



TONDA *PF* XIALI CALENDAR  
COMPLETE CHINESE CALENDAR, WORLD PREMIERE

ESTD  1954  
**SINCERE**  
FINE WATCHES

**PARMIGIANI**  
FLEURIER



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