

THE Y T L L U X U R Y M A G A Z I N E

Y T L L U X U R Y

L I F E

HAUTE TROPICS

WELCOME SUMMER AT
TANJONG JARA RESORT WITH THE
SEASON'S HOTTEST FASHION

THE MELTING POT

DISCOVER THE UNIQUE AND
COMPLEX NYONYA CUISINE AT THE
MAJESTIC MALACCA

SUN & SENSIBILITY

COOL DOWN WITH
LUSCIOUS AFTER-SUN
THERAPIES AT SPA VILLAGE



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COVER

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Shot on location at **Tanjong Jara Resort, Terengganu, Malaysia**

Model wears textured copper dress with empire waist line and strappy leather platforms **Bottega Veneta**

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T H E Y T L L U X U R Y M A G A Z I N E

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In this current global climate, where financial and environmental issues are in the forefront of our community's consciousness, it is sometimes possible to fail to appreciate the new and innovative ways in which the world has begun to tackle these issues.

In the last few years, society has begun to rise to the challenge, and with passion and creativity, more and more people are searching for, and finding, novel solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems.

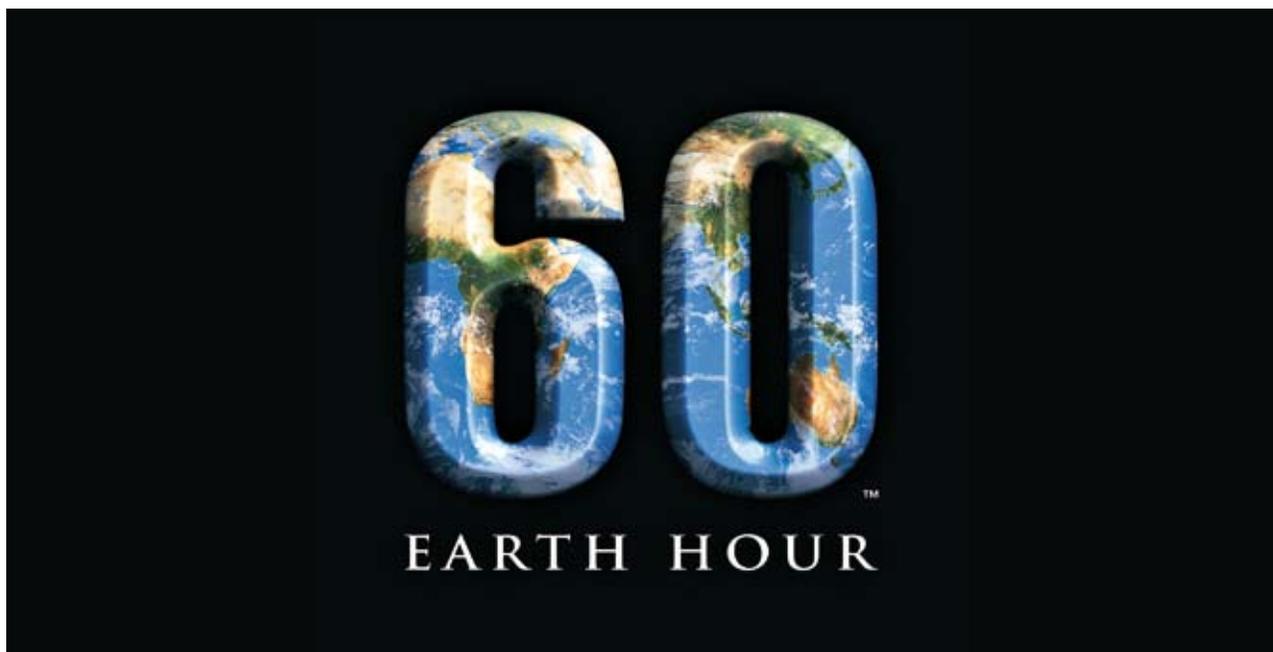
This issue of YTL Life is a celebration of this new movement that looks at the world through fresh eyes and with that vision appreciates much of what has been taken for granted for so long.

A prime example of this new movement is Earth Hour. A simple act that turned into a global phenomenon, this event is a testament of hope to all, that change is indeed possible.

YTL as a Group has pledged more than 20 of its iconic properties from Starhill Gallery to the award-winning Pangkor Laut Resort, all participating in the one-hour lights off event uniting with the rest of the world to send a powerful message of action against global warming.

Also within this issue, we delve into the natural wealth and rich wildlife that Pangkor Laut has to offer through the passionate eyes of the resort's naturalist. On the hills of Cameron Highlands, the history and evolution of tea, one of life's simple pleasures, is revealed. Through the Vigour Discovery Path at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, a seemingly immovable force is stirred into action seeing the world anew.

This issue embraces the sun, which in our tropical climate is easily taken for granted, the joy and hope that can be found with it and how within that we find a reason to continue to try to make a difference. We hope that you will enjoy our suggestions for the celebration of life, and be able to sample for yourself some of the unique experiences we offer.





ONE BIG HAPA FAMILY The Majestic Malacca, The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur and Shanghai restaurant at JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur made it treble joy for YTL Hotels at the recently concluded Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards (HAPA) 2008-2010 - Regional Series. After only a year in operation, the prestigious classic hotel The Majestic Malacca scooped the "Best Signature Hotel", a fitting tribute to the efforts made in preserving and transforming this 90-year-old colonial mansion into an exquisite luxury 54-room heritage hotel. The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur was awarded "Hotel of the Year", a reaffirmation of the hotel's commitment to its flawless and personalised full butler service. The hotel was also a finalist in four other categories. The award-winning Shanghai restaurant at the JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur provided the final topping by being named "Most Exquisite Palate Experience (Chinese Cuisine)". For nine years now, the restaurant has established itself as the choice place to go for Shanghaiese cuisine in KL. The inaugural Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards 2008-2010, Regional Series was held at the JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur and was organised by World Asia Publishing to recognise the 'Best in South East Asia' in the hospitality industry. The Awards saw a total of 139 nominees from the region.



TOY STORY Last Christmas brought unexpected cheer to 81 children from three local orphanages when JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur revived an old Marriott tradition. Keeping with the idea of the 'Spirit to Serve', the hotel launched the campaign 'Toys for Tots' from December 2 to 31, 2008, a month-long event where a Christmas tree was placed at the hotel lobby adorned with photos of the orphans and their respective Christmas gift wishes. Members of the public could then decide to dedicate a gift to a specific child. The participating homes were House of Joy, Rumah Charis and The Pure Life Society. All the children were between the ages of 5 and 12.



FOUR TIMES THE CHARM

The already immense success story of Spa Village in the domestic luxury spa industry reached another milestone when it swept the recent 'Malaysia Spa & Wellness Awards 2008', clinching four top honours. Spa Village won for 'Best Spa Group' while the jewel of its crown Spa Village Pangkor Laut celebrated being named 'Best Destination Spa'. Spa Village Malacca also got into the action with its first award in the 'Best Signature Treatment' category for its 'Shiok Shiok Sejuk Spa Experience'. Finally, Spa Village Cameron Highlands' signature treatment 'Jungle Secrets of Anti-Aging' won its second award of the year, winning 'Best Spa Experience' here after recently scooping 'Best Signature Experience' at the AsiaSpa Crystal Awards. This treatment is inspired by the indigenous Semai tribe, a perfect illustration of how the Spa Village brand as a whole stays true to its commitment to practise the healing traditions of each individual location.

A BLIZZARD OF OZ

AUSTRALIA COMES TO KL IN APRIL AS KLPAC PAYS HOMAGE TO THE LAND DOWN UNDER WITH A SERIES OF ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS BY EUGENE NG



Arts, Australia, April. These three 'A' words will come together as Kuala Lumpur's premier arts venue Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (klpac) dedicates an entire month celebrating the arts and culture of one country.

'australia month @ klpac' is the brainchild of Joe Hasham, the Artistic Director of klpac, an Aussie native settled in Malaysia for years and years and a doyen of the local theatre scene. The event will be presented by klpac and The Australian High Commission and will be a cross-cultural extravaganza showcasing the breadth, originality and vibrancy of Australian arts.

Among the festival highlights will be the workshop that kicks it all off, focusing on theatre and dance and helmed by short play guru Alex Broun and prolific dancer-choreographer Kay Armstrong. Those interested in the classics should not miss 'From the Page and onto the Floor', a 3-week long Shakespearean workshop conducted by Jeff Kevin, an established Australian stage performer/director. This Shakespeare boot camp will culminate in a public showcase performed by the participants at the end of the month.

Collaborative efforts including the premiere of the dance 'Rasa Unmasked', which brings together the talents of local dance doyen Ramli Ibrahim of Sutra Dance Theatre, Anandavalli of Lingalayam Dance Company, Australia, and ethnomusicologist/composer Alex Dea. Hasham gets into the directorial hot seat as he works on a stage adaptation of Nikolai Gogol's short story The Diary of a Madman.

The klpac Sinfonietta kicks off its own 2009 season by joining

forces with local choir The Young KL Singers and several didgeridoo players to perform Aussie favourites like Waltzing Matilda. Hasham will then celebrate his homeland with a recital of famous Australian poetry. None of which, we are sure, will contain the phrase 'fair dinkum'. ■



klpac, Sentul Park, Jalan Strachan (Off Jalan Ipoh), KL, +603-4047 9000; www.klpac.org and www.australia.org.my

PROGRAMME FOR 'AUSTRALIA MONTH @ KLPAC'

Date	Item	Venue
3 - 5 April	Short+Sweet 2009 (workshop)	Studio
6 - 26 April	From the Page and onto the Floor (workshop & showcase) - conducted by Jeff Kevin	Studio & Pentas 2
7 - 12 April	Rasa Unmasked (dance)	Pentas 1
9 - 12 April	The Diary of a Madman (play) - directed by Joe Hasham, starring Will Gluth with Nicole Ann Thomas	Pentas 2
16 - 19 April	klpac Sinfonietta...in the style of Down Under (concert)	Pentas 1

LET'S FEAST AGAIN! Epicureans and arts lovers take note. The Midsummer Nights Feast will be taking place once again. Into its second year, the annual gourmet festival is all set for an even more remarkable edition this time round. Held at Starhill Gallery, gourmet cuisine and the arts coalesce at the festival as celebrity chefs whip up award-winning creations served up with live music, dance and theatre as side dishes. Look out for thematic gala nights and celebrity soirées too. *Midsummer Nights Feast, July 3 to 12, 2009, at Starhill Gallery, Bukit Bintang, KL; call +603-2782 3855.*

CHRISTMAS IN CAMERON'S

Located in a place which in so many ways still symbolises and celebrates our grand colonial heritage, the Cameron Highlands Resort has an annual tradition marking the start of the Christmas season with its Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. This year, the event received a boost when it was graced by shoemaker to the stars, Dato' Jimmy Choo OBE, the officiating guest of honour. Hosted by the President of YTL Hotels Dato' Mark Yeoh, guests were the first to sample the Resort's Christmas menu at a special dinner presentation after the lighting ceremony. The Verses choir also injected some festive spirit to the proceedings with a performance of favourite Christmas carols. The next day, guests enjoyed the cool air and picturesque bucolic scenery of the Highlands with a round of golf, rediscovering nature with the Resort's resident naturalist or visiting the numerous vegetables, flowers and fruit farms peppered around the area, providing a memorable festive weekend for all.



Dato' Jimmy Choo



Dato' Mark Yeoh and Dato' Jimmy Choo



The Dining Room



Mr. Chong Cheng Hai and Ms. Chaw Foong Kin



Mr. Steve Cokkinias and Mr. Ben Quah



Ms. Sonia Kolesnikov Jessop and Ms. Stacey Zolt Hara

READY, TEDDY, GO!

Christmas last year took a new and unique twist for The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur as teddy bear mania hit this award-winning luxury boutique hotel during its inauguration of a new Christmas tradition for the hotel. The tantalisingly titled 'Teddy Bear Tea' that took place on December 20 saw parents and their children spend a fun-filled day doing and eating teddy bear things. For starters, The Lobby Lounge was decked, not in boughs of holly, but with teddy bears galore. Kids participated in activities such as the Teddy Bear Workshop, Christmas-tale readings with Santa Claus and cake decoration with the hotel's Pastry Chef and they chomped on Teddy's Gummy Bears and Lollies, Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich and Teddy Smiles Cream Cookies. The adults, meanwhile, lunched on more elegant and less cutesy delights such as Winter Truffle Scented Wagyu Beef Brochette, Wild Berries Crème Brûlée and Butter Poached Maine Lobster Quiche. The highlight for the little ones though must have been the Workshop, where they got to personalise a teddy bear to their desired 'huggability', place a wish in the bear and design a tee for the teddy which they got to take home. After naming it and inscribing the chosen name onto a birth certificate presented by Santa, of course.



THINK PINK

The Spa Village Kuala Lumpur recently played host to an exclusive fashion show featuring the batik from Pink Jambu, a local label that designs contemporary batik fabric which is then transformed into stylish clothes. The show was held at the Spa's poolside so that the very select audience could enjoy morning tea while lounging in the outdoor cabanas and watching models show off clothing from the Pink Jambu Couture, Ready To Wear and Home lines. Pink Jambu is available at Spa Village Kuala Lumpur and Spa Village Pangkor Laut boutiques.



HAPPY HOURS TIME

Swiss watchmaking pioneer and classic watch brand Rado opened its first Malaysian store in December last year. Located at the city's luxury watch hub Starhill Gallery in the heart of Bukit Bintang, the flagship boutique is the design brainchild of Austrian architect Andreas Burghardt. Inspired by the brand's characteristic obsession with materials and endless flows, absolutes and ultimate innovation, the resulting space is a striking sculptural enclosure with endless multiplications of luminescent surfaces. As such, the products on display appear to be floating in space. The launch of this stunning watch boutique was commemorated with a Happy Hours session hosted by Rado CEO Mr. Roland Streule, Rado Malaysian Brand Manager Mr. Bernard Yong, Rado Ambassador Ms. Rachel Tan and Dato and Datin Francis Sew from Mystique Universal. Champagne flowed all evening as guests enjoyed house music and enjoyed the ambience of what will prove to be a unique new addition to Starhill's already glittering constellation of watch boutiques.



Rachel Tan



Yuri Wong & Ms. Xandria Ooi



Ms. Rachel Tan (2nd L), Mr. Roland Streule (3rd L) and Mr. Bernard Yong (R) show off their Rado watches



Stephanie Chai



Pamela and Vanessa Chong



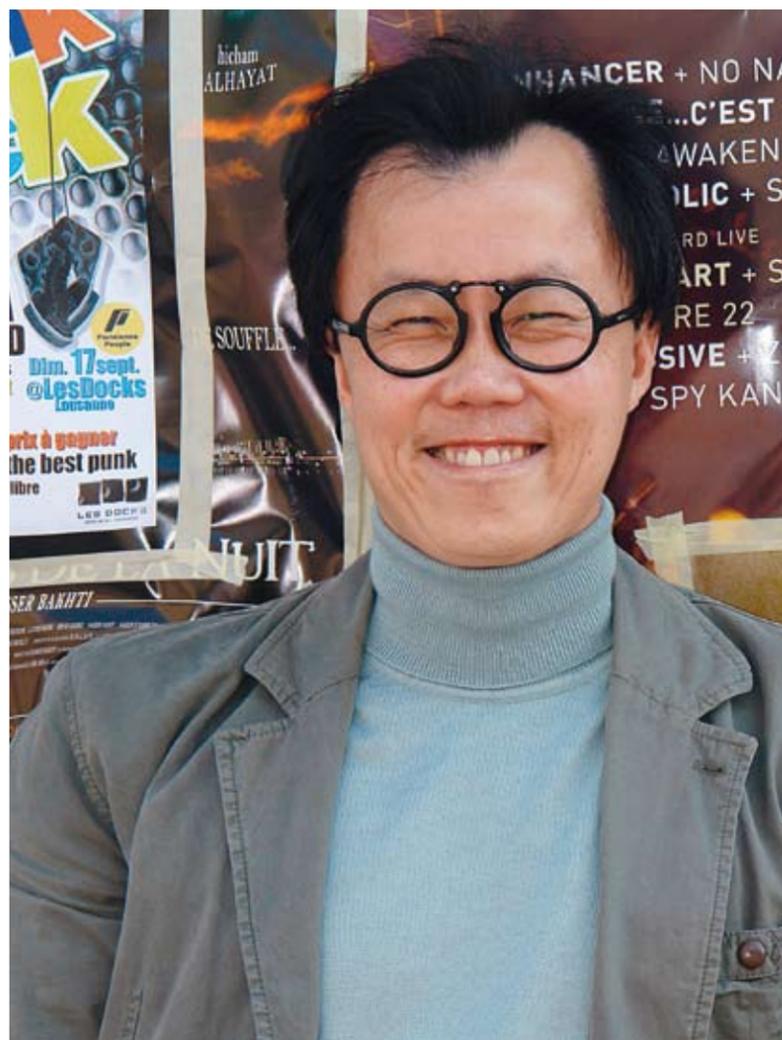
Jac Ng & Ms. Jocelyn Lim

TICKING WITH PASSION

YTL LIFE TAKES ONE LAST LOOK AT 2008'S 'A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME' WATCH AND JEWELLERY FAIR HELD AT STARHILL GALLERY.

IN THIS SPECIAL REPORT, WE MEET DR. BERNARD CHEONG A PASSIONATE WATCH COLLECTOR, INDUSTRY LEADER AND ONE OF THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS DURING THE FESTIVAL

BY MELISA ANN SELLVADURAI PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR. BERNARD CHEONG



investing in luxury watches during boom and down economic times. YTL Life caught up with this high-spirited personality to find out more about this inspirational man and his amazing passion for watches.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO THE WORLD OF HOROLOGY? WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO IT?

It was actually an evolution of my own interest in buying and collecting stuff. My passions include collecting comics, cars and hi-fi systems, but those things are more like hobbies. My main collections I would say are comics and watches. They are both very distinctive things. Comics are very delicate and require a lot of attention and storage space, and they are a very unusual art form. Watches on the other hand require much less attention, and they can be used every day. The beautiful thing about collecting watches is that they occupy very little space and I can wear them to work. So I came to realise, I'd rather spend money on buying watches because I could enjoy their beauty on a daily basis. Over 30 years, I accumulated more and more. A foreign magazine came over once and counted my watches and it came up to over 360 pieces! That's far off the estimated 100 I originally thought I had!

WHAT ARE THE HALLMARKS OF A GREAT WATCH? IS IT THE TECHNICALITY OF IT? AESTHETICS? OR SIMPLY THE REPUTATION OF THE BRAND?

It's aesthetics. A watch must be good, not only visually, but also in the tactile aspect; it must feel good. A watch that is big should feel heavy. A watch that is thick should also feel heavy. It must feel nice as you run your fingers along the curves, and it must have that balance of colour and texture. That being said, one cannot ignore the fact that craftsmanship plays a

DR. BERNARD CHEONG - watch aficionado, art collector and closet saxophonist - recently made history by becoming the world's first non-industry, 'civilian' chairman of the Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève held in Singapore last year. At the recent 'A Journey Through Time' luxury watch and jewellery fair held at Starhill Gallery, he gave a talk on the subject of

great role in aesthetics. It is something that is at first invisible but as your knowledge increases, craftsmanship begins to matter, and once that happens, the second or third watch you buy, you'll find yourself paying more and more attention to the details of craftsmanship.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WITH AN INTEREST TO INVEST IN A GOOD WATCH?

What I want people to know as they walk from shop to shop in Starhill Gallery is that they should base their choices, again, on the fundamentals - craftsmanship and aesthetics. All the brands here are good, because you don't deal with any fancy non-fundamentally good watches. I've been to many shopping centres and many fairs, and I must compare Starhill to Singapore and Basel. I'm from Singapore, and two years back I would tell many Singaporeans, there's no justifiable reason to go to Basel to look at watches, because firstly, its too far away and secondly, you're looking at things which are not on sale to consumers but to retailers. Now why do I bring up Starhill then? In Singapore, one still has to travel an average of four square miles to see everything and you're going to come across lots of shops that sell junk mixed together with good stuff. No doubt Singapore is a great place to see watches, but you don't have a focus of really great brands and watchmakers in one place. But you have that in Starhill. Even Basel doesn't have that! In Starhill because the tenants here just all happen to be people who know the trade, they're not going to set up here to sell some generic rubbish. If you're looking to buy a good watch, just come to Starhill!

YOU WERE SELECTED AS THE WORLD'S FIRST NON-INDUSTRY, 'CIVILIAN' CHAIRMAN OF THE GRAND PRIX

D'HORLOGERIE DE GENÈVE (GPHG) IN ASIA. WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ON THAT? It was an honour for me that Edipress selected me and I think there were much more deserving people. One thing about me is that I'm very outspoken, and I would really call a black shoe a black shoe and a glove a glove. I don't mince my words, and I think in many ways it's made me many enemies. But I think in life, one is only significant if one has said enough relevant things and has made people annoyed with you.

CAN YOU PLEASE ELABORATE ON THAT ROLE AND WHAT EXACTLY "FORMULATING A TRANSPARENT SYSTEM OF JURY SELECTION AND VOTING FOR THE EVENT" MEANS?

This brings me to the point of why I have made so many enemies - I'm not afraid of transparency. I wanted very much to set up a system that would remove the element of advertising playing any part in a contestant winning an award. Small watchmakers don't have budgets to advertise and making me chairman of that particular contest allowed many small watchmakers to actually stand a chance at winning prizes. Its very important to me that magazines which focus on totally watch-dependent advertising should not have full overall power in the system. I took great pains to actually employ the services of Dr. Massimiliano Landi, one of the world's most respected people in game theory. He formulated the process by which the GPHG was run.

WHEN DID THIS SYSTEM COME INTO PLAY?

The system came into play this year when we held the world's first Asian Geneva Grand Prix Haute Horlogerie (in Singapore) where Dr. Massimiliano created a voting system whereby judges could not influence each other nor communicate their taste with



Dr. Bernard Cheong with Tan Sri Dato' (Dr.) Francis Yeoh at A Journey Through Time 2008

THIS MAY BE CONTROVERSIAL... BUT HANDLED CAREFULLY, I THINK A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME CAN BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN BASEL

each other. And the selection of judges was very unusual. We did not select just watch collectors: we selected a sample of different people with different tastes and economic standings to get a good cross section of what we felt the watch market would be like.

LET'S TALK ABOUT WATCHES AS INVESTMENTS. IS WATCH-COLLECTING DONE MORE FOR MONETARY REASONS, AS A HOBBY, OR AS A STATUS SYMBOL?

That's a good question. Historically, things that make the best investments are always those that people claim are not investments. When people are talking about it as an investment, nine times out of ten, you've already missed the boat. You can ask Tan Sri Francis Yeoh the same thing. He would buy things that people would say, 'No! This can never be an investment or make you any money.' But look at YTL's track record; almost everything YTL has bought has turned to gold. He has bought stuff that people would have laughed at and said they would never be investments. I think good businessmen have that same idea of buying low. The reason being that nobody wants to buy it. So nobody wanted to buy watches as investments. They'd rather buy stocks, shares, property etc but look at what is happening right now. Watches can be investments if bought wisely... anything can be! I made a bundle in comic books. When I say a bundle I mean six figures! By buying comic books for \$20 - \$200 and selling them for \$200,000, now that's what I call an investment!

IN YOUR WORKSHOP, YOU TALKED ABOUT INVESTING IN FINE WATCHES IN GOOD AND BAD TIMES. IN OUR CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION, IS IT STILL FEASIBLE TO MAKE THAT INVESTMENT?

Yes! Absolutely. If everybody were to say watches are a great investment right now, again, you've probably missed the boat. By the time people say it, half of the good pieces would have been sold. Right now people are still wondering whether watches are worth buying. The moment you start to wonder it's not too late. The fact that you wonder makes it probably true that they make good investments. It's a good time to go and do your homework and look at the good pieces to save up and buy them.

COULD YOU ALSO SUMMARIZE FOR OUR READERS THE TALK YOU HELD DURING A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME 2008.

I went through different segments as briefly as I could about how to spot good timepieces, the fundamental qualities that would be able to help them lock in a good watch as a financial tool. And the things to invest in were craftsmanship by looking at the finish of the screws, plates, dial, and the

watchcase. Secondly, I told them not to be preoccupied with in-house movements. Thirdly, I also told them that it is not unwise to actually explore the used market as well.

IT IS QUITE WIDELY KNOWN THAT YOU PREDICT MARKETS WITH REGARDS TO THE ECONOMIC SITUATION. WELL WHAT ARE YOUR PREDICTIONS FOR 2009?

2009 will be a very interesting year. It's a year where the supply side is going to have to cut down and decide which pieces would limit their exposure the most. I think many watchmakers who don't have enough leverage are going to go under. For the buyers, I think it's going to be very exciting. Buyers who have a lot of money can actually now access the very esoteric watch pieces at much more realistic prices. Buyers who are very daring can buy the expensive pieces because I think these pieces are going to be rare and will hold great appeal once the economy recovers. And good things, like good antiques and paintings, always recover faster than stocks and shares. This has been proven over many years. All the great museums, the great families, the Guggenheim for example, they have always bought the best pieces during recessions.

LET'S TALK A BIT ABOUT ASIA AS THE NEW HOTBED FOR WATCH COLLECTORS AND INVESTORS.

As we see the West suffering from the banks and their problems, many Asians were not so deeply exposed (to the crumbling stock market). And also, the Asians have an older and more matured collecting society for watches per se. I think Asians will make a good killing on a market with the big pieces especially. This is what I foresee in 2009 and 2010.

WHAT SORT OF ROLE DO EVENTS LIKE A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME PLAY IN THIS RESPECT?

Handled carefully, A Journey Through Time (AJTT) will be more important than Basel. This is very controversial. The moment I say this, I think ears in the West will prick up and feel that Bernard is again being very antagonistic about this, but this is what I personally feel. I really want to convince YTL and Malaysia and my country Singapore, that AJTT is much more than a fair. It is a concept. And it's going to be something that will involve tourism and the country's economy on a larger scale. Why do I say that? There's nothing that can transfer and do so much trade like small portable assets. It's like setting up a diamond-trading centre in the heart of a part of the world that is not known for it. It's a totally unexpected move. YTL has the infrastructure that is two years ahead of its time. It works well with Forbes, and Forbes is a powerhouse of leverage and information and database so I really see not

only potential but think that immediate plans should be made for making AJTT a destination and educational centre for watch collectors and a model shopping centre for many kinds of luxury products (art, spa and luxury resorts).

HAVING EXPERIENCED THE FAIR FOR TWO YEARS IN A ROW, HOW DO YOU THINK THE EVENT FARED IN 2008?

It has improved by about 800% or more! Looking at naysayers first, people would think that these things don't work. Naysayers are always motivated by the fact that they have not invested enough in AJTT. I think they really have to realise that the traffic in AJTT is greater than it seems. This place is humongous! And it will take a lot of people to make the place look crowded. I can see that there are a lot of people walking around but they are diluted by the size of the mall.

YOU'VE BEEN DESCRIBED AS A RENAISSANCE MAN, WITH YOUR INTEREST IN CARS, PHOTOGRAPHY AND AUDIO EQUIPMENT. WHAT IS ANOTHER LESSER-KNOWN ASPECT OF DR. BERNARD CHEONG?

Oh, I play the saxophone! And I play it every day. Recently I had a special saxophone made for me by James Morrison. It's a Morrison Digital Trumpet. It's a very unusual instrument but it's really me. It's also related to watch making in many ways. Firstly, it's hand made and a beautifully crafted machine, but its electronic. And it's able to translate my breath exactly the way I would have played a saxophone. I enjoy playing music and it helps me understand watch making and helps me develop my taste.

ANOTHER INTERESTING THING TO NOTE IS YOUR BUSINESS CARD. IT'S THE FACE OF THE 3 OF HEARTS THIS YEAR AND LAST YEAR IT WAS THE 6 OF DIAMONDS.

Last year I chose the 6 of Diamonds because it was my family that helped me move my business to another higher level. The diamond has always represented merchants and there are six people in my family including my mom and dad. This year I wanted to focus more on my wife and my two daughters. Hence the 3 of Hearts. The quote on the card - "De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum" is something we should all learn to live by. Essentially, it means that good taste has no argument, no relativity. Many people might argue that good taste is relative. In other words, if you showed somebody a Rembrandt, and this person knew nothing about art, he wouldn't be able to appreciate it. But I beg to differ. Many years ago, a well-known German auto maker brought a Japanese sports car and one of their old German sports cars deep into the heart of Africa. This was in 1993 and these African tribes had never seen cars. And they were asked to choose a car for their chieftain. Every one in the tribe chose the German car. These are people who don't know the difference between a Toyota and a Lamborghini. Good taste is absolute and they have tried this with LV handbags and Porsche items, and have shown them to people who have no contact with advertising. And they have invariably always chosen the better-designed object.

Dr. Bernard Cheong with his wife at A Journey Through Time 2008



Dr. Bernard Cheong with the Head of Intellectual Property of IWC in Schaffhausen

WELL SPEAKING ABOUT GOOD TASTE, WHAT IS THE BEST INVESTMENT IN WATCHES YOU HAVE EVER MADE?

That would be the Opus 5 or the Vianney Halter Antiqua. Both of these have appreciated in value to twice of what I had originally paid for, in less than two years. ■

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

WE TAKE ONE LAST LINGERING LOOK AT THE SEVEN BEAUTIFUL WATCHES THAT MADE THE GRADE AT THE 'STARHILL GALLERY'S WATCH AWARD NIGHT', THE GRAND FINALE OF 'A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME 2008' BY EUGENE NG

STARHILL GALLERY FAVOURITE LADIES' WATCH AWARD 2008

GLASHÜTTE ORIGINAL NIGHTSHADE: THE STAR COLLECTION

It was indeed a starry, starry night for Glashütte when the sparkling crown of its exquisite Star Collection - Nightshade - unsurprisingly scooped the 'Favourite Ladies' Watch' award. A masterpiece of imagination, design and the traditional art of horology, this precious timepiece evokes visions of stars and the moon and comets and the night sky with the clever use of white gold and diamonds on a black background, and a strap made of a material called black galuchat that has the double benefit of not only looking unique and elegant, but also seeming like it is quietly bubbling along the Milky Way. www.glashutte-original.com



STARHILL GALLERY FAVOURITE MENS' WATCH AWARD 2008

RICHARD MILLE RM 010

It is easy to see why Richard Mille was a shoo-in for this award. Uncompromisingly masculine in appearance, many of the RM 010 main features are considered major technical innovations. In fact, its design was the subject of years of research and development (the watch-case design alone took a year), and the construction of the watch was done according to extremely rigorous specifications, almost in the manner of the analytical engineering methods used in the design of Formula 1 racing cars where the chassis and the engine are developed in complete harmony. The RM 010 also uses the brand's exclusive rotor with variable geometry, an invention that allows the movement's winding mechanism to be optimised and personalised to the owner's lifestyle. www.richardmille.com



STARHILL GALLERY INNOVATIVE DESIGN WATCH AWARD 2008

DEWITT WX-1

What makes DeWitt's victory in this category all the more impressive is the fact that this avant-garde brand in Haute Horlogerie was only five years old in 2008 but already with a history and an ethic based on the traditions and fundamentals of horological inventions. With the WX-1, the brand's first 'Watch Concept', the mechanical construction completely dissociates the displays from the mechanism driving them. At the very heart of the WX-1 is a vertical flying tourbillon with a carriage performing one revolution per minute and visible through a cylindrical 'chimney' located on the back of the case. Futuristic in design, genesis and ambition, it is a complex creation and a genuine first in the history of watch engineering. This innovation can actually be viewed by sliding the 'hood' or 'bonnet' to reveal the entire mechanism housed beneath its transparent covering plate. www.dewitt.ch



YTL SPIRIT OF CLASSICAL ART AWARD 2008

ULYSSE NARDIN THE IMPERIAL ST. PETERSBURG IN THE EGG OF THE TSARS

This award honours the spirit of YTL head honcho Tan Sri Dato' (Dr.) Francis Yeoh and his love of art. And Ulysse Nardin's The Imperial St. Petersburg in the Egg of the Tsars was indeed a worthy recipient. From the brand's Marine Collection, it features a hand-crafted oven-cured enamel dial with an applied gold double-headed Eagle emblematic of the eponymous city of its name. But what distinguishes this timepiece is its presentation in an elaborate multi-layer white translucent enamel Egg of the Tsars decorated with 4.25 carats of diamonds that echoes legendary symbols of St. Petersburg in The Admiralty Spire, Rostral Columns and the Arch of the General Staff Building. Limited edition of only 30 pieces in platinum. www.ulyssse-nardin.com

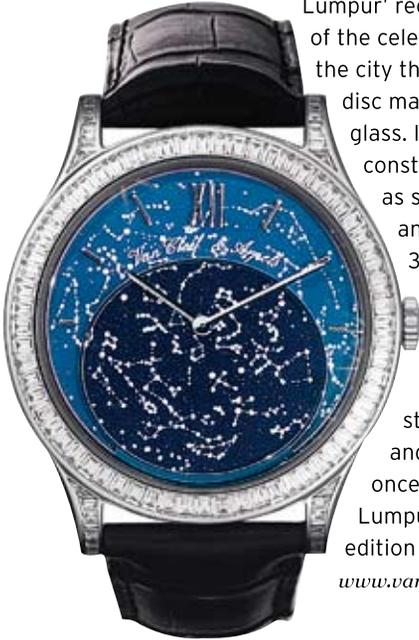
**TOURISM MALAYSIA
MOST REVERED WATCH
AWARD 2008**

**VAN CLEEF & ARPELS MIDNIGHT IN
KUALA LUMPUR**

The evening's most prestigious award went to Van Cleef & Arpels for its stellar effort in creating a one-of-a-kind piece that honours our city of Kuala Lumpur. 'Midnight in Kuala Lumpur' recreates the map

of the celestial dome above the city thanks to a rotating disc made of adventure glass. It features the constellations of stars as seen in the KL sky and it rotates on a 365-day cycle. The calendar at the back of the watch is surrounded by genuine meteorite stones. It is beautiful and mysterious all at once. 'Midnight in Kuala Lumpur' is a limited edition of 1 piece only.

www.vancleef-arpels.com



**STARHILL GALLERY ACTIVE
LIFESTYLE WATCH AWARD 2008**

**JAEGER-LECOULTRE MASTER COMPRESSOR
DIVING PRO GEOGRAPHIC**

The Master Compressor Diving Pro Geographic is the star diver's model in a series of three. The Geographic features a case custom-designed to withstand 1000m depth pressures but more importantly, features the milestone Jaeger mechanical depth gauge (depth sensor chamber), distinctly visible in the chamber on the outer side of the case and inspired by the 80-year system driving the Atmos clock. In an era when diving computers frequently indicate the body's nitrogen count, calculate decompression stages or measure water temperatures, the depth gauge on the new Geographic constitutes an impressive achievement combining inventiveness and technical genius. It is unmistakably an instrument intended for professionals.

www.jaeger-lecoultre.com

**STARHILL GALLERY WATCH WITH
COMPLICATIONS IN MOVEMENT
AWARD 2008**

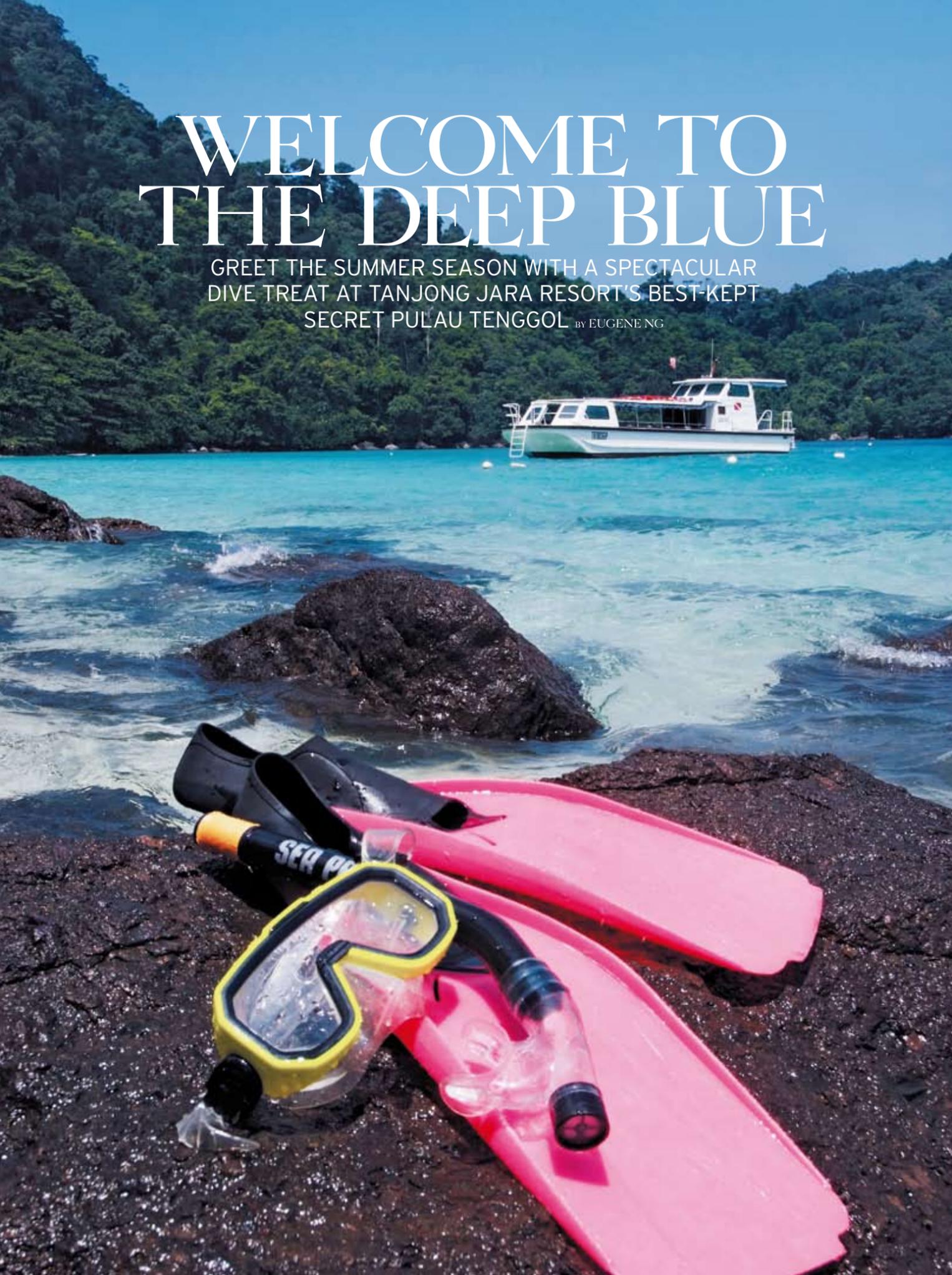
MAURICE LACROIX MÉMOIRE 1

The Memoire 1 made history by being the first mechanical watch ever to have a memory function and it is considered one of the most complicated watches ever developed. Look closely at its 3 o'clock and a clue is revealed. By pressing the button integrated into the crown, the mode changes from "Time" to "Chrono". The hands and the hours disc immediately change their positions. If their previous function was telling the current time, they are now available for the precise measurement of time intervals. When the button is pressed once again, they all return to their positions for telling time. This is made possible thanks to an ingenious mechanism christened 'va et vient' ('come and go') for which the company has filed a patent. Only 20 limited pieces were made last year. www.memoire1.ch; www.mauricelacroix.com



WELCOME TO THE DEEP BLUE

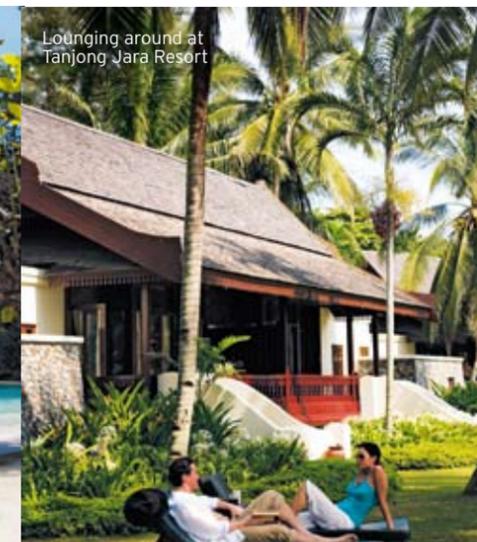
GREET THE SUMMER SEASON WITH A SPECTACULAR DIVE TREAT AT TANJONG JARA RESORT'S BEST-KEPT SECRET PULAU TENGGOL BY EUGENE NG



A friendly turtle



Idyllic Pulau Tenggol



Lounging around at Tanjong Jara Resort

IT IS PERHAPS QUITE FITTING THAT AFTER THE CHAOS OF THE MONSOON SEASON, when the waves are high and the winds strong, the following six months offer visitors to the Malaysian East Coast a chance to then enjoy the ocean when it is calm, blue, brilliant and at its most peaceful.

From March to October, the East Coast of Malaysia is a haven for sunseekers and holidaymakers as the South China Sea rolls out the welcome carpet inviting intrepid guests to come discover its undersea treasures. Home to many gorgeous tropical islands and beautiful sandy beaches on the coast, the area is a favourite amongst divers from all over the world.

One such island is Pulau Tenggol, part of a cluster of islands, and one of the country's best-kept secrets with some of the finest diving and snorkelling sites. The reason for this is that the main island is part of the Terengganu Marine Park, and although it is small and compact at less than 3km long and 2km wide, it offers over 20 dive sites and a chance to catch glimpses of rare species of marine life such as the shovel nose shark at the region's famous 'Amazing Grace' site.

An impressive array of giant rock and boulder formations offer an underwater assault course for the experienced diver, whilst those looking for a more restful experience can simply let the currents fly them over the reef, accompanied by curious batfish or enormous schools of hunting trevallies.

From giant double-headed parrotfish, yellowtail fusiliers and sea turtles, to eagle rays, black-tipped reef sharks and barracudas, the steep and rugged cliffs of Pulau Tenggol form a spectacular canvas for diving and an ideal hideaway for the tropical

underwater world. Bright corals and vivid nudibranchs provide the perfect backdrop.

The best way to access Pulau Tenggol is through the exclusive five-star Tanjong Jara Resort. Sitting along the coast, Tanjong Jara Resort is an award-winning luxury resort inspired by 17th century Malay palace architecture and anchored in Sucimurni, an ancient Malay way of life that embraces tranquility and purity through wholesome living.

Based on the philosophy of 'crafting experiences' for its guests, one of the signature experiences at Tanjong Jara Resort is a diving trip to Pulau Tenggol. The island can be reached in a mere 45-minute ride in the Resort's brand-new twin outboard engine speedboat. Pristine new equipment is available for hire and a range of PADI licences, including Open Water Diver and Advanced Open Water Diver as well as Emergency First Response and Rescue Diver courses are on offer. Interested guests can receive the PADI theory book prior to their visit and for beginners an introductory diving class is available to 'test the waters'.

The Resort's experienced dive instructor will then lead guests on an unforgettable underwater journey. To maintain a level of exclusivity and also because Pulau Tenggol has so many stunning dive sites, guests rarely find themselves having to go down with other groups of divers, ensuring each dive is a truly personal and memorable experience. World class diving at a world class resort. What better way to start the season. ■

Tanjong Jara Resort, +603-2783 1000; www.tanjongjararesort.com



CALL OF THE WILD

AMONG THE HIGHLIGHTS OF ANY STAY AT THE EXCLUSIVE PANGKOR LAUT RESORT ARE THE NATURE WALKS WHICH TAKE GUESTS THROUGH A TWO MILLION-YEAR-OLD VIRGIN RAINFOREST. THE RESORT'S RESIDENT NATURALIST UNCLE YIP LEADS THE WAY

BY TAN LEE KUEN ALL PHOTOS (EXCEPT OTHERWISE CREDITED) BY KELVIN OON

PANGKOR LAUT RESORT HAS A RAINFOREST FOR A BACKYARD. When viewed from above, Pangkor Laut island is largely covered by greenery - approximately 80% of the 300-acre island is still covered by one of the oldest rainforests in the world - a testament to man's ability to live in style and luxury side by side with nature.

This non-interference with the rich natural heritage on the island has proven to be a huge draw for the resort. One of the resort's most popular activities is its daily jungle treks, conducted by an amiable gentleman named Yip Yoon Wah.

Yip, or Uncle Yip as he is affectionately known, is the resident naturalist of Pangkor Laut Resort, although his duties sometimes take him to YTL Hotel's other properties at Tanjong Jara Resort and Cameron Highlands Resort. He leads guests on daily morning treks through the rainforest, offering all sorts of interesting bits of information and stories; it is also not unknown for him to suddenly quote poets such as Coleridge.

During one such walk with Yip, the group managed to witness him cajoling a pit viper from the bushes with a stick, pointing out a giant spider on a glistening web measuring six metres and leaving us in awe at a towering fig tree whose powerful roots snake all along the side of a hill. One of his favourite sights are the fossils embedded in the sandstone slabs imported from Kerala, India and which sit on the resort grounds. The 73-year-old also showed no signs of running out of energy or stories as he led the group on the two-hour walk.

Born in Ipoh, Perak, Yip trained as a field forester in Lumut at the age of 19. He then spent 10 years working in the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia at Kepong before striking out on his own into the private sector, setting up a consultancy firm on landscaping. Yip followed this up with a spell as Chief Executive of the Malaysian Nature Society. During his tenure with the society, he had a hand in designating Belum forest in Perak as a forest reserve. He then worked for a timber company on the Solomon Islands before finally landing the job in Pangkor Laut Resort in 1996. Yip has a book Pangkor Laut: A Guide to its Natural History to his name.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A NATURALIST WITH PANGKOR LAUT RESORT, AND HOW DID YOU COME ACROSS THE JOB?
I have been with Pangkor Laut Resort for 13 years. I came as a paying guest, started talking to the



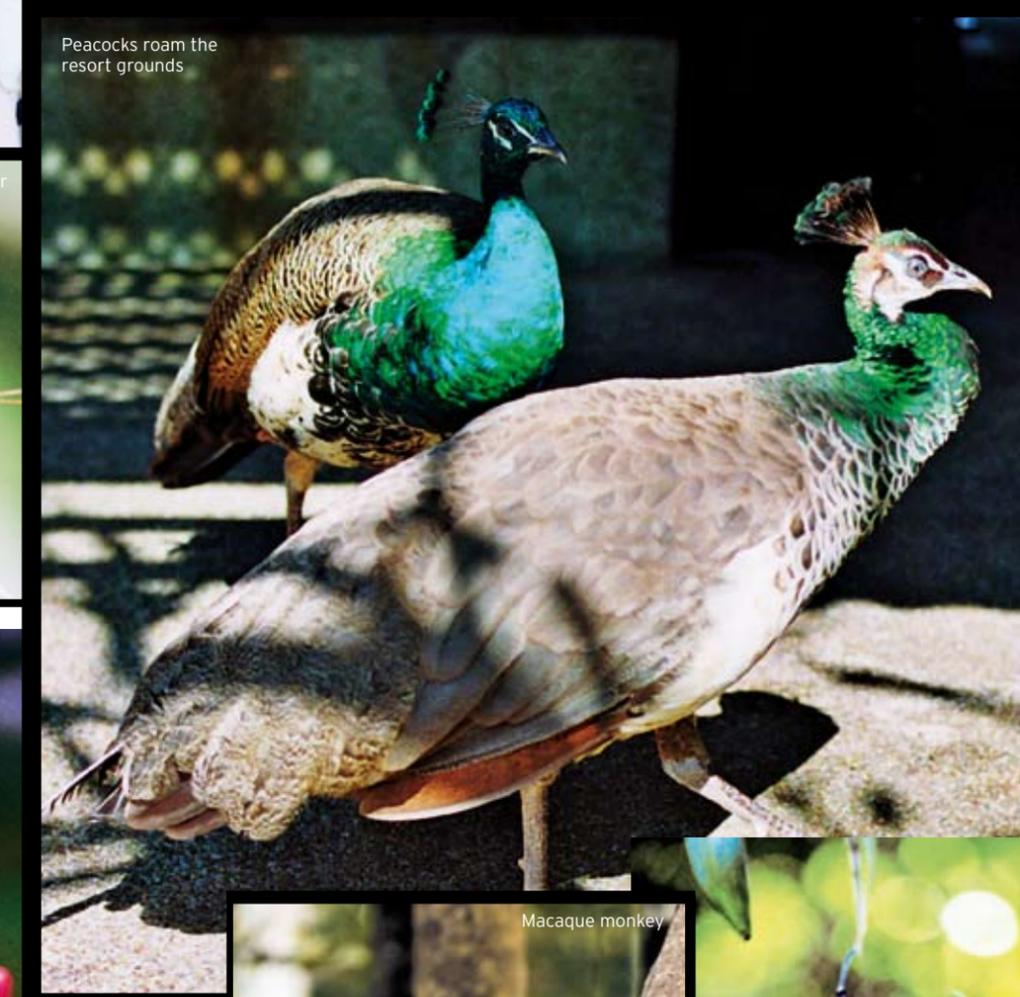
Pit Viper



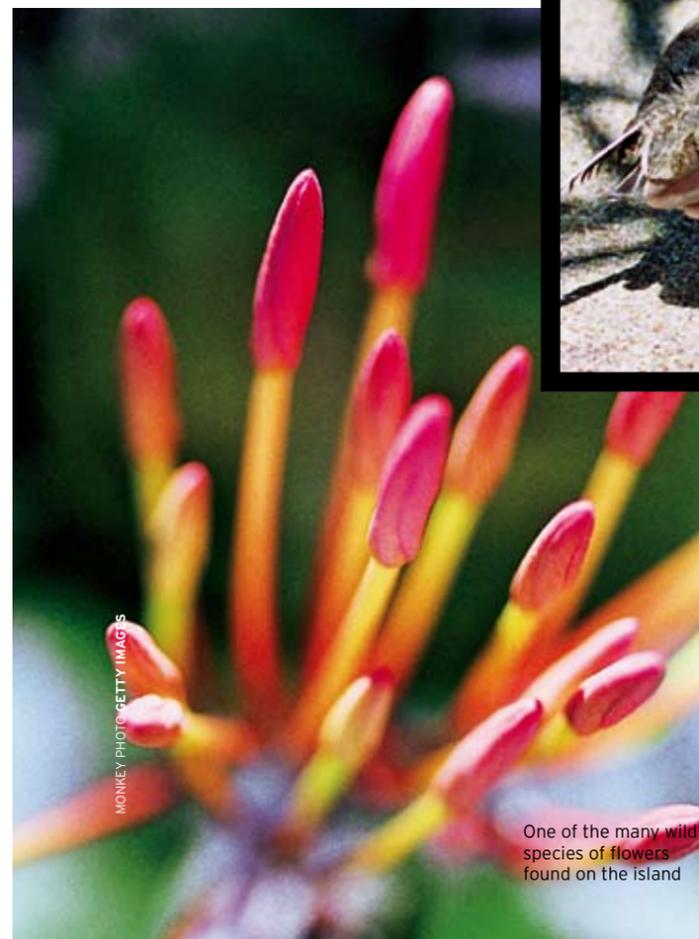
Uncle Yip briefing guests before the walk



A grasshopper



Peacocks roam the resort grounds



One of the many wild species of flowers found on the island



Macaque monkey



A giant spider the size of a human palm



A LOT OF GUESTS HAVE SAID THAT THE [NATURE] WALK IN THE RAINFOREST IS ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THEIR STAY HERE

General Manager, and when I was about to leave, he offered me the job as a naturalist here.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THE WALKS YOU CONDUCT. There are two walks on the island - the Northern and Southern Perimeter Trek. I normally take the groups on the Northern trail, which cuts through the island and passes through virgin rainforest. We start at the reception area, pass through the sea villas and the Spa Village into the jungle trail which will end up in Emerald Bay - here guests can swim or have lunch. The trail is only about 525 metres, but the whole walk takes about an hour and a half to two hours. Guests can do the walk themselves except there's no one to point things out to them.

WHAT ARE THE NATURAL FLORA AND FAUNA THAT CAN BE SIGHTED ON THE ISLAND? Hornbills, macaque monkeys and monitor lizards are the animals fairly commonly seen. The island has a variety of other birds, reptiles and amphibians such as the white-bellied sea eagle, the brahminy kite eagle, little herons, pit vipers and agamid lizards. It is extremely rare to spot the pangolin or scaly anteater. As for marine life, we have sea urchins, sea cucumbers and jellyfish. We recently came across the Asian blue fairy bird and Emerald pigeon on the island. As for plants, we have at least 10 species of orchids on Pangkor Laut, including the world's smallest and biggest orchids, not to mention the majestic tropical trees that we have here.

WHAT DO GUESTS GET OUT OF IT? Some experience an inspirational talk about the rainforest, especially the Europeans. It is different from the European environment and they get excited about it, especially if you can provide information on the rainforest and the various aspects of it. A lot of guests have said that the walk in the rainforest is one of the highlights of their stay in Pangkor Laut Resort.

CONSERVATION IS BIG ON THE TO-DO LIST FOR CORPORATIONS THESE DAYS. WHAT IS PANGKOR LAUT RESORT'S STANCE ON THIS? I was just at a conference on corporate social responsibility last year, and as one of the big players, YTL is actively concerned about it. For example, we take care not to pollute the waters or damage marine life which will

jeopardise the livelihood of the fishermen around here. The same goes for terrestrial conservation, which we have started right from the initial stages in conserving large areas of virgin rainforest which are now a special attraction for guests. We also regularly clean up rubbish from the sea bottom.

YOUR HOME IS IN KUALA LUMPUR BUT YOU HAVE TO BE AWAY FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME. HOW DO YOU MANAGE? I am used to being away from my family. I have worked in the Solomon Islands and Indonesia before. In life, you have to accept that you can't have everything perfect and that you have to make sacrifices. You want a good job, to make money and to be happy; something's got to give.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT THE JUNGLE? The rainforest is my second home and I love being in contact with the trees, plants, insects and animals. I am more at home in the jungle than in the city. Everytime I go back to KL I tend to judge it by this standard and it is difficult to adjust to life in the city.

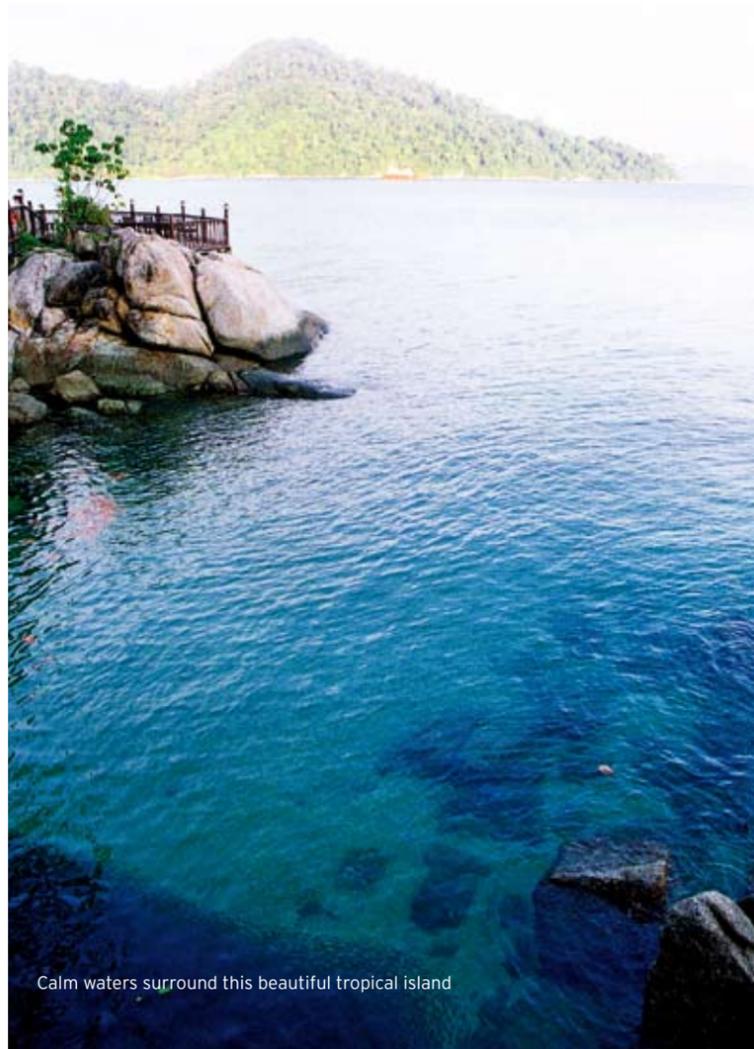
WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NEXT? I am coming out with the second edition of the Pangkor Laut book, which is 95% complete. I am also starting a book on the natural history of Cameron Highlands.

YOU ARE QUITE A KEEN PHOTOGRAPHER - MOST OF THE PHOTOS IN THE NEW BOOK ARE YOURS. WHAT CAMERA DO YOU USE AND WHAT TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR BUDDING NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS? I use a Nikon D200, with the kit lens that comes with it. As for tips, you have to be prepared to get into the territory where you will be shooting, where you will get attacked by mosquitoes, leeches and whatnot. Patience is of course the first thing you need. Once I was shooting an eagle circling about in the sky and it landed on a tree. I waited for quite some time for it to take off, as that was the shot I wanted, but finally gave up. Just when I turned my back, the eagle took off and I lost the shot. So patience and no small measure of luck is important.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER AS YOUR PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT? That I am able to bring across a message of conservation through my ability to talk and write. And my documentation of nature. ■



Hornbills are a common sight here



Calm waters surround this beautiful tropical island

VILLA PHOTO YTL ONLINE LIBRARY



IT'S TIME FOR TEA

IN RECENT YEARS, IT HAS BEEN COFFEE THAT HAS BEEN THE TRENDY GLOBAL DRINK DU JOUR. BUT TODAY, IT IS TEA THAT IS TAKING THE WORLD BY STORM AS IT HAS BEEN ELEVATED TO GOURMET STATUS IN THE KITCHEN, IN BARS AND EVEN IN THE SPA BY L.H. NG

"THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF POETRY AND FINE SENTIMENT IN A CHEST OF TEA." - *Ralph Waldo Emerson (American philosopher)*

Swirled gently in its container, the dark amber liquid releases its precious scent with hints of chocolate and berries. Like whiskey or fine wine, true connoisseurs may appreciate its subtleties but it's not only gourmets and the rich who enjoy this particular drink. Tea is one of the most common drinks in the world today.

Global tea consumption topped 3.64 million tonnes in 2006 alone, and is expected to continue rising as more people switch over to the soothing beverage. But not all of the tea being drunk today comes poured out of a teapot. Bottled tea drinks, tea frappes and even tea cocktails are just some of the ways that this beverage is becoming a major ingredient in the kitchen, the bar and now even in the spa.

Tea has a distinctive flavour that goes well with happy hour, in a delicious common ground with concoctions such as the Moroccan mojito, made of rum infused with whole-leaf Moroccan mint tea. Some of the trendier bars in New York have signature drinks composed of gin with Earl Grey tea leaves for an Earl Grey Marteani. And since tea originated in Asia, it's no surprise that Asian-themed restaurants have a variety of green-tea cocktails, sometimes delicately enhanced with fresh fruit juices so that you get some extra health benefits with each sip.

In fact, tea's medicinal properties were already noted back in the 16th century by a Chinese herbalist, who declared: "It clears the voice, gives brilliancy to the eye, invigorates the constitution, improves the mental faculties, opens up the avenues of the body, promotes digestion, removes flatulence and regulates body temperature." Since those words were written, it seems that hardly a week goes by without news of yet another research study confirming the many health benefits of tea. It has been found by UK nutritionists to protect against heart disease, stroke and even some cancers, as research has shown that the high levels of antioxidants in tea leaves help prevent cell damage.

READING THE LEAVES The birthplace of tea is said to be China's southern Yunnan Province some time in the 4th century, when hill tribes began to brew the leaves as a drink. Tea drinking soon spread to Japan and the Himalayan kingdoms by the 12th century where it was first considered an herbal remedy useful for headaches and illness, although the pleasure of tea soon became a daily drink pursuit of the masses. The tea ceremony is still a cornerstone of Japanese culture, as a meditative ritual that emphasises quiet refinement and simplicity.

One of the earliest global commodities, tea spread along trade routes until it reached the tables of the East India Company. Milky drinks were flavoured with cardamom and cinnamon by Indians for centuries, so when they adapted these spices to tea the resulting aromatic brew became popularly known as chai. Chai's exotic flavours represent the mingling of cultures in tea, and can still be found in any coffee chain today. Dutch traders in India would also prepare it with sugar and ginger as a cold remedy.

The great diarist Samuel Pepys records tea's introduction to England as "a China drink of which I had never drunk before." By 1830 each person in England drank a pound of tea a year which was imported only from China. The labour-intensive crop was cultivated on small plots of land and subject



Tea-drinking rituals are an important part of many cultures particularly in the East

to fluctuations in supply. This vast trade deficit encouraged the British to set up their own supply, especially with the discovery of tea bushes growing native to the district of Assam in 1823.

Although the English had been buying tea from China for over two centuries, they had no idea about how to produce it and the Chinese jealously guarded their secrets. Initial harvests from Assam were tiny and of poor quality but after about 40 years of perseverance,

FIRST CONSIDERED AN HERBAL REMEDY FOR HEADACHES AND ILLNESS, TEA SOON BECAME A DAILY DRINK PURSUIT OF THE MASSES

the Indian tea industry was finally able to quench the English thirst for a cuppa.

TEA IN THE MALAYSIAN HIGHLANDS Love of tea soon spread throughout the British colonies, with westernised Indians beginning to sip a cup of tea for breakfast instead of water or buttermilk. But of all the former colonies in the British empire, a handful such as India, Kenya, Ceylon and Malaya were also found to have ideal conditions for cultivating tea. The plant, *camellia sinensis*, thrives in areas of continuous rainfall and especially on lush mountain ranges.

The Cameron Highlands were discovered by surveyor William Cameron on a mapping expedition in 1885 and first used as a retreat from the tropical climate. British planters soon found its fertile mountain slopes ideal for growing tea, and in 1929, John Archibald Russell, the son of a British administrative officer, started a tea plantation that grew into the BOH Tea Plantation.

Malaysia's largest tea-producing region today is still the Cameron Highlands, and no trip there is complete without a visit to the BOH Visitor Centre, a contemporary pavilion perched on a hill ridge overlooking the terraced lines of tea shrubs. BOH produces 4 million kgs of tea annually, which is about 5.5 million cups of tea per day. It also packs its own teas and thus is one of the few tea companies in the world with operations ranging over the entire spectrum of tea manufacture - from cultivation and processing to packaging its range of black teas.

For those who want to have their afternoon tea with cake, and eat it in the great outdoors, a unique experience to be savoured is the picnic at the heart

of a BOH Tea Plantation. This exclusive collaboration with the Cameron Highlands Resort allows guests to have a guided tour of the tea factory and estate at Sungei Palas, with a stroll through the tea bushes. The tour also includes an introduction to the fine art of tea tasting, an intrinsic part of the transformation from leaf to cup.

Different grades of tea are sampled, with notes compared on aroma and taste. And just like wine, tea

is said to be best sampled by slurping it with a bit of air to bring out the taste. The colour and aroma of the infusion, as well as its flavour, are the key to establishing the value of the harvest which takes on the characteristics of the soil from which it grows, as well as the manufacturing process.

This insight into tea is a special treat for those looking to find out more about their daily brew. But the real highlight of this tea journey takes place where few outsiders are permitted to go in the plantation. In a secluded spot, amidst rows of manicured tea bushes, one finds a magnificent panoramic view of the lush valleys below. Here on the vivid green slopes, a personal butler from the Cameron Highlands Resort has laid out a private picnic for your enjoyment.

A selection of dishes, whether for afternoon tea or something more substantial, is prepared using the



Green tea ice-cream is now a very common dessert

Enjoy a spectacular private afternoon tea prepared by Cameron Highlands Resort amidst the rolling tea hills of the BOH Tea Plantations



Tea-based spa treatments are a signature experience at the Spa Village Cameron Highlands

freshest seasonal produce of the Highlands and served on fine porcelain with crisp damask. Guests enjoy this intimate meal al fresco as they sip on white wine or delicate china cups filled with locally produced tea. The Cameron Highlands Resort Signature Experience, in collaboration with BOH Plantations, is one of the many extraordinary experiences available at Cameron Highlands Resort and is the perfect way to indulge in Malaysia's proud history of tea in style and luxury.

IT'S OUT OF THE BAG The way we drink tea today has however come a long way since its exotic origins. The tea bag was launched in post-war UK by Tetley and was an immediate success, with a convenience that revolutionised how it was prepared and drunk. As the traditional tea-pot gave way to tea made in a cup using a tea bag, few realised that they were drinking a by-product of processing loose-tea, which was the 'fannings' or broken leaves and dust.

The main difference between loose and bagged teas is the size and quality of the leaves, which contain chemicals and essential oils as the basis for the distinctive aroma. When the leaves are broken up, those oils evaporate and the taste declines. Tea leaves also need space to swell, expand and unfurl their flavours. Good water circulation around the leaves is important as part of the brewing process, which doesn't typically happen inside a tea bag.

Like wine, tea also varies greatly in aroma and taste from district to district, and from harvest to harvest. In China itself, more varieties of tea are said to exist than French wines, with over 50 different types of tea-leaf in Sichuan province alone. All tea comes

from the same plant, but the way in which it is processed makes all the difference in character. The least processed variety comes from the tender buds, known as white tea. New tea buds are plucked before they open and simply allowed to dry into curled-up buds with a silvery appearance, which produce a pale, delicate brew.

Green teas are dried by firing immediately after being picked, which helps to prevent oxidation and preserve the leaf enzymes. The flavour is somewhat astringent, and is best savoured after a heavy meal. Black tea is wilted then rolled to bruise and allowed to ferment. The leaves then oxidize before being oven-dried, giving the drink a full-bodied depth. Some gourmet brands now even market their black teas as being similar to a cabernet sauvignon wine blend, with flavour described in terms of depth and fruit overtones.

Oolong tea is partially cured, with a subtle characteristic that is less sharp than fermented black tea. Other ways to add flavour to tea include infusing leaves with dried flower petals. This practice is believed to have originated in the Sung dynasty, when chrysanthemum, rose, jasmine and plum blossoms were added to inferior leaves to improve the taste. Bergamot oil from the rind of the citrus fruit is added to black tea leaves for the refreshing blend of Earl Grey tea.

MORE THAN A CUPPA Tea can also add subtle flavour and rich colour to a variety of foods. The Chinese have used it as a seasoning for centuries - with the most traditional ways being tea-leaf eggs and for smoking duck Sichuan style. As more Western

chefs are influenced by Asian flavours and techniques in their cooking, the pleasures of flavouring with tea are becoming more appreciated.

Tea is most frequently used for smoking poultry and the technique is said to have originated as a way to preserve food in the warmer provinces of Sichuan and Hunan. Western chefs favour the use of tea leaves in smoking, as it imparts a more delicate aroma than typical hickory or mesquite wood smoking. The type of tea used is extremely important, and Lapsang souchong, which has a naturally smoky taste, is a particularly winning combination.

Tea even adds exotic perfume to desserts. Green tea is a standard ice-cream flavour in Japanese cuisine, and now tea flavours in desserts are becoming popular with French and American chefs. Jasmine tea is used to season a classic custard cream at the Michelin-starred Restaurant Troisgros in France, while the renowned Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, poaches fruit in sauterne wine enhanced with Darjeeling tea.

TEA AT THE SPA If a cup of tea is good for your body, it must be just as great for your skin, goes

the thinking on organic spa culture today. At the Cameron Highlands Resort, healing therapies are based on produce from the surrounding fertile lands and ancient tea rituals. This authentic blending of culture and product is what makes Spa Village Cameron Highlands such a unique and therapeutic healing retreat.

Tea is a major part of the experience from the moment you arrive: firstly, soothing herbal tea is served as you wait for a spa treatment. Depending on the selection of treatments, you may then find yourself immersed in an old-fashioned bathtub full of hot tea and rose petals, with rose sugar to rub into your skin. Then it's time for more tea - fragrant honey tea as your face mask, herbal tea bags for your eyelids, and chilled lemon tea to actually drink.

The most sensual experience here uses pure rose essential oil and rose petals for a calming and relaxing effect. As the first rose garden was cultivated in the Highlands back in the 1950s, Cameron-grown Champagne roses are used in these signature body and facial treatments, while the Rose Tea Bath is a luxurious soak in tea leaves, rose petals and aromatic oils.

IF TEA IS GOOD FOR YOUR BODY, IT MUST BE JUST AS GREAT FOR YOUR SKIN, GOES THE THINKING ON ORGANIC SPA CULTURE TODAY

Mint and tea is another classic combination found in the Spa Village, as mint has long been acknowledged for its healing properties of improving circulation and boosting the immune system. The Mint Tea Bath is as stimulating as it is wonderful for soothing muscular aches.

Another crop grown in the Highlands is a delicious fruit found in afternoon teas. But it is also the main ingredient in the series of Strawberry treatments. Pureed fresh strawberries are used in body treatments to soften the skin and cool inflammation. The Strawberry Tea Bath is a beautifully sensual spa experience that helps to ease nervous tension and stress, while leaving the body rehydrated and the mind feeling rejuvenated.

THE PERFECT SIP The fine art of tea-making has its various devotees, but all agree that the best way to make a good pot of tea is to rinse a teapot with boiling water and then to add loose tea, allowing 1 teaspoon for every cup. Pour more boiling water into the pot, cover and allow to infuse for 3 to 5 minutes before pouring. The leaves should not be allowed to steep too long as the tea is best drunk freshly brewed and piping hot.

Water is also crucial to making tea, with mountain spring water and well water being preferred by experts to tap water. Does that mean you have to make your tea with mineral water? Not necessarily, because some mineral water actually has a high mineral content, although Volvic is recommended amongst connoisseurs. Using an earthenware or china teapot is also preferable to a metal kettle.

The perfect cup of tea of course has endless options for accompaniment. Traditional Japanese confectionary known as wagashi is served during the Japanese tea ceremony to take away the bitter astringency of the green tea. With afternoon tea, the British elevated tea-drinking to a social ceremony accompanied by sandwiches, scones and cakes such as a Victoria sponge. Needless to say, whether you take your tea black, with sugar, milk, lemon or spices, or with or without biscuits, this drink is definitely an everyday indulgence for everyone. ■

AFTERNOON TEA IN THE HIGHLANDS



On a cold day, curled up in front of a fire or coming back after a long walk in the rain, a cup of tea can be the most inviting treat. Even better then, if the tea is a gourmet blend accompanied with your choice of cream or sugar, and a selection of freshly-baked scones and strawberries.

The Jim Thompson Tea Room at the Cameron Highlands Resort is a unique tribute to the tradition of afternoon tea, where teas sourced from surrounding plantations are offered for your selection and served in fine china. There's mango tea, lemon and mandarin tea, passion fruit, clove and cardamom tea, vanilla, lime and ginger, Earl Grey and tangerine and Java black blends.

In this little part of Malaysia that's more English than England today, high tea is of course served with a delectable spread: scones and jam, and cucumber or cress sandwiches. Fresh Highland strawberries grown in the area come with a divine selection of sauces; melted chocolate, cardamom cream and vanilla honey fudge complete this sumptuous repast. The resort's teak and leather library contains a section on tea poetry, with plenty of plush seating and cushions on which to curl up and read.



At the BOH Tea Plantations, you can witness the entire process of manufacturing tea from cultivation and harvesting to packaging



THE MELTING POT

Nyonya cuisine, a unique blend of Chinese and Malay cooking, has its home in historical Malacca. YTL Life delves into the history and complexity of one of Malaysia's most enduring culinary legacies

BY BOEY PING PING PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTOPHER A. SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA
WITH FOOD STYLING ASSISTED BY EUGENE NG ALL FOOD PREPARED BY CHEFS AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA

'Ikan Assam Pedas' (Spicy and Sour Fish) is a perennial Nyonya favourite with a sauce that is fiery hot and satisfyingly sour. Also called Ikan Garam Assam, there are many interpretations of this classic dish but most are accompanied by either ladies' fingers (okra), tomatoes and/or brinjals.

W

ho would have guessed that an inter-racial marriage in 15th century Malacca would be the origin of one of South-East Asia's most unique and original cuisines? The story began when a fair

maiden, Princess Hang Li Po, the daughter of an emperor from China, arrived in ancient Malaya to tie the knot with the tall, dark and handsome Sultan Mansur Shah of Malacca. She brought along with her a 500-strong entourage and it was these immigrants who formed the first Chinese settlement in Malacca. As would be expected, these settlers, who were mainly men, eventually began taking native Malay women as brides and as a result a new generation of Chinese-Malays was born.

They were called Peranakan or 'Straits Chinese', with the men referred to as 'Baba' and the women 'Nyonya'. Though originally from Malacca, Babas and Nyonias were soon found all over Malaysia, with a particular concentration in Malacca, Penang and Singapore.

The Peranakan assimilated to the local way of life, adopting the Malay language as their own, donning the Malay 'sarong kebaya' and incorporating the Malay's fondness for chillies, 'belacan' (dried shrimp paste) and coconut milk into their traditional Chinese dishes. In effect, this marriage of traditions gave birth to a culture and cuisine that is unlike any other.

Neither truly Malay nor exclusively Chinese, Nyonya cuisine is in a genre all of its own, a relatively undiscovered gem in the culinary world but a Malaysian mainstay today. Pungent, spicy and fragrant, Nyonya food - whether from Malacca, Penang or down South in Johor and Singapore - is flavoured by the most aromatic of ingredients. Not only that, but at its best, Nyonya cuisine is quite easily one of the most delicious and complex: rich, tasty, and with depth in flavour.

The secret to cooking the best Nyonya food is all in the preparation, which can take hours and hours. Extended marination ensures that the best cuts of meat fall off the bone easily and are fully flavoured. Wet spices are pounded and fried while dry spices are ground and cooked with coconut milk to produce rich gravies and spicy curries. Sauces are made from scratch, spices are blended with deliberation and every dish demands precision of skill, patience, and passion

to create a cuisine that is loved and talked about by the many who grew up eating it. In the homes of Babas and Nyonias just a generation past, womenfolk could always be found sitting on the kitchen floor pounding away at their mortar and pestles that turn a carefully measured amount of herbs and mixed spices into a creamy blend that forms the base of all Nyonya cooking. It has been said that in the old days, a Nyonya lady seeking a prospective bride for her son would listen to the pounding of spices by the maiden concerned as it denoted the amount of attention she would give to her cooking.

One of the key aspects of Nyonya cooking is in the liberal use of belacan, that spicy oh-so-pungent flavour enhancer that when dry-fried produces an overpowering smell that has been the downfall of many an unsuspecting 'mat salleh' (white foreigner). Used in curries, sauces and gravies to give dishes a depth and richness that is difficult to reproduce, the Peranakans also eat belacan pounded with fresh red chillies as an accompaniment to many dishes that do not require the use of belacan.

Other distinctive Nyonya ingredients feature pungent roots such as galangal and turmeric, fresh and dried chillies and lemon grass. Appearing very similar to ginger, save for its pink shoots and brown skin, galangal is sour and peppery and produces a particular flavour that enhances soups and curries. Also from the ginger family, yellow turmeric provides curries with a golden hue and also improves flavour. Several different types of chillies are used, from the tiny but fiery bird's-eye chilli to medium length plump chillies and finger-length green and red chillies to create a varying heat scale. To balance out the zing of flaming-hot chillies, fresh lemon grass is added sliced, pounded or bruised to help flavour dishes with its zesty tang.

Aromatic leaves such as curry, pandan and kaffir lime are also hallmarks of Nyonya cooking. Curry leaves garnish noodles while pandan (screwpine) leaves are tied in a bunch and left to steep in coconut milk to boost the flavour of desserts in particular. Kaffir lime leaves are indispensable as their ability to release aromatic oils into curries is responsible for creating the distinct taste that is Nyonya.

Nyonya flavours have not just influenced the way locals eat but opened up a whole new realm of hybrid cuisine for gourmants in this food paradise called Malacca. Though Straits Chinese settlers can also be found in Penang and Singapore, the first Peranakan community initially flourished in Malacca.

Known as 'Pie Tee' or 'Top Hats', this quintessential bite-size Nyonya snack is the perfect way to start a meal. A crispy shell of deep-fried flour and egg is filled with stewed turnip, diced shrimps and carrots and topped with scallions, shallots, chillies and finely sliced omelette. The Majestic Malacca version (as pictured here) comes lusciously crowned with a Merlimau Prawns for that touch of decadence.



Nyonya Kuih (cakes) come in a rainbow of colours and flavours and are where you can truly see the Malay and Chinese influences coalescing. In Malacca, the eponymous 'gula melaka' (palm sugar) has become synonymous with Nyonya desserts, but another distinctive feature of Nyonya kuih is also the use of the bright blue dye of the Bunga Telang (Blue Pea Flower) to stain certain kuih. Breakfast and tea time favourites include 'ang koo kuih', 'seri muka', 'pulut inti' and 'kuih ko sui', and also (clockwise from top R in photo) 'onde-onde', 'kueh lapis' and 'seri kaya'.



Called 'Otak-Otak', this classic Nyonya creation is a perfect example of the cuisine's complexity. Fish slices are marinated with fresh turmeric, lemon grass, lime leaves, chilli and coconut, then wrapped in banana leaves. They can then be either steamed or grilled. The result: a creamy, spicy fish 'mousse'.



A dish like 'Udang Kuah Pedas' (Prawns in Spicy Sauce) served with fresh pineapple illustrates the versatility and adaptability of Peranakan cuisine in this rich, sharp and delicious curried dish. Again, the classic sweet and sour push-and-pull comes into play here.



And while Penang Nyonya cuisine is tangy and hot, with a preference for prawn paste due to its Thai influence, the Malacca Nyonyas prefer their food sweet with generous doses of coconut milk and Malay spices. Here are several traditional favourites which are but a slice of the essence and depth of Peranakan cuisine.

INCHE KABIN Nothing says comfort food like fried chicken. This Nyonya version of a classic favourite owes its finger-licking goodness to a marinade of soy sauce, oyster sauce, five-spice powder, black pepper, ginger and scallions. The bite-sized chicken pieces are dipped into a batter of egg and flour and fried until a spicy aroma permeates the air. The result is tender, juicy meat enveloped in a crispy, peppery skin.

AYAM PONGTEH Infused with a thick treacly sauce of preserved soy bean, chunks of garlic, chilli and gula Melaka, this deceptively simple stew is so wonderfully rich in flavour that it doesn't need any other accompaniment. Only a plate of steamed white rice is necessary.

PRAWN KAPITAN The name 'Kapitan' is apparently derived from a maid questioning her captain's fondness for a curry lunch everyday: "Curry, Kapitan?" In this adaptation of Kari Kapitan, fat, juicy prawns are used instead of chicken and cooked in a

deliciously creamy sauce redolent of lemon grass and more than a hint of chilli. Instead of curry powder, a paste crafted from dried chilli, garlic, onions, turmeric, galangal, lemon grass and candlenuts is used to create the aromatic, red and yellow gravy.

CHAP CHYE Despite this being a simple dish of mixed vegetables, there is something rather reassuring about an unpretentious meal of familiar tastes and aromas. More brown than green, this vegetable dish reveals a treasure trove of mushrooms, black fungus, bean curd skin, lily buds, cabbage and glass noodles that goes rather nicely with a dollop of sambal belacan.

CENDOL Hot sunny days become instantly cooler with Cendol, an ice-cold dessert of shaved ice drowned in coconut milk and sweet, syrupy gula Melaka, a golden liquid of caramelised palm sugar flavoured with screwpine leaves. The crushed ice melts to reveal green jelly strips made of green pea flour and fat, flavourful red beans.

BUBUR CHA-CHA While Cendol is best eaten cold, Bubur Cha-cha tastes better warm. This dessert dish is a porridge of yams, sweet potatoes and sago swimming in thick coconut milk and gula Melaka caramel. Screwpine leaves, a natural flavour enhancer makes this Nyonya dessert simply irresistible. ■

NYONYA CUISINE AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA



To adapt an old saying: 'When in Malacca, eat as the Malaccans eat'. So sampling Nyonya cuisine should then be at the top of the list of every visitor to the city. For those looking to do so in an ambience that is refined, luxurious and exclusive, there is no other place than at The

Majestic Malacca, the city's premier boutique heritage hotel. Besides an extensive menu of excellent Western offerings, the restaurant at the hotel also offers diners the choice of four Nyonya Set Menus. Carefully selected and crafted to represent the most authentic Nyonya culinary

journey, dishes featured on the menu include Inche Kabin, Ayam Pongteh, Prawn Kapitan, Chap Chye, Cendol and Onde-Onde with Ice-Cream.

For pre-order of the Majestic Malacca's Nyonya menus, call +606-289 8000.

A 'PICK-ME-UP' IN PARADISE

THE 'VIGOUR' DISCOVERY PATH AT
SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI IS A
BESPOKE EXPERIENCE CRAFTED TO PUT
SOME PEP BACK INTO YOUR LIFE BY MAGDALENE TAN



W

hen most of us go on an island getaway, we think sun, sea, sand and surf. We make sure that most of our time is spent doing nothing but lazing on the beach with a book and topping up our

tan. A bit of surfing, shopping and bar hopping is as active as we plan to be. Don't get me wrong. I'm an avid fan of the lazy island holiday, but to be honest, I rarely return completely refreshed, recharged and invigorated; instead I go back to work longing to still be basking on the beach.

This year, my new year's resolution was to start a more active lifestyle. And why shouldn't this include vacations as well? I wanted to go on a holiday that sharpened my mind and refuelled my spirit. Mostly, though, I wanted to feel physically stronger and more energetic to jump start my new fitness regime. But could I really have a relaxing break away and still be highly active?

Bali may seem a little laid-back for such a dynamic holiday, but I discovered the ideal place where I could find the perfect balance between serenity and vitality for both the mind and body. The Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is a charming spa resort tucked away along the northern coast. One of the resort's signature experiences is the 'Discovery Path', consisting of four different sets of spa and activity programmes to cater to different needs.

The 'Balance Path' focuses on restoring peace to the mind and completely relaxing the body; 'Creative' allows you to discover your creative spirit through the inspiration of Balinese art. If the philosophy and practice of Balinese healing therapies interest you, The Spa Village Academy will show you the way of these traditional techniques. But it is the Vigour Path that cries out to me. A programme with an amalgamation of activities created to regain strength and boost energy levels, and all this set within a tropical haven. Perfect.

DAY 1: A BALINESE WELCOME The Resort wastes no time in preparing guests for the ultimate Path experience. Upon arrival you are greeted and seated by smiling staff. You will be served a glass of chilled watermelon juice while your feet are soaked in a large, bronze basin filled with warm water and fragrant flower petals. As the cool drink flows down the throat and the warmth at your feet rises, the two contrasts



seem to meet halfway and merge into a soothing sensation in the stomach. The immediate balance of the two opposites is a pleasant surprise.

A small pot of hot ginger tea awaits me in my gorgeous private villa as well as a fresh set of linen fisherman's pants and top. True believers in comfort will abandon the usual everyday clothes and wear nothing but this ultra comfortable attire throughout their stay. A few cups of the zesty tea and I am ready for my first activity.

Daily yoga classes take place on the resort's spacious lawn and if you have never done yoga in the middle of such natural and peaceful surroundings, let's just say that it truly uplifts the spirit. Your senses heighten as you sit on the mat and concentrate on your breathing with the sound of birds chirping and soft crashing waves in the background. As I stretch and move from

posture to posture, muscles that have been at rest for far too long now spring to life and by the end of the class, sweat beads dot my face and I leave feeling both nimble and at ease. And a little peckish.

A romantically lit restaurant with no walls and furniture created by local craftsman, Wantilan restaurant provides an airy yet cosy atmosphere. Fresh local produce and seafood are lovingly prepared and expertly cooked, resulting in an exciting taste of Indonesian fusion cuisine. While savouring my fresh tuna roll al fresco, I look out over the Bali Sea and witness an amazing sight, a moonrise, in all its majestic and surreal glory. This has become a dining experience to remember.

Before I turn in for the night, I head to the infinity pool where an attendant is waiting to prep me for my session of 'Starlight Gazing'. This is another signature

experience of the Resort where guests lie on an air mattress and float weightlessly in the Resort's pool. While listening to soothing meditation music from an MP3 player, you can then gaze up at the twinkling stars, often out in magnificent numbers here. This languid experience proves to be the best nightcap of all and I sleep like a baby that night.

DAY 2: LOCAL FLAVOURS It's early in the morning and I'm at the Resort's black sand beach for a session of Pencak Silat. This ancient Indonesian martial art closely imitates the movements of animals such as the monkey and the tiger, amongst others. The local expert leads us through the swift moves and footwork and explains that in Pencak Silat you strive for fluidity and precision. I breathe in the crisp morning air and listen to the lapping waves as I go through the movements and feel my strength build up throughout my entire body.



THE VIGOUR PATH IS AN AMALGAMATION OF ACTIVITIES CREATED TO HELP ONE REGAIN STRENGTH AND BOOST ENERGY LEVELS



After a nourishing fruit-fest breakfast (the homemade strawberry yoghurt is just divine), I make my way over to the Taman Gili bale where Muliartini, my spa therapist, welcomes me to the Jamu Making Class. She explains that Jamu is a traditional herbal health drink originating from Java, and that Indonesians of all ages drink it daily for physical energy, vigour and mental clarity - just what I need.

Muliartini prepares the ingredients for Jamu Beras Kencur (rice and finger root tonic drink) and demonstrates how this drink is made. Rice grains are ground, juices are extracted from ginger root, and then boiled with tamarind, cinnamon, clove, palm sugar and a pinch of salt. This ancient remedy can be served warm or chilled. Its fusion of sharp flavours harmonises into a natural and unprocessed citric tonic. Great for removing toxins, Jamu has been drunk by Indonesians to keep ailments away long before aspirins and antibiotics existed. I knock back as much of the tonic as possible.

Now that my insides feel pepped up, it is time for my outer self to receive some TLC. The thirty minute pre-spa treatment, Segara Giri ('Ocean Mountain' in Balinese), is a prelude to all body treatments here with a purpose to eradicate toxins and improve blood circulation.

The ritual begins with you sitting at a bamboo-covered pit, while your feet and legs receive an unusual foot sauna conducted with hot stones (mountain) and a bed of the famed black volcanic sand (ocean) unique to this part of Bali. It does tend to get rather hot as the steam forces out toxins through your pores. And after buckets of perspiration, you can probably imagine how pleased I am to be served a bowl of ice shavings generously drizzled in palm sugar to cool me down. The pre-spa treatment ends with a wade through a shallow water-filled path to wash off the remaining sand followed by a lounge on a comfortable half moon chair under the shade of frangipani trees. As I sip on cold, refreshing ylang ylang water and bite on frozen grapes, I feel like I'm in heaven.

The Penganten Melukat is a body treatment traditionally performed on the bride and groom by their mothers three days before their wedding. It is a popular treatment for honeymooners staying at the Resort because it is an experience that may be enjoyed together. The four-part treatment begins with a traditional Balinese massage, Mewangsul. Oil is methodically rubbed over my entire body by a specialist while hypnotising meditation music plays in the background. I fight to stay conscious, until the

second part begins.

Meodok is where Boreh body scrub is used to gently and evenly exfoliate you from shoulder to toe. The mixture of galangal, ginger, rice and cloves, scrubs away dead skin and the ingredients elicit a prickly sensation. The third part, Empehan, is where fresh milk is applied all over to alleviate the heat from the Boreh scrub as well as to soothe and moisturise the skin. The treatment concludes with Mersiram Sekar, a fragrant floral bath with cleansing and therapeutic benefits. I come out of it all feeling as light as a feather and extremely purified.

Before dinner, I board a traditional Balinese boat, the Jukung, for a sunset sail. The sea is calm and the sun is setting. When all you can hear is the lapping water, and all you can see is the magnificent sight of the sleeping, volcanic giant, Mount Agung, back lit by a warm sky, Mother Earth seems to radiate. With a glass of chilled wine, I take a deep breath and become one with her.

DAY 3: LET'S GET PHYSICAL I aptly end the Vigour Path with the Fitness Circuit on my last morning. Ten stretching and toning exercise stations consisting of presses, lunges, squats and flexes will surely get your muscles pumping and your endorphins racing.

Before I go to the restaurant to order more of that homemade strawberry yoghurt, I have my first experience on a yoga swing; perfect after a high-impact gym workout. Exercise on this apparatus will have you rotating and suspending forwards and backwards. Regular use of a yoga swing will strengthen muscles and improve agility. As I suspend myself upside-down, only held up by my legs entwined around the material of the swing, my spine is optimally stretched and I think to myself, 'I've got to get me one of these!'

Three days has not been long enough, but I lay down my fisherman's pants and say goodbye to the resort feeling more toned, a little stronger, spiritually replenished, detoxified and invigorated inside and out. But I also depart impressed with the expertly crafted experience of unexpectedly finding vitality and zest in this most serene of settings. This active retreat has given me the push I needed and has shown me the importance of balance between movement and rest; something we could all do with a little bit more of in our lives. ■

Experience the 'Discovery Paths' at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali; +603-2783 1000; www.tembokbali.com

Deconstructed
prairie dress and belt
Bottega Veneta;
bangles **Stylist's own**

HAUTE TROPICS

WELCOME SUMMER AND THE
SEASON'S FABULOUS FASHION AT
THE WORLD-CLASS MALAY PALACE-
INSPIRED, TANJONG JARA RESORT





Suede clutch in coal with gold lining by Sofia Coppola for **Louis Vuitton**; Metallic belt **Bottega Veneta**



Yellow chiffon dress with layered skirt **Fendi**



Doctor B bag with side buckles **Fendi**; Printed cotton pareo **Louis Vuitton**



Military green strapless romper with front patch pockets **Gucci**; Acetate aviators with metal inlays **Louis Vuitton**; Timepiece **Rado**



Bag with floral prints and intrecciato details **Bottega Veneta**; Ballet flats **Lanvin**



Organza blouse with sheer skirt, stretch shorts and wide belt **Christian Dior**; Obsession Rond sunglasses in pink, and Neverfull tote with fuchsia graffiti, from the Stephen Sprouse collection **Louis Vuitton**



Pink chiffon top and shorts **Fendi**; Grey platform sandals with ankle strap buckles (in basket) **Gucci**



Black tulle dress with nude lining **Lanvin**;
Multicoloured leather
crochet bag **Bottega Veneta**



Ceramica Maxi Basic watch and white True Diamond timepiece **Rado**



Midnight blue Grecian dress with elastic belt **Lanvin**; Suede purse (on bar counter), by Sofia Coppola **Louis Vuitton**; Platforms with leather straps **Christian Dior**; Timepiece **Rado**



Short sleeve flounce flute dress **Gucci**;
Ceramica Maxi Basic timepiece **Rado**

PHOTOGRAPHY
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STYLING
AZIZ DRAIM

HAIR & MAKE-UP
TAISU

MODEL
SONIA, TALENT CAFE

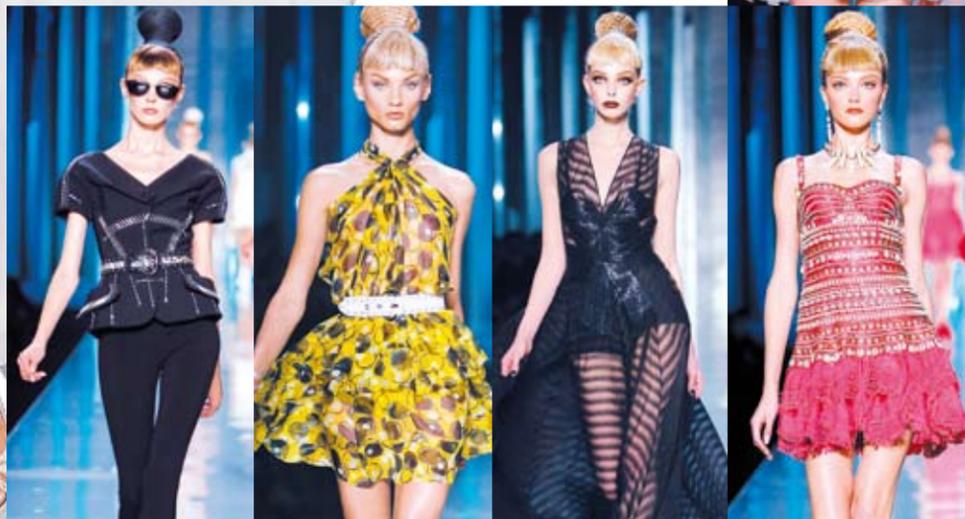
SHOT ON LOCATION AT
TANJONG JARA RESORT,
TERENGGANU, MALAYSIA

IN BLOOM

AS TEMPERATURES RISE AND LAYERS ARE SHED, THIS SEASON'S SPRING-SUMMER COLLECTIONS SHOW A DIVERSITY OF FASHION FANTASIES DESPITE (OR BECAUSE OF) THE LOOMING GLOBAL RECESSION BY CHOO AI LING

THRILL SEEKER

CHRISTIAN DIOR - WOMEN'S The 80s as seen through the aesthetic of Azzedine Alaïa, Thierry Mugler, and Claude Montana has been a recurring trend of late and for Spring-Summer, John Galliano mined it with relish and a touch of wistful nostalgia - he was after all famously chummy with the supermodel clique of that era - Cindy, Naomi, Linda et al. Unapologetic sexiness ruled the collection as glamazonians stalked down the catwalk in short flippy dresses with sheer skirts, bodysuits, python jackets, spotty animal prints, and jutting bras. Who knows, perhaps Galliano's aggressive version of dressing could be just the right armour to face the crumbling economy.



MISS MANNERS

VALENTINO - WOMEN'S While Valentino has never been known for directional fashion, Alessandra Facchinetti's last collection for the house continued to gradually update the ladylike looks the fashion house is renown for with a gentle touch. Softening the ladies-who-lunch look with chiffon, ruffles and a neutral colour palette, Facchinetti even injected some playfulness with silk polka-dot dresses, and shorts suits with raised, coiled, jewelled embroidery. Valentino's signature red gown was re-imagined as a one shouldered Grecian confection draped in diaphanous red georgette and paired with flat jewelled slippers.



ON MUTE

BOTTEGA VENETA - WOMEN Given that Bottega Veneta has never been about gimmicky fashion, Tomas Maier's response to the sober mood was almost imperceptible. In fact, Maier merely continued his oeuvre of beautifully crafted pieces which have always gracefully side-stepped trends (and possibly the brunt of recession). His earthy palette of muted browns-caramel through dark saffron, copper, and chestnut - emphasised the almost artisanal quality of the manipulated fabrics and handcrafted leathers. Maier also subtly referenced the hardy American pioneers with shirtwaisters and dirndls in washed colours and vintage motifs which closed the collection, perhaps to underline the need for resilience in these trying times.



LOUNGE LIZARDS

BOTTEGA VENETA - MEN As with his women's collection, Tomas Maier kept to classic lines for the gents except with a lightness of touch to accommodate the warmer weather. The masculinity of the collection was of a confident, insouciant type as worn so well by Robert Mitchum and Humphrey Bogart - when men dressed like men in square-shouldered blazers, full-pleated trousers, and chunky saddle shoes. Lest you think that the collection a one note, Maier keeps things interesting by pairing the classics in unexpected ways - mixing prints and colours in refreshing yet elegant combinations.



COURAGE UNDER FIRE

LOUIS VUITTON - WOMEN Defiance was the underlying mood in Marc Jacobs' exuberant collection. It seems that the Vuitton woman faces an uncertain future with no small amount of spirit... and a fabulously flirty skirt. Strutting down the catwalk to the strains of Edith Piaf, it was obvious that Jacob found inspiration in the plucky glamour of women in wartime Paris - complete with an Art Deco colour palette and the Oriental accents so popular in that era. Embellishment aplenty was found on the clothes themselves (embroidered with beads and sequins, trimmed with lace and python) and the models were piled high with accessories (heavy gold cuffs, obi leather sashes, elaborately patchworked shoes).



ACCIDENTAL HERO

LOUIS VUITTON - MEN In sharp contrast to LV's vivacious women's collection, menswear studio director Paul Helbers pares down the bombast with an icily pale collection (a handful of charcoals and pinks excepted) of almost ethereal properties. Charlie Chaplin may seem like an unlikely inspiration, but it was the Chaplin's fluid, almost accidental elegance which spurred the designer to construct a new silhouette for trousers. Pinching the line of the leg into an O shape, it discreetly echoes the great entertainer's bow-legged stance. Delicate fabrics like voile, and details such as "couture gathering," which pleats the back of shirts into poetically blouse-y volumes add to a collection which will float easily into Spring.



C'EST CHEAP C'EST CHIC

WHO SAYS YOU NEED TO SPLURGE TO LOOK STYLISH? WITH THE SOMBRE ECONOMIC MOOD, DESIGNERS AND EVEN CELEBRITIES ARE PAVING THE WAY TO CHEAP CHIC AND CALLING FOR 'RECESSIONISTAS' OF THE WORLD TO UNITE BY CHOO ALLING



Michelle Obama in a Jason Wu Dress

SUB-PRIME CRISIS. Credit crunch. Global recession. An ominous vocabulary which has been percolating in our consciousness for the last year or so. As financial institutions crumble, stock markets careen and unemployment mounts, is there any place for fashion? Couture dresses and Manolos may seem irrelevant but the world of fashion does not exist in a bubble, instead one could say that fashion is a barometer of the times. As the great Coco Chanel said: "Fashion is in the sky, in the street. Fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening."

The oldest maxim about fashion and the economy is that hemlines rise and fall with the stockmarket. During the booming '20s and '60s, skirts were short; in the '30s and '40s, they fell. This time-tested adage may be too simplistic in our complex times and it seems we cannot rely on skirt length alone to track the economy through fashion. One could even say that the most memorable fashion designers have always been the ones who captured the prevailing mood of the moment.

As the first Spring-Summer collections stalked down the Bryant Park runway last year, Cathy Horyn, fashion editor of the New York Times, reported that the tunics layered over trousers at Marc Jacobs referenced the pop-over aprons of the Depression era. Another reaction to this scary and uncertain future? It seems that when the going gets tough, the tough wear armour. The Autumn-Winter collections of Rag&Bone, Ohne Titel and BCBG Max Azria all showed their own interpretation of urban body protection. Even Hervé Léger - whose famous bandage dress is known more for showing off the female form rather than protecting it - turned urban-warrior with patchwork textures of snakeskin, suede and velvet, tough metallic embellishments and asymmetrical cutouts creating a shield to the outside world.

Some designers like Jason Wu defiantly waved the flag for optimism in the face of gloom. Wu, Michelle Obama's designer of choice for her husband's inaugural ball and who donned Wu again for the March cover of Vogue, showed a First Lady-worthy collection of polished daywear in optimistic hues. Big hitters like Diane Von Fürstenberg and Donna Karan also embraced colour, albeit mixed with prints.

PHOTO CORBIS

As with all good trends, this one already has an accompanying lexicon. The term cannibalises the much bandied 'fashionista' to produce 'recessionista'. Lexicographers claim that the word 'recessionista' has its roots in economic hardship as finance executives first used the term to connote a person predicting a recession or a person who believes a recession would benefit the long-term health of the economy. But, as the skies over the global markets continued darkening, over the last six months of 2008, publicists, retailers and magazines refashioned the word to mean recession chic.

But what exactly is recession chic and how can it possibly be stylish to not have the dough to dish out for those designer must-haves? Style.com, the website of American Vogue declared the free-spending fashionista of the type feted in Sex and the City obsolete. To fill her Manolos, the website fashioned a new icon for the new austerity, a plucky heroine able to fixate on designer logos even at a time when her banker boyfriend is being forced to work a three-day week and her apartment might be facing foreclosure.

Derek Blasberg wrote last summer on style.com: "You should know that while the fashionista may have locked herself in the vault with her tiaras, her younger, hipper sister - recessionista - is at the mall finding designer threads (or diffusion designer threads) at discount prices. Look for her at Target, Uniqlo, Payless or Kohl's, all of whom have inked deals with designers recently. That's because recessionistas aren't letting a little thing like falling stock prices and rising gas bills get in the way of their wardrobe."

To some extent, the word mirrors the efforts of fashion and beauty publicists to spin the economic downturn as an attractive retail trend. For example, Bourjois, a moderately priced French makeup range, sent a recent press release by e-mail promoting the brand's cheapest mascara and lip glosses as "the Recessionista Collection," an antidote to gloom. An e-mail message sent last week on behalf of Salon Eliut Rivera in Manhattan promoted "Recessionista Beauty," offering discounts on haircuts and eyebrow shaping.

The use of the word recessionista is "making light of a situation that isn't so favorable for the consumer-driven industries of our nation, spinning it... and delivering a luring message to the masses - PR 101 ladies and gentlemen," wrote Heather Viggiani on the blog of a public relations firm where she works part-time

Either way, the reality is that while classification may be new, the concept of moving merchandise in a tough climate is not. From as far back as 1930, which was the beginning of the Great Depression, a Sears catalog offered "coats of the new mode in the spirit of smart economy" priced to sell at \$9.75 to \$25. Phrases like "be smart and thrifty" and "look at the chic economy" promoted dresses that cost \$4.98 to \$8.98. In the wake of the stock market crash of 1987, designers began to offer less-expensive second lines like

Donna Karan's DKNY in 1989.

The chain reaction of retailers to mass media has been swift. Elle's July 2008 issue teased an eight-page spread Le Cheap, C'est Chic! on the cover with the line "No She Didn't!" And style bible US Vogue's December 2008 issue focused on how to be stylish in a difficult economic climate, with editor-in-chief Anna Wintour challenging designers to produce credit-friendly party dresses.

Celebrities, the icons of our times have also succumbed to the recessionista trend with Tia Carrere picking up her first ever Grammy - for Best Hawaiian Music Album - in an outfit which cost under \$100. Her ensemble - a skin-tight black number with jewel embellishment, and a fancy purse were all purchased on eBay and Carrere even proudly declared, "It's my statement for the economic times." Michelle Obama who has become a trendsetter in her own right has been on the recessionista trend all through the campaign trail to the Whitehouse. By pairing chic designer splurges with off-the-rack goodies from J. Crew, H&M, White House/Black Market and Target, fashion spectators say her ability to make a strong statement on a budget sends an important message during tough economic times.

From America's first lady to the infamous Nuclear Wintour, it would seem that tightening belts, whether or not you need to, is the trend du jour. But at the crux of it, it's about looking fabulous regardless of the economy - after all to paraphrase Yves Saint Laurent - recessions come and go but style is forever. ■



Rag&Bone

Tia Carrere: Looking like a million bucks in less than a hundred

Marc Jacobs

MARC JACOBS AND RAG&BONE PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES; TIA PHOTO CORBIS

IT'S ABOUT TIME

WATCHES WHICH ARE AS STUNNING TO BEHOLD AS THEY ARE WONDERS OF ENGINEERING BY CHOO AI LING



WOMEN'S HOUR Mother's Day is almost upon us and what more appropriate way to indulge the most important lady in your life than with a lavish watch from the Lady Korloff collection. Evoking feminine softness with its sensual curves, time ticks by on a case inlaid with mother of pearl, white-gold double Ks and eternal stones. The precious dial is protected by a faceted sapphire glass and the finishing touch is bestowed by a moiré satin, technological or genuine alligator skin strap. For those who prefer a dash of colour, the Miss Korloff comes in different lacquer colours and concave sapphire glass. *Korloff, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2141 2881/7881*



JUNGLE FEVER The Bestiary Tourbillon combines the imagination of fine jewellery with the epitome of watchmaking in a decadent collection which represents the three animals most closely associated with Boucheron. The snake, chameleon and frog - all hand crimped by the master jewellers of Maison Boucheron - serve to focus the attention on to the technical jewel they guard so jealously. Even the watch face is deliberately set off-centre opposite the opening in the watch face, so that the hypnotic border looks as if it is levitating. What further abets this dreamlike construction is that nature, captured in a bejewelled instant, seems to have frozen in time before the butterfly formed by the hour and minute hands is swallowed up by the animal on guard. These stunning masterpieces come in two different versions and a limited run of only eight pieces. *Boucheron, Indulge Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2143 2669*



BLAST FROM THE PAST Breitling pays homage to one of its most famous models - the Chrono-matic - which featured the world's first self-winding chronograph movement with the Chrono-Matic 49. Debuted in 1969, the Chrono-matic not only revolutionised the way timepieces ticked, it influenced how they looked - paving the way for the trend of oversized watches. While the new model's angular, taut lines are inspired by the original's generous size and 60s/70s look, details have been updated: namely the black rubber-moulded steel construction of its rotating pinion bezel and a new woven steel bracelet which contrasts with the pure lines of the case. *Cortina Watch Espace, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2142 1171*



M03 TIMES A LADY For a watch as singular as the woman who wears it, Armand Nicolet's M03 collection fits the bill. Crafted to meet the refined demands of female tastes, the collection was inspired by the desire to produce a prestigious watch with a perfect mechanism as complicated as any men's watch yet which could easily pass muster as a piece of jewellery. Every detail attests to this search for absolute elegance, from the rotor movement decorated with Côte de Genève to the "perlage" of rhodium-plated bridges and blue screws, from the unique "guilloché" finished dial inserted with mother-of-pearl parts and even down to the alligator straps in colours which match the mother-of-pearl. *Armand Nicolet, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2144 4328*



FIRST AMONG EQUALS Iconoclastic brand Romaine Jerome's fascinating Titanic-DNA collection welcomes a new addition with the bold T-oxy III Skeleton Chronograph Tourbillon. A true instrument of chronometry, this exceptional skeleton timepiece is an assertive interpretation of the chronograph Tourbillon and boasts a diameter of 50mm - 53mm including the screw-in crown. It also features interchangeable horns and a push button which blends perfectly with the design of the Titanic-DNA timepieces by integrating the characteristic of the transversal paw. The skeleton dial integrates various materials (brass, black or, steel, pink gold 5N) and mixes matte velvet with a satin and shot-blasted finish for the Roman numeral XII. *Khronos-Unique Horlogerie, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2141 9021/9102*

DESIGN OF THE TIME



LuxuryConcepts' first multi-brand boutique, Khronos - Unique Horlogerie, recently took home the gold award at the Malaysia Interior Design Awards 2008.

Khronos represents the first venue in the world to showcase various unique watch brands like Romaine Jerome, Franc Vila, Villemont, Hysek, Mühle Glashütte, Pierre DeRoche, Hermes-Vaucher Movement Collection and Rebellion under one roof so the boutique design had to represent the distinctive identities and be a suitable

place to celebrate the art of haute horology.

To realise such a unique concept, Khronos turned to relative newcomers Room Interior Design Sdn Bhd for a fresh take. With a free hand to come up with something unconventional, the designers found inspiration in a three-sided polygon to give the space a sense of capaciousness while enabling a practical and functional division of areas. The entrance of the showroom is at the bottom leg of the triangle where glass screens effectively delineate the showroom from the outside without creating a visual border. Perpendicular to this entrance is a stretch of 10 white display cases (one for each brand) that appear to float off the floor. Part of the wall is adorned with bold, copper-hued graphic prints illustrating the gears and Roman numerals associated with

horology and lends a modern edge and visual stimuli against an otherwise formal setting.

Three different brands are given pride of place in designated 'rooms' aligned along the hypotenuse of the aforementioned triangle. Three separate circular sections closed off by a curtain of strings are placed along the hypotenuse to mark each room's area and are fitted with wall display boxes and a set of contemporary armchairs and table.

The finished boutique is a culmination of the clever use of space and an effortlessly elegant ambience without any accompanying staidness. Small surprise then that it was given the highest nod in the Commercial category from the Malaysian Society of Interior Designers.



TIME FOR A CLASSIC

IT-BAGS ARE SO LAST SEASON, AS ANY STYLE UPDATE WILL NOW TELL YOU TO INVEST IN PIECES THAT ARE MORE ENDURING. BUT IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU WANT TO RELY ON, INVEST IN SOMETHING THAT KEEPS GETTING BETTER WITH THE PASSING OF TIME. MAURICE LACROIX IS A CLASSIC BRAND THAT WITHSTANDS FASHION TRENDS BY LHMNG

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW THE TIME THESE DAYS? It's all around us - blinking from your phone, laptop and even electronic displays on the street. In an age when time is important because we never have enough of it, just think of how tapping the wrist is recognised in any country as a query for the time. And because we have this universal behaviour, wristwatches are still a key part of any wardrobe.

The true appeal of a fine watch is not just how well it tells the time. A watch communicates a great deal about your personal style, taste and aspirations. The more obvious way to do this would be with ornamentation, or ever more fanciful shapes. But like high-performance cars, the best watches are unique for their internal sophistication and not their outer appearance. Exclusive timepieces with complex movements and innovation through design are the distinctive work of Maurice Lacroix.

Maurice Lacroix is known amongst watch aficionados for creating extraordinary timepieces that are the evolution of the Swiss watch-making tradition. Its first watch model was launched in 1975, and soon established itself as a highly regarded brand amongst collectors. Amongst the exclusive ranks of Swiss watch manufacturers, the ongoing innovations of Maurice Lacroix have set benchmarks for the industry.

Though mechanical clocks were known to exist since the 13th century, the history of the wristwatch is barely 130 years old. Queen Elizabeth I was known to have owned a small timepiece fastened to a bracelet, but it was only in 1880 that wristwatches were produced in any quantity. The military and airforce used these early watches, though women soon found made it popular as an accessory that combined jewellery and function. Technological developments made them even more popular,

Divina



as the first chronographs appeared in 1909 and waterproof watches were launched in 1915.

INNOVATION INC. Important milestones in the Maurice Lacroix history include the year 2003 and its Masterpiece Double Rétrograde, with a highly complex mechanism for this model's retrograde indications. The movements were developed entirely in-house, and the conceptual design of a 3/4-bridge used for the first time for the Masterpiece Lune Rétrograde in 2005. Today, Maurice Lacroix can look back on a remarkable series of developments that have continually pushed the boundaries of mechanical watch making. Maurice Lacroix is also able to demonstrate outstanding expertise especially in the area of chronographs, retrograde displays and moon phase indications.

This is proven in all of its timepieces and not least by the ML 106 manufacture movement, an exclusive chronograph caliber. Maurice Lacroix has also gathered the experience and creativity of designers, engineers, constructors and watchmakers under the "Atelier de Maurice Lacroix". This new creative cell is where revolutionary ideas for movements and complications are developed, all of which are setting new benchmarks in the history of the brand.

Maurice Lacroix will incorporate the innovations garnered from this highest form of watchmaking art into its successful collections. The first result to emerge from the Atelier's creative efforts is the Mémoire 1, which Maurice Lacroix presented at Baselworld 2008. This highly limited chronograph series of mechanical timekeeping uses a new Grande Complication, entirely developed by Maurice Lacroix. The Mémoire 1 demonstrates the potential of the "Atelier de Maurice Lacroix" in producing the first memory function in a mechanical timepiece.

The extensive design ateliers and production workshops in Zurich and Saignelégier in the Jura Mountains are all part of Maurice Lacroix's dedication to excellence. Here, skilled craftsmanship and technological capabilities are combined

with a commitment to the integrity of the brand. This emphasis on maintaining the highest quality means that only 120,000 timepieces leave the workshops in Switzerland every year, finding their way to demanding customers around the world.

MALAYSIAN ODYSSEY One of the very first Maurice Lacroix boutiques in Asia can now be found at the exclusive Starhill Gallery. This exquisite showcase of the time-keeping art is framed with exotic Makassar wood and classically elegant materials. Plush furnishings and hand-woven carpets create a refined and calm oasis in which to admire the timepieces.

The heart of the Maurice Lacroix store is the aptly-named "centre of attraction". This space serves as an interactive showcase for manufacturing innovations, including the Mémoire 1, the first mechanical watch with a memory. Of course, the Masterpiece Collection is also featured as the watchmaker's finest art, using high quality manufacture movements, technical innovations and novel design features.

Since the middle of the 1980s, Maurice Lacroix has been indispensable to the renaissance of the mechanical timepiece, creating stunning pieces that are both unique and contemporary. The timeless, purist design of the Pontos collection and its sophisticated inner mechanical workings is known to attract those searching for refinement, especially the Pontos Décentrique GMT whose functions are arranged de-centrally.

Maurice Lacroix has also been focusing its efforts on developing attractive additional functions since the early 1990s, with lavish, surprising mechanisms. Starside is the new collection for women, a line that combines the spirit of traditional manufacture and a contemporary vision of watchmaking.

Another unique collection for women is the Divina Special Edition, with flowing lines that shape this testament to the feminine mystique. This limited collection by Maurice Lacroix brings together Swiss watchmaking precision with the highest form of the jeweller's art in a treasured collaboration.

As desirable as an innovative mechanical movement can be for serious collectors, the practical function of a stylish wristwatch is something that Maurice Lacroix brings about with its Les Classiques range. These exciting models have enjoyed years of success through their clean elegance and timeless beauty, with all the distinct qualities of a classic wristwatch. And lest it be said that mechanical watches are only for formal occasions, the watch models in the Mirois collection stand out with their independent, sporty, and timeless aesthetics.

All of these continuous innovative developments in the technical field and at the design level have enabled Maurice Lacroix to register numerous patents and trademarks. Maurice Lacroix remains one of the few independent watch manufacturers in Switzerland, with a constant drive to produce innovative complications and movement developments, using a heightened passion for detail, perfection and quality.

Maurice Lacroix timepieces are available at about 3,300 selected retail shops in over 60 countries. But it's only here at the Starhill boutique where the precision and innovation of the brand can be appreciated in a unique setting. Time in Kuala Lumpur has a new dimension. ■

Maurice Lacroix, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL; +603-2148 5663; www.mauricelacroix.com



Pontos Titanium Black



Starside Magic Seconds



Squelette Steel



Double Rétrograde



A DOSHA GOODNESS

THE SUNDARI TREATMENTS AT SPA VILLAGE TAKE YOU TO KARMIC HAVEN BY ANIS RAMLI

MY SKIN HAS A TENDENCY TOWARDS PITA. With a bit of Vata thrown in. Or so says my aesthetician at Spa Village Pangkor Laut. Those elements constitute my combination skin, she says, and why I'm prone to getting blackheads.

The terms are beauty speak, Ayurveda style. Vata, Pita and the third, Kapha, describe a person's mind-body type, or 'dosha'. And while all three influence a person's emotional and mental well-being, it also affects the kind of skin you have. As the adage goes, beautiful skin begins from within. Essentially, when you're stressed, it shows on your skin; but if you lead a balanced and wholesome life, your skin glows with the light of health and vitality.

Vata skin is generally dry. Pita skin has a tendency to break out and is photosensitive. Kapha tends to be a little oily. Hence my Pita-Kapha diagnostics. But fret no more over what type of skin you have, because once you've tried out Sundari facials, you'll be experiencing Ayurvedic skincare at its very best.

Rooted deep in the principles of this ancient Eastern philosophy, Sundari combines botanicals with modern science to deliver a holistic approach to skin care. Traditional plants and powerful herbs such as neem leaves, known as the "Pharmacy Tree of India", and gotu kola, with its firming properties, have all been incorporated into the range.

Sundari is derived from the Sanskrit word that means "beautiful woman". Its facials are instantly recognisable by its signature Marmassage, a technique akin to stimulating acupuncture points. The massage technique is subtle, beginning with a light

touch before the aesthetician increases the firmness over the course of a minute. This action stimulates and energises the marma points, releasing a deep flow of energy that is almost dynamic. The effect of Marmassage goes beyond deep tissue massage or acupressure, and fans often cite a longer-lasting sense of calm, satiation and relaxation.

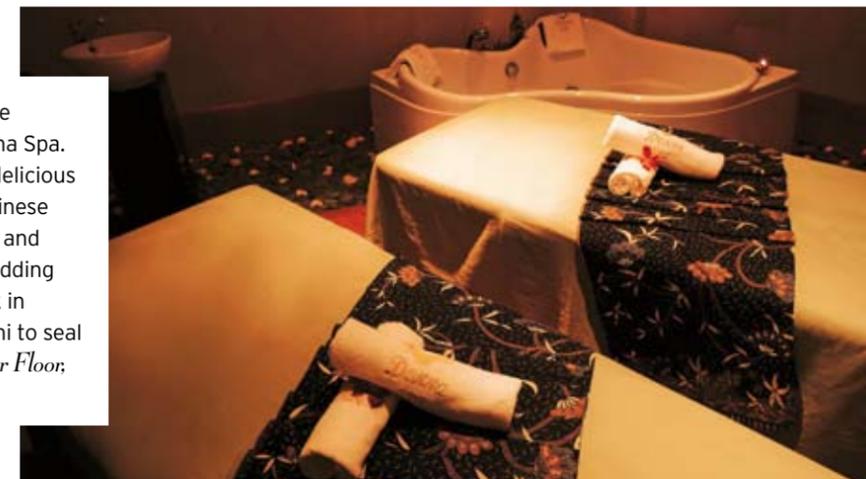
An Ayurvedic treatment may seem like a laborious and complicated affair to some, but a Sundari Facial is the best way for first timers to experience it. This facial custom-blends ingredients and essential oils to meet specific needs. The treatment exfoliates and renews skin, and together with the signature Marmassage, allows for a rejuvenating experience.

In addition to the Sundari Facial, there is also the Neem Restorative Facial and the Neem Detoxifying Facial, the latter of which is a highly relaxing treat. It begins with a Rose and Lavender Hydrating Mask that primes the skin followed by a Neem and Green Tea Mask blended with a tonic of vitamins and herbs. The experience is further enhanced by a stress relieving hand and foot massage.

Sundari is more than just a philosophy. At a time when mainstream skincare promotes the merits of laboratory results and dermatologists' research, Sundari offers a refreshing approach to time-tested beauty secrets. Furthermore, the products are formulated with organic ingredients wherever possible with no synthetic fragrances or dyes used. ■

The Sundari facials are offered exclusively at Spa Village Pangkor Laut and Spa Village Kuala Lumpur; www.spavillage.com

BALI HIGH All the staples of true Balinese beauty can be found at Donna Spa. From time-tested Javanese Lulur to delicious home-made boreh, the spa offers Balinese remedies old and new amid a relaxed and soothing ambience. The luxurious Wedding Indulgence treatment includes a soak in seven tropical flowers and a pedi/mani to seal the deal. *Donna Spa, S20 & 27, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL: +603-2141 8999*



SMOOTH OPERATOR

No more waxing or shaving ever! That's the promise made by the revolutionary hair removal techniques from IPL Skin Care Clinique. The latest technology, variable pulsed light (VPL), is touted as the next generation in permanent hair reduction

technology that also aids in skin rejuvenation. There's less pain and discomfort compared to other hair removal treatments, and skin feels soft and smooth after. *IPL Skin Care Clinique, S2, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL: +603-2141 4277*



BARE BEAUTY With all the enemies of skin upon us, Beaubelle Shield-Nude sunscreen is heaven-sent to fight sun damage and more. The new formulation boasts an SPF30 and is power-packed with antioxidants to protect skin cells by blocking harmful chemical reactions. Bisabolol soothes inflammation and panthenol locks in moisture to replenish skin and keep it supple. Its lightweight, non-greasy texture is a bonus. *Baubelle Skin and Body Care Day Spa, S15, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL: +603-2148 4898*

HIGH BEAM Aside from the wonderful colour palette, Kanebo's latest Spring makeup range is all about highlights and shine from within. The Coffret D'or line includes a sublime five-colour, eye shadow palette that houses a sparkling gel liner. Just a finishing swipe of this dresses the peepers in sexy shine and sparkle. *Kanebo International Salon, S21-25, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL: +603-2144 1218*



SMOOTH OPERATOR PHOTO CORBIS

SUN AND SENSIBILITY

Summer time... and the tanning is easy. But when the heat gets too much, seek refuge in the world of Spa Village where a host of after-sun therapies will soothe, satisfy and sensually satiate your sun-kissed body

BY ANIS RAMLI



COOL AID The Cucumber & Aloe Wrap is so pure it's good enough to eat (although we won't recommend that you try). Fresh cucumber and aloe vera are blitzed into a luscious body smoothie then lathered all over skin that's been exposed to the sun. The anti-inflammatory properties of both ingredients help relieve redness and hydrate the skin, while the soothing mixture helps bring the body temperature down a notch after the day's heat. *Spa Village Pangkor Laut*



GREEN PASTE Since sun and chlorine can damage your luscious locks, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali takes a leaf out of the Balinese's book in pursuit of gorgeous tresses. The Mekramas hair treatment begins with a glorious scalp massage using lengis nyuh (coconut oil) and fried tingkih (candlenut) before hair gets deep-conditioned with a paste of daun pucuk (hibiscus leaves) and fresh lidah buaya (aloe vera). End result? Hair that shines with lustre. *Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali*

COCONUT COCKTAIL Dry, brittle hair will love the Ulik Nyiur Malay hair treatment at Spa Village Tanjong Jara Resort. Rich coconut cream known for its deep conditioning and nurturing properties is used to gently coax hair back to life. But just before the treatment, you're pampered by the most glorious head and shoulder massage of brewed herbal oil, by which time, you'll be snoozing away as the hair conditioner takes effect. *Spa Village Tanjong Jara*



DEEP SEA PLEASURES At Spa Village it's not how you eat your caviar, but where you want it smeared. The Kerstin Florian Ultimate Caviar Facial begins with a straightforward cleansing. Then comes the mask, which is a spirulina algae paste; and while unrecognisable as fish eggs, contains sevruga extracts. The caviar's powerful antioxidants help promote cellular health and regeneration - perfect for sun damaged skin. *Spa Village Kuala Lumpur*

CAVIAR PHOTO CORBIS



FRUIT FOR THOUGHT Indulge your sweet tooth as you luxuriate in Spa Village Cameron Highlands' Fresh Strawberry Escapade. Fresh highlands strawberries are puréed to cool skin touched too much by the sun. The three-step treatment begins with a soothing dip in a Strawberry Tea Bath, followed by a strawberry yoghurt and oatmeal body polish that leaves skin soft and supple, and ends with a blissful strawberry-scented body massage to relax you. *Spa Village Cameron Highlands*



A TROPICAL TOUCH Guava is not only rich in vitamins, but great for sunburn and prickly heat. The leaves too have antiseptic properties that help relieve sun effects. Spa Village Malacca cuts them finely and adds them into a yoghurt mixture for its Yoghurt Guava Leaves Body Scrub. While the mixture has a sublime cooling effect on the skin, it also does double duty by extracting toxins from the body. *Spa Village Malacca*

FIVE ALIVE!

THE SENSORY EXPLORATION SPA TREATMENT UTILISES ALL THE SENSES TO LIFT THE SPIRITS AND SOOTHE THE MIND BY BOEY PING PING



IN THE EVER EVOLVING WORLD OF SPA THERAPIES, there has been an exponential increase in the number of innovative treatments utilising the most exotic of ingredients and most ancient of traditions in the quest for physical, mental and, to an extent, spiritual rejuvenation. But at the Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, an award-winning urban spa sanctuary located at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, there is a unique and exclusive treatment that chooses instead to engage the most basic of our instincts in this never-ending quest.

Created as an ideal remedy for those who suffer from troubled muscles and spinning minds (or when you have trouble blocking out stress-inducing thoughts), the spa's signature Sensory Exploration treatment, as its name suggests, is an hour-long treatment that plays on and engages all the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

The Spa Village Kuala Lumpur is an oasis of calm that I enter in anticipation of experiencing this most evocative sounding of treatments. I immediately enjoy the warm hospitality of a therapist who swiftly relieves me of my heavy shoulder-bag and leads me to the stylish interior of a changing room. I change into the most comfortable

brown pantsuit made of a soft, snug material and a pair of comfy sandals and then am led to the lounge area where a glass of water and a hot towel await. My frayed city nerves feel calmer already.

My therapist smiles warmly and hands me a notepad on which to pen all my negative thoughts before guiding me to a darkened Sensory Room gently illuminated by the warm glow of yellow lights. I take my place on one of the mats and lie back with my feet propped up on a triangle pillow. The room dims even further until overhead, tiny sparkling lights burst into view like twinkling stars that change colour, from red to blue to green. Each colour brings on a different vibe. As my eyes begin to blink in unison with the flickering lights above, I feel my stress ebb away and I'm transported into a world of relaxation, exclusively my own.

Soothing piped-in music and a vibrating floor cause me to enter a meditative state as I hear the soft yet firm voice of my therapist instructing me to breathe in deeply and breathe out calmly. As I inhale, I imagine myself taking in all the good and positive things I want in my life. And as I exhale, I purge myself of all the negative thoughts that prevent me from reaching my goals.

The sound of a loud gong signals the next step - a sensorial exercise which involves the tongue and a small tray filled with tiny mysterious nibbles. But first, my therapist instructs me to take the paper containing all my negative thoughts - frustration, anger, dissatisfaction and worry - and submerge it into a small bowl of water. The ink starts to fade, symbolically dissolving any previous bad thoughts.

I take the oil-scented towel and lightly sweep it against my forehead, cheeks, chin and neck all the while inhaling its sweet fragrance. Then I pour the tiniest bowl of eucalyptus oil into my palm, rub my hands together and inhale deeply, enjoying the wonderful scent of relaxation.

Four little nibbles sit on the daintiest thumb-size plates. I try the first one and find it extremely bitter as I've just bitten into a piece of raw bitter melon. A glass of water comes to my rescue and I quickly wash away the bitter taste. The second plate contains grains of salt which leaves a rather saline aftertaste. The third, a piece of juicy sour lemon is enough to make my eyes squint but the last - the sweet unmistakable taste of fresh dates - is a pleasant reward. The flavourful experience provides multiple sensations that heighten my awareness.

The treatment continues with a massage session that concentrates on the most neglected areas of the body - the neck, shoulders and feet. Sturdy hands and expert fingers move rhythmically up and down my neck and shoulders, smoothing out the knotted tension created by internet addiction. Soles tired from standing, walking and shopping are given a full 25 minutes of undivided attention and care. The pressure is firm enough for my feet to feel a difference yet gentle enough so that I don't yelp out in pain.

By now, it truly feels as if all my negative energy has been completely washed away like the ink from the paper and I emerge into the late morning sunlight ready to start the day with positive energy. I have left my worries behind and take with me a small tangible souvenir of my uplifting experience: a beautiful gemstone to remind me how valuable life is. ■

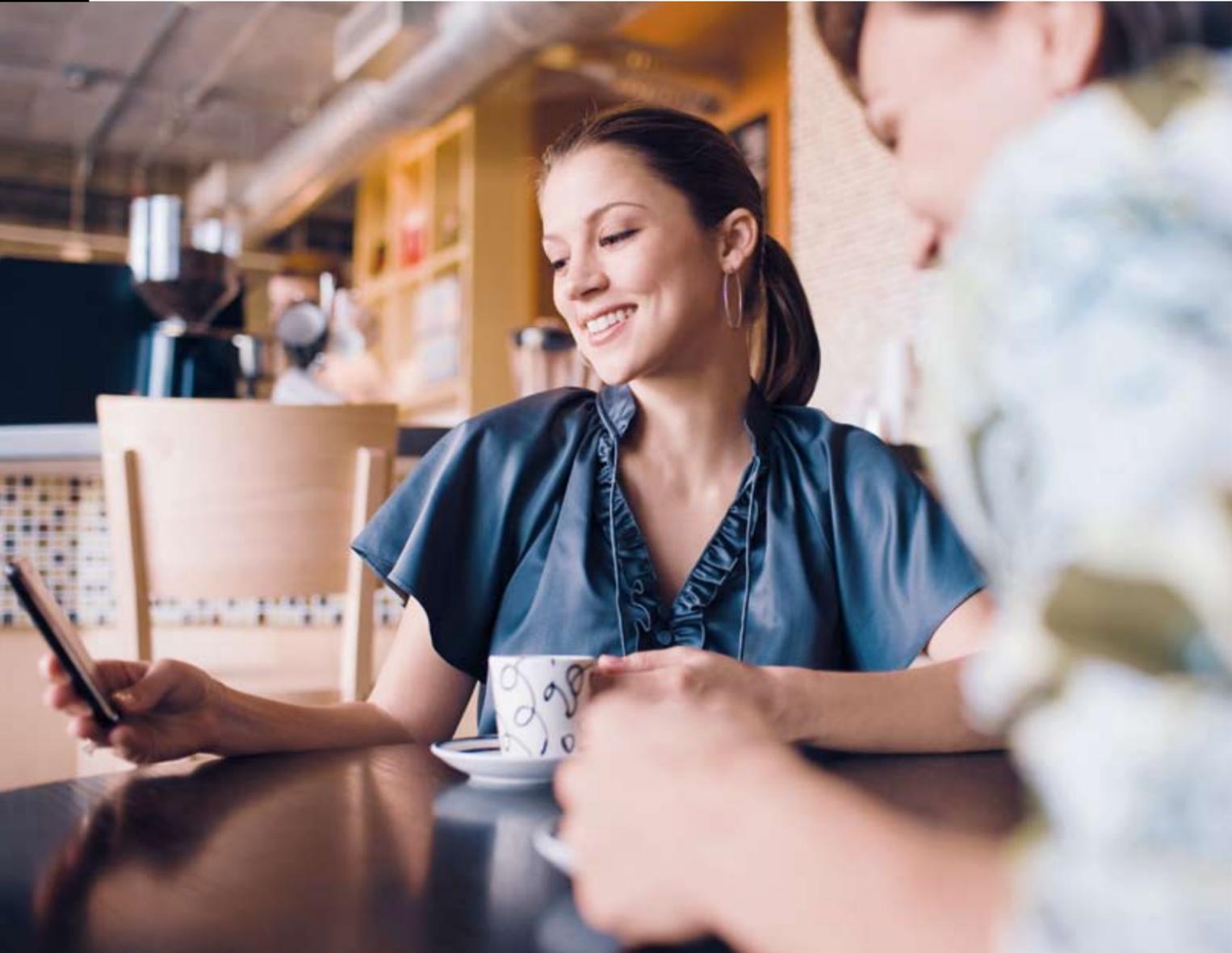


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PALM PILOT

WITH THE EXPONENTIAL TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT OF MOBILE PHONES THESE DAYS, THE WORLD IS NOW TRULY IN OUR HANDS

ALL STORIES BY MATT ARMITAGE



WHILE THOSE OF US IN THE MEDIA INDUSTRY WONDER HOW WE EVER MANAGED TO RESEARCH AND WRITE ANYTHING BEFORE WIKIPEDIA, there is a far more ubiquitous piece of tech that is currently enabling a much wider social revolution to take place. The humble cell phone, from its origins as a yuppie toy celebrated in movies like the soon-to-be-sequelled Wall Street to its current status as the de rigeur playground accessory, can now be found even in the back pockets of those with little access to regular electricity.

Stoop to drop a dollar in the cup of a beggar in New York or London and you will quite likely see the recipient staring at a mobile screen, texting or chatting with some caller. That's not to say that the homeless are getting any richer, it's simply to acknowledge that there is little status and few barriers to ownership in these days of bundled minutes and dirt-cheap pay-as-you-go deals.

All of which serves to mask the true power of this tiny little

PHOTO CORBIS

machine. Whilst mobile carriers shelled out billions in the early noughties for third-generation licenses that would enable us to make video calls, users remained largely indifferent given the high cost of calls, the large and ungainly handsets and took to texting - the Short Messaging Service that has been possible since the mid-1980s - in their billions instead.

Similarly, mobile Internet on handhelds as little as three years ago was a gut-wrenchingly slow and irritating procedure, compared to the wired computing alternative that certainly justified the high data charges for just a very few. That same disability also hampered the spread of PDAs - personal digital assistants - that were rapidly approaching the entry-levels of computers in terms of processing power and ability but were still sorely lacking when combined with a phone and turned into so-called convergence devices.

Yet today unlimited data is packaged with mobile service plans and multi-use phones routinely replace cameras, camcorders, media and audio players, and can browse the Web and handle email as efficiently as a full size computer. And yes, they still handle video calls if you can find anyone to receive them.

What's really changing the world are the applications the cell phone companies never thought of. Apple's iPhone proved that a convergence device doesn't have to do everything, it just needs to be excellent at what it does: in this case browsing the Internet, playing audio and video and, of course, making calls. RIM's Blackberry handhelds are also stealing up on the Nokias and Samsungs, introducing models like its Storm and Bold. And the game is about to be upped again with Palm's new Pre phone and its webOS not to mention the emergence of Google's open platform Android mobile system.

By embedding GPS (global positioning system) chips in many of these devices they are able to sync with a host of social network related services that are emerging, allowing up-to-the-minute localised information on everything from the best place in walking distance for a mochaccino latte to price comparisons thanks to cameras that now double as barcode scanners linked to the web that sniff out the best price deals.

And while that information is great for making our lives

easier, it's in the developing world that it's really making its presence felt. Samsung recently unveiled Blue Earth, a solar powered phone, and though it will be some time before that self-charging technology is on every cell phone, it shows that manufacturers are thinking beyond users tethered to desks and powerpoints.

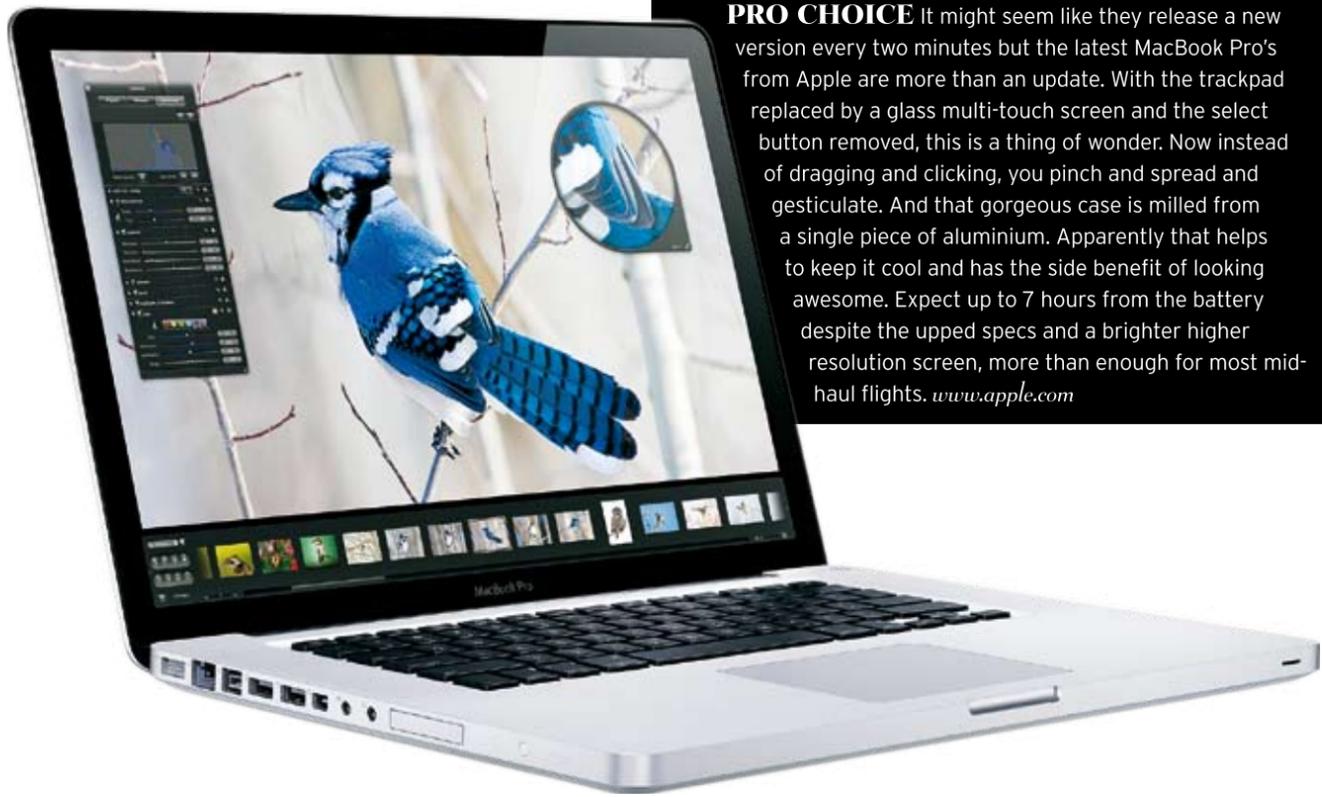
Throughout Africa mobiles are bringing SMS-based banking services, called m-banking, to the continent's poor and non-urban dwellers, enabling the transfer of small sums of money between handset users and enabling the roll out of micro credit and other programmes designed to stimulate local economies. With traditional banks often limited to one or two branches in capital cities and main towns, accounts costly to operate and ATMs a distant luxury, money management services are leading a boom that is adding 70 million consumers a year to pioneering operators like Kenya's Safaricom.

That same expansion is also bringing Internet access to areas that are economically unsuited to the installation of costly optical cable networks. Used as modems to connect laptops or simply to browse the net onscreen, mobiles are bringing information and access to schools, farmers and small business operators as well as connecting residents to distant medical services, allowing doctors to make initial diagnoses on people who may live several days walk from the nearest clinic.

Which is quite a role for a device the size of a candy bar. ■



Medical marvels?



PRO CHOICE It might seem like they release a new version every two minutes but the latest MacBook Pro's from Apple are more than an update. With the trackpad replaced by a glass multi-touch screen and the select button removed, this is a thing of wonder. Now instead of dragging and clicking, you pinch and spread and gesticulate. And that gorgeous case is milled from a single piece of aluminium. Apparently that helps to keep it cool and has the side benefit of looking awesome. Expect up to 7 hours from the battery despite the upped specs and a brighter higher resolution screen, more than enough for most mid-haul flights. www.apple.com



PLANE SAILING Flying for fun used to be one of the most time consuming hobbies this side of yachting, not to mention all the trouble of getting a pilot's license. Icon Aircraft's A5 is one of the first commercially available Light Sport Aircraft and needs only the far more reasonable Sport Pilot's license and is specifically designed for recreational flying. With a pared down instrument system reminiscent of a bespoke sports car, this single prop barnstormer is designed to be stable, easy to fly, easily transportable and, in the high cost world of flying, pretty affordable, retailing for less than a very high-end audio system. www.iconaircraft.com



EASY CYCLE When you've paid so much money for a holiday view that includes beaches, hills and forests, you owe it to yourself to explore a little. Walking is too slow, cars are cheating, and well, cycling is rather hard work for a vacation. Enter OHM cycles and their range of battery back-up urban and off-road bikes. Our pick is the top of the range Sport XS750. Its lightweight 20" aluminium frame keeps the heft down despite the 38v Li-ion battery and drive train. Pedal to the max and then flick over to powered travel when it all gets too much. OHM claim a maximum range of 120km from a single charge, with a 3 hour top up time. www.ohmcycles.com



TITANIUM HORSE DREAMS Just in time for Malaysia's F1 season, Vertu launches its latest model, the Ascent Ti Ferrari, a collaboration with the sleek Italian auto-maker, available in Ferrari's trademark Rosso (red) and Giallo (yellow) liveries. Featuring the famous Prancing Horse on the reverse of the phone, where the fine leather tooling is also an authentic recreation of the car maker's upholstery, the phone features subtle design cues that echo the bends and curves found across Ferrari's range of cars. Add to that a titanium chassis, a sapphire glass screen and a series of genuine Ferrari sounds specially blended by former Eurythmic Dave Stewart and you have another series winner to grace the Ferrari name. www.vertu.com



SMART PENMANSHIP When it comes to technology, the humble pen is usually considered as ploughing the same furrow as it has for decades, a few gimmicky laser pointer devices aside. LiveScribe aims to change all that with the Pulse Smartpen. Not only does it record meetings and lectures in 3D sound (with a choice of 1Gb and 2GB machines), it also records your notes and links them to the audio via the company's microdot paper and an integrated infrared scanner near the pen's nib (which can now be printed on many laserjet printers), turning the bundle into pdf files that can then be shared and even transposed into type using the bundled recognition software. Writing will never be the same again. www.livescribe.com

THE GRAND SOUND OF STEINWAY

ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE SOUND SYSTEMS ARRIVES IN KL.
YTL LIFE FINDS OUT WHAT THE BUZZ IS ALL ABOUT

BY MATT ARMITAGE



WHEN IT COMES TO HIGH-END AUDIO THERE HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN TWO ROUTES TO AURAL NIRVANA: tasteful and discreet all-in-one solutions by a variety of manufacturers, and rather more uncompromising component systems with individual pieces sourced from different producers. While the former is likely to gel more easily with the work of an interior designer, they may be sonically bland. The latter may excite your ears, but the visual trade-off wouldn't look out of place in a junk shop.

Which is where Steinway Lyngdorf comes in. Its newly opened store in Kuala Lumpur's Starhill Gallery is the company's first dedicated retail outlet, and despite resembling a tastefully modern furniture store, its rooms are all about the audio.

YTL Life spoke to the company's founder Peter Lyngdorf, in town for the launch of the outlet in February 2009 along with Suguna Madhavan, Steinway Lyngdorf President Asia Pacific and Middle East and Ranjit Wijedasa, the company's Vice President for Sales & Operations. Lyngdorf explained the philosophy and technology behind products like Steinway Lyngdorf's Model D.

The first surprise for audiophiles is that Steinway Lyngdorf's audio solutions - its Model D and C music systems and the Model M home theatre system - are entirely digital. "A fully digital amplifier is not really an amplifier, it's a digital-analogue [d/a] converter," Lyngdorf says. "There is no pre-amplifier or power amplifier so it is a much purer system than any of the analogue systems. [There is no way that] the signal can be modified after it has been created."

While this may sound like an uncompromising stance to take towards consumers in these times of almost infinite customisation, it may be because Lyngdorf regards the Model D and its siblings as uncompromised products. "We don't allow anyone to have their own opinion about how a Steinway piano is reproduced," he states. "It should sound like a Steinway and nothing else." Although, with a large range of custom finishes on offer, that sound will blend into any home.

"The Steinway management had been tinkering with the idea of doing audio systems and [about three years ago] asked [if] I would be interested in meeting with them," recounts Lyngdorf. "We clicked almost instantly and within a matter of hours we decided to do a project together to set a new standard for sound reproduction."

As with the Steinway piano, this meant creating a product without equal. Lyngdorf, who had previously founded audio companies like NAD and Snell Acoustics, even went a stage further and committed to developing a system that sounded so pure that a Steinway pianist would be unable to distinguish the reproduction of the company's signature piano from the real thing. "I [made the pledge to] reproduce a Steinway grand piano so that the Steinway pianist would believe it was a Steinway piano they were listening to and not a loudspeaker."

The result was the Model D, a precision crafted music system that takes, the company claims, 'over eight weeks to painstakingly assemble'. As Lyngdorf explains, the goal was not simply to create the best music system ever heard but 'also to make the best complete package for people in terms of reliability, ease of use, durability, upgradability'. "Because when we decided to make the finest audio system in the world, [which] is Steinway heritage, we knew it was going to be very expensive. It also had to be of investment grade."

It's an unusual approach in a world where many businesses have adopted a replacement cycle approach to product ranges. "If you buy a Model D system, which is US\$188,000, it's no good to say that two years from now we have a new model and the old model is old hat," explains Lyngdorf. "That's not workable. So it has to be completely flexible, upgradable, repairable, serviceable and so on so that the framework of the system is the same 30 years from now. People who have the original Model D can update it because everything is digital. And that will cost a tiny fraction of the original selling price." The beauty of the digital approach lies in the fact that the music is little more than a stream of mathematics sent

from the source - a CD player integrated in the centre piece of the Model D - to where it is decoded by the dual speaker towers. As Lyngdorf adds: "One advantage is that when you play it at a soft level you have exactly the same sound as when you play it at a high level because the level change comes via the power supply."

The dedication to after-sales service - users can even connect their systems to the company's servers via the Internet to run diagnostic checks on them - means that Lyngdorf himself sometimes visits his customer's listening environments to ensure that the automated set-up procedure and the company's patented RoomPerfect room adaptation technology are working optimally. "The point is to make it sound stunningly good where the customer is going to experience it. So yes, I'm quite hands-on but I don't need to be there to get a good result."

That approach is also mirrored in Steinway Lyngdorf's Starhill Gallery showroom. "A lot of the high-end manufacturer's have their wonderful listening room at the factory and they can make it sound stunningly good there," laughs Lyngdorf. "But what's the point? The point is to make it sound stunningly good where the customer is going to experience it."

"We don't plaster the walls with sound absorbing padding and we don't need to have thick cables running under the floor," he explains. "You can get our sound, perfect sound, in any kind of acoustical environment. And we're also showing people that wherever you are in the room it sounds like music, it doesn't sound like loudspeakers. We'll give people a few surprises." ■

Visit Steinway Lyngdorf at The Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery, Kuala Lumpur.



BANKING ON SUNSHINE

DESIGN FIRM CREA INTERNATIONAL SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON THE WAY MODERN-DAY BANKS SHOULD LOOK AND FEEL

BY AZIZ DRAIM IMAGE & ADDITIONAL TEXT COURTESY OF CREA INTERNATIONAL



WHEN ONE IS ASKED TO DESCRIBE THE INTERIOR OF A BANK, the words 'sunshine' and 'warmth' rarely come to mind. Banks are known to be ultra-formal, painfully rigid and rarely inspiring. It's a place that is all work and no play.

As much as they are serious about their business, the Mediobanca Group is also serious about having some fun. Which is why they've recruited multi-disciplinary design company Crea International to create a dynamic look and concept for the group's new retail banking branch, CheBanca!.

Crea International practises what they call Physical Brand Design®, which is the philosophy and methodology of bringing to life the values, language and spirit of a brand within a space. Though CheBanca! still upholds values that are formal (it is a bank after all), its radical concept and design allow the bank to speak a language that is friendlier while exuding a spirit that is refreshingly warm and welcoming. The result? Chebanca! actually feels less like a bank and more like a futuristic boutique.

The overall atmosphere of CheBanca! is designed to recall the warmth and light of the sun, an idea made possible by bright yellow accents punctuated throughout a marshmallow white interior. The outlet's layout references the logical organisation of the solar system with the client ideally at the centre of it all. Aniline-treated wood reinterprets the straightforward approach we come to expect of financial outlets while metacrylic surfaces printed with a honeycomb texture further soften the atmosphere.

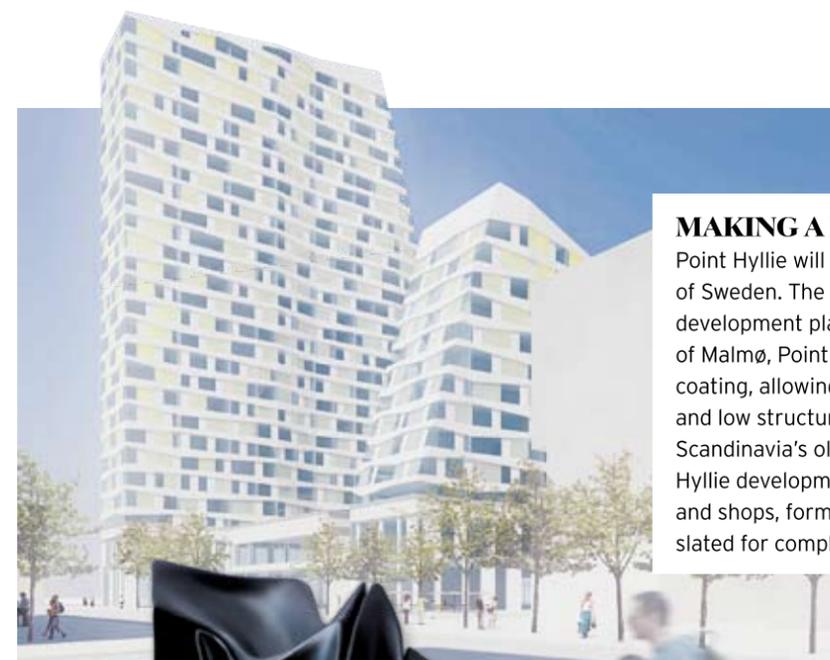
The main interior presents a layout overturn with the presence of a central base point (from which the bank staff operates) with connection booths around its perimeter. This creates an open and fluid space that directs a consumer upon walking through the outlet's entrance to the multitasking connection booths where any banking operation can be performed, either in self-mode or with the support of a staff member.

These various elements make up what the designers call The Natural Tech, a concept that translates to 'ethics and transparency of a world that does not deceive.' It's a design concept that allows CheBanca! to bring human contact upfront, encouraging better service with clients.

Environmental branding is also established in the CheBanca! design, materialised in strong visual elements such as the wall portals, light fixtures and the interactive walls. Apart from the business areas, this branch is also fitted with two chill-out areas, a coffee bar and children's space. Additionally, the CheBanca! concept is complemented with a mobile branch conceived to function as a communication tool to get in touch with new potential clients.

"CheBanca! represents a banking concept with sensational communicative power," says Massimo Fabbro, Managing Partner of Crea International. "We (focused on) formal and layout innovation to boost the attraction potential: when you pass this bank, it will be very difficult not to admire it." ■

www.creainternational.com



MAKING A POINT Stretching up to 95 meters high, Point Hyllie will be the second tallest residential building in all of Sweden. The tallest of four other towers in the new urban development planned for Hyllie Station Square in the city of Malmö, Point Hyllie bares an undulating façade of pastel coating, allowing for a soft and supple transition between high and low structures. Designed by C. F. Møller Architects, one of Scandinavia's oldest and largest architectural practices, the Hyllie development encompasses 300 homes as well as offices and shops, forming a distinctive Swedish edifice. The project is slated for completion in 2011. www.cfmoller.com



OOPS, HADID IT AGAIN Is über-architect Zaha Hadid becoming ubiquitous? Adding to her already extensive list of works, the Baghdad-born creative mastermind currently has ongoing architectural projects in England, Scotland, Lithuania, France, Italy, Azerbaijan and in the United States. Yet, in between her many grandiose schemes, Hadid finds time to dabble once again in product design to also make her presence felt in your home. Produced by Alessi, 'Niche' is a centrepiece comprised of five melamine dishes characteristic of the architect's fragmented geometry. You just can't escape this woman. www.alessi.com

FLIGHTS OF FANCY Spanish designer Jaime Hayon flirts with the whimsical in his Fantasy collection for Valencia-based porcelain makers Lladró. Interpreting the brand's signature exaltation of human values with his vocabulary of the magic of the unexpected, Hayon explores the themes of love and family, and the charm of Japanese toys by painting a dreamscape of humour and surrealism in his seductive and at times flamboyant style. Fans of the designer will recognise references to his previous works in these small wonders. www.lladro.com



ALL SHOOK UP

YTL LIFE MEETS CHEF JOHANN, THE MAN WHO OILS THE KITCHEN WHEELS OF ONE OF KL'S MOST EXCITING FINE DINING RESTAURANTS SHOOK!, WITH ITS SIGNATURE FOUR OPEN KITCHENS CONCEPT, EXCELLENT CONTEMPORARY CUISINE AND NEW SURPRISES IN THE BAG. FUBU, ANYONE? STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAN LEE KUEN



THERE IS A SOFT BUZZ OF ACTIVITY COMING FROM THE KITCHENS IN SHOOK! In contrast to the crazy bustle as espoused in books and television on restaurant kitchens, Shook!'s kitchens are calm oases as the chefs and their helpers go about their work with minimal fuss and maximum effectiveness. They have little choice, the kitchens are open to the public eye at all times, a novelty when Shook! pulled out its plates in 2000 but which has since become something of a signature concept for the restaurant.

With four kitchens - Chinese, Japanese, Italian and Western Grill - out on the floor, coordination and supervision is paramount for the restaurant to run like a well-oiled mackerel. This responsibility lies on the capable shoulders of Executive Chef Johann Ong, occasionally seen moving between the four work stations, his brisk and concise movements borne of years of training in disciplined kitchens. This is a welcome home of sorts for Ong, who was involved in the opening of Shook! in

1999 under Group Executive Chef Stephan Stumpke.

Eschewing flying for cooking as a youth, Ong cut his culinary teeth on the Queen Elizabeth 2, cooking his way through the high seas for three years before docking at the Michelin-mentioned Morels in Ireland. Eventually the Penang boy came back to Malaysia where he joined Pangkor Laut Resort in 1996. Ong has since worked his way through two other YTL Hotels' properties - Tanjong Jara Resort and JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur - before ending up as Executive Chef of Shook! in 2006. Prior to this appointment, he had briefly hung up his apron in favour of different pastures but was soon lured back. "I missed the life of the kitchen," he said simply.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS EXECUTIVE CHEF OF SHOOK!? My duties are principally to coordinate between the head chefs of the four kitchens, ensure consistency in products, purchasing food items and creating menus. It is a

lot of control and monitoring to make sure that everything runs smoothly. I also coordinate all functions and events in the Feast Village and the entire Starhill Gallery.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNATURE DISHES OF THE RESTAURANT? Fresh sashimi air flown from Japan at the Japanese kitchen, grilled Australian tenderloin beef from the Western Grill, dancing prawns (deep fried prawns coated with sweet mayonaise and topped with walnuts) and antipasto from the Chinese and Italian kitchen respectively.

SHOOK! IS ONE OF THE FIRST RESTAURANTS IN MALAYSIA TO HAVE AN OPEN KITCHEN. WHAT IS THE APPEAL OF HAVING ONE? Customers can see their food being prepared and the kitchen in action. It is like a show. There are some challenges to having an open kitchen as customers are watching you, which forces you to be more disciplined.

QUALITY OF FOOD MUST BE IMPORTANT. WHERE DO YOU SOURCE YOUR INGREDIENTS FROM? My belief is that 60% of the food depends on the ingredients, 40% on the cooking. Most of our imported food comes from Japan and Australia - sashimi fish from Japan, premium grade beef from Australia - also France for foods such as duck liver and escargot. Vegetables are both local and imported. We do try to use local products where we can. Good quality products are not always imported and as long as the produce are fresh and good, we will use them.

WHAT IS THE STRANGEST FOOD SERVED IN THE RESTAURANT? You can order fubu (puffer fish) from us seven days in advance and we have a licensed fubu chef from Japan to cook it for you.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU CHANGE THE MENUS? Once every six months. Favourite items will remain on the menu and unpopular items will be replaced with new dishes. Customer feedback is important to us but we also keep in mind that food is a subjective matter and not everyone will agree on the same thing. We also create promotional menus such as the spring menu to be launched in April 2009.

DO YOU KEEP UP WITH FOOD TRENDS WHEN CREATING NEW MENUS? We do study food trends but we also have to understand that locals might not be ready for a certain trend, say molecular gastronomy (as practised in the restaurant El Bulli). We are however currently trying out slow cooking with dishes like duck confit and lamb shanks, old methods which are making a comeback in restaurants.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM WHEN CREATING NEW DISHES? I read a lot of books and magazines on cooking, as well as conduct research and development in the kitchen regularly. It is also good to visit other restaurants and try different food to get new ideas.

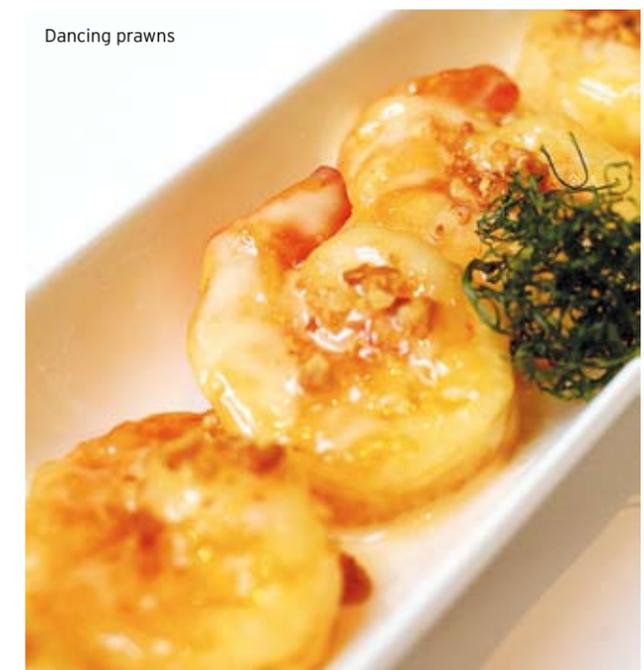
WHAT WAS THE MOST GLAMOUROUS EVENT YOU HAVE

ORGANISED FOR SHOOK! OR STARHILL GALLERY? Definitely the Louis Vuitton store opening two years ago. It was a very big event with a lot of celebrities, and we (in partnership with JW Marriott) had to ensure the best food was served at the cocktail party. There's also the annual A Journey Through Time event in December when Shook! is closed for watchmakers and jewellers' dinners and functions. We have to create special menus for the event.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE HYPE SURROUNDING CELEBRITY CHEFS AT THE MOMENT? It's made a lot of people interested in becoming chefs and household people interested in food. However what you see on television with Gordan Ramsay or Jamie Oliver is not always the reality of the kitchen. Being a chef is a lot of hard work.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF GOOD FOOD? I like simple dishes like steamboat. All the ingredients are fresh and you can taste whatever you put in the broth (which has to be clear). It is a clean dish. I believe food should not be too complicated. ■

Shook!, Starhill Gallery, +603-2719 8535/8536



Dancing prawns
Grilled Australian tenderloin beef



Voted the world's best resort, multiple award-winning Pangkor Laut Resort promises the privileged visitor an experience of exclusivity and elegance. Its home is the private island of Pangkor Laut, blessed with pristine beaches bathed in the waters of the Straits of Malacca. The accommodation is luxuriously appointed and the resort boasts unparalleled hospitality and attention to detail. On the gastronomic front, guests can enjoy a wide range of cuisine, whether dining at the new Feast Village at Fisherman's Cove or by the sea. Add the tropical sun, luxurious surroundings and the services of the Resort's world-renowned Spa Village – which combines the healing arts of India, China and Malaysia – and it is no wonder that this is the choice holiday destination for international celebrities and the most discerning of holidaymakers. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.pangkorlautresort.com



In a small secluded cove near Pangkor Laut Resort rest the eight wonders that make up The Estates. Each of these individually crafted enclaves is reminiscent of the traditional South East Asian way of living of days gone by, when an 'estate' was made up of a number of special purpose buildings scattered amidst gardens of astounding beauty. Comprising either two, three or four bedrooms, each Estate offers a private infinity-edge pool, as well as discreet living, dining, bathing and sleeping pavilions in various adaptations of Malay architectural traditions. There is also a private vehicle and driver assigned to each Estate should guests decide to leave the seclusion of their villa to dine in one of the Resort's restaurants or to go for a treatment at the Spa Village. The Estates is truly the perfect luxury hideaway. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.pangkorlautresort.com/estates/

Intimate Experiences

Enjoy leisurely sunset excursions that provide the perfect setting for a romantic evening. Cruise around the island on board the Resort's large traditional 'tongkang'-style teakwood boat which will anchor at Emerald Bay where you will witness one of the world's most beautiful sunsets. From there the Captain will sail off to a quiet cove where you'll be served a delicious four-course dinner at a table set only for you.

Emerald Bay

A centrepiece of the Resort is the magnificent Emerald Bay, considered by many independent international travel consultants as one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Here the beach is kept as pristine and natural as possible. This intimate bay remains as it has been for eons, providing the perfect place for swimming, sunbathing or simply spending time together.

Rainforest Revelations

There are three jungle treks through the rainforest that are accompanied by our experienced resident naturalist. The walks are free of charge and offer a fascinating insight into the spectacular virgin rainforest that is estimated to be over two million years old. Some of the interesting wildlife you may spot on the island includes crab-eating macaque monkeys, tropical monitor lizards and yellow pied hornbills.

Privileged Tranquillity

Reflecting a South East Asian aesthetic, each villa at the Estates offers complete privacy to its privileged guests and is crafted to provide refined elegance and luxurious comfort. Polished tropical hardwood floors are accented by textured fabrics that add warmth to the elegant bedrooms with their podium beds; bathrooms and vanity areas are wonderfully spacious, and crafted with fine attention to detail.

Integrated into the Environment

Each and every individual Estate is a unique experience - tailored to blend comfortably and stylishly into its natural environment. In fact, the entire Resort was built with integration in mind, so that it not only blends in with the environment, but actually becomes part of it. A variety of wildlife roam the area so don't be surprised to find yourself dining with a peacock or waking up to the call of monkeys.

Sterling Service

Every Estate is assigned an Estate Manager, at least two dedicated attendants and a Chef, all of whom will aid in unobtrusively addressing and coordinating every aspect of each guest's tenancy. During meal times, guests can give specific instructions, or be as adventurous as they want, as all our chefs' culinary skills span a wide range of both local Asian specialties and Western cuisine.



Set amidst tea plantations and rolling hills, this tranquil boutique hideaway promises visitors all the splendour, romance and nostalgia of Cameron Highlands' grand colonial heritage. Cameron Highlands is Malaysia's largest hill resort and is the only place in this tropical country where you can find tea plantations and strawberries, while enjoying a temperate climate. Largely unchanged since its colonial heyday, this 'little corner of England in Asia' is still dotted with Tudor-style cottages and is a place where scones and afternoon tea will not seem out of place. The Resort itself is representative of all this: with tall French doors, timber-beamed ceilings, plantation shutters and even a fireplace adding old-world charm to the surroundings. It also houses a Spa Village as well as an 18-hole golf course and 56 luxuriously appointed rooms and suites which weave in the wondrous colours and textures of Jim Thompson's famed Asian silks. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.cameronhighlandsresort.com



An evocation of the elegance and grandeur of 17th century Malay palaces, Tanjong Jara Resort is the only luxury resort that sits along Malaysia's beautiful East Coast beaches. Built on a 17-hectare site that blends in with its natural surroundings, the 99-room Resort is an embodiment of the gentle Malay arts of service and hospitality. With a philosophy based on the concept of 'Sucimurni' (which emphasises purity of spirit, health and well-being), Tanjong Jara is the perfect place to escape and rejuvenate. The Resort offers four different luxurious accommodation options, each commanding stunning views of the South China Sea and appointed in a fashion fit for a Malay king. Tanjong Jara is surrounded by sleepy fishing villages, shaded by coconut palms, alongside a meandering river teeming with wildlife – providing guests with an authentic taste of the region's spirit and culture. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.tanjongjararesort.com

The Spa Village
Today, Cameron Highlands is still home to many tea plantations, being Malaysia's largest tea-producing region. The treatments at the Cameron Highlands Spa Village feature healing therapies based on produce from the surrounding jungles and ancient tea rituals. This authentic blending of culture and product, along with the tranquil ambience of the lush highlands, makes it a unique and therapeutic healing retreat.

High on Golf
The Resort sits alongside the only 18-hole golf course in the area. The well-manicured course comprises luxuriant green fairways with well-developed trees, fine sand bunkers, tricky greens and forgiving rough. At 5,000 feet above sea level, it has been carved with precision out of the foliage and forests of the area. Tree-covered mountains also provide a spectacular backdrop to this stunning course.

Taking Tea
The Resort takes its tea-time very seriously and the Jim Thompson Tea Room is a cosy retreat and the perfect spot for this time-honoured English tradition. Savour finger sandwiches, light-as-air pastries and home baked scones as well as fresh Cameron strawberries. For a local twist, try the scones with exotic local fruit like banana or mango. Complementing this spread is a wide selection of quality Cameron teas.

The World's Most Innovative Spa
The Spa Village Tanjong Jara was recently awarded 'The World's Most Innovative Spa' by UK's Tatler Spa Awards, a testament to the unique nature of the Malay healing culture found only on the East Coast of Malaysia. Ancient Malay healing traditions are honoured through the signature Asam Roselle, 'Panglima' – Warrior Massage and 'Syurga Tujuh' – Seven Steps to Heaven programmes.

Diving off a secluded Island
Just off the Resort, approximately 45 minutes by speedboat is Tenggol Island which is part of the fabulous Terengganu Marine Park. Famed for its untouched coral gardens and rare species of marine life, it has over 20 dive spots for both the beginner and experienced diver. The Resort also offers its guests the chance to gain their PADI Open Water Diver licence while on holiday.

The Heart of Malay Culture
Culture is an integral part of the Tanjong Jara Resort experience, and this manifests itself in a myriad of ways. Guests can enjoy cooking lessons which will introduce them to the various culinary arts of Malaysia. Or indulge in activities like playing 'congkak', learning the Malay martial arts 'silat' or go on handicraft tours to witness traditional 'kris' blacksmiths, batik painters, 'songket' weavers and shipmakers at work.



The key to every YTL Luxury Spa Resort is the marriage of luxurious accommodation and sterling service with beauty, tranquility and a sense of sanctuary. The Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is all that and more. Inspired by the Spa Village Pangkor Laut, this newest jewel in YTL Hotel's crown embraces the same healing ethos of celebrating local culture, honouring the ancient healing traditions of the region and infusing each visit with the essence of the surrounding location. Set in a landscape of great natural beauty, this 31-room luxury spa resort offers guests the best of Balinese massage, wellness and spirituality therapies which seek to restore not just the body and mind, but also to replenish the spirit through a range of carefully-designed programmes. The seclusion of the Resort also offers guests the opportunity to get away from the stresses of the world and rejuvenate within a place tailor-made for that very purpose. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.tembokbali.com



Following the Path

Each guest is invited to select a Discovery Path based on an analysis of their needs – choosing from Balance, Creativity or Vigour – with each offering a combined range of tailored treatments and activities designed to restore equilibrium to bodies and spirits. Those who wish to improve their personal skills in the art of Balinese massage can join the Spa Village Academy and undergo private training with a group of skilled therapists.

Meditate upon the Stars

Unique to Tembok Bali is the Starlight Gazing experience, where you can enjoy the hypnotic pleasure of stargazing while floating on the Resort's infinity pool. You do this listening to Ultra Meditation music, designed to induce the brain into a synchronized theta state of consciousness, found to aid in expanding and enhancing memory and learning capabilities.

Cuisine Designed to Rejuvenate

Seafood is drawn daily from the local ocean, fruit purchased from local farmers, and only the freshest of ingredients are used in every dish. With captivating views of the Bali Sea, set just above the slate-hued beach, the open air Wantilan restaurant offers ever-changing flavourful regional and international cuisine. And organic products, as available, are the first choice ingredients.

The Peranakan Spa

The award-winning Spa Village opens its sixth wellness centre in The Majestic Malacca. Adhering to the brand's philosophy of honouring the healing traditions of the local region, the Spa Village Malacca is the world's only spa to base its therapies on the healing heritage of the Baba-Nyonya culture and offers treatments which uses a local specialty gula melaka, also known as palm sugar.

Dining Sensations

Malaysia is a country that is world renowned for the diversity and depth of its culinary options. And nowhere in the country is this more evident than the multicultural mix that is Malacca – the unique merging of cultures in this historic city has resulted in a novel marriage of cuisines, both Chinese and Malay, known as Nyonya food – which is truly a feast for both the senses and the palette.

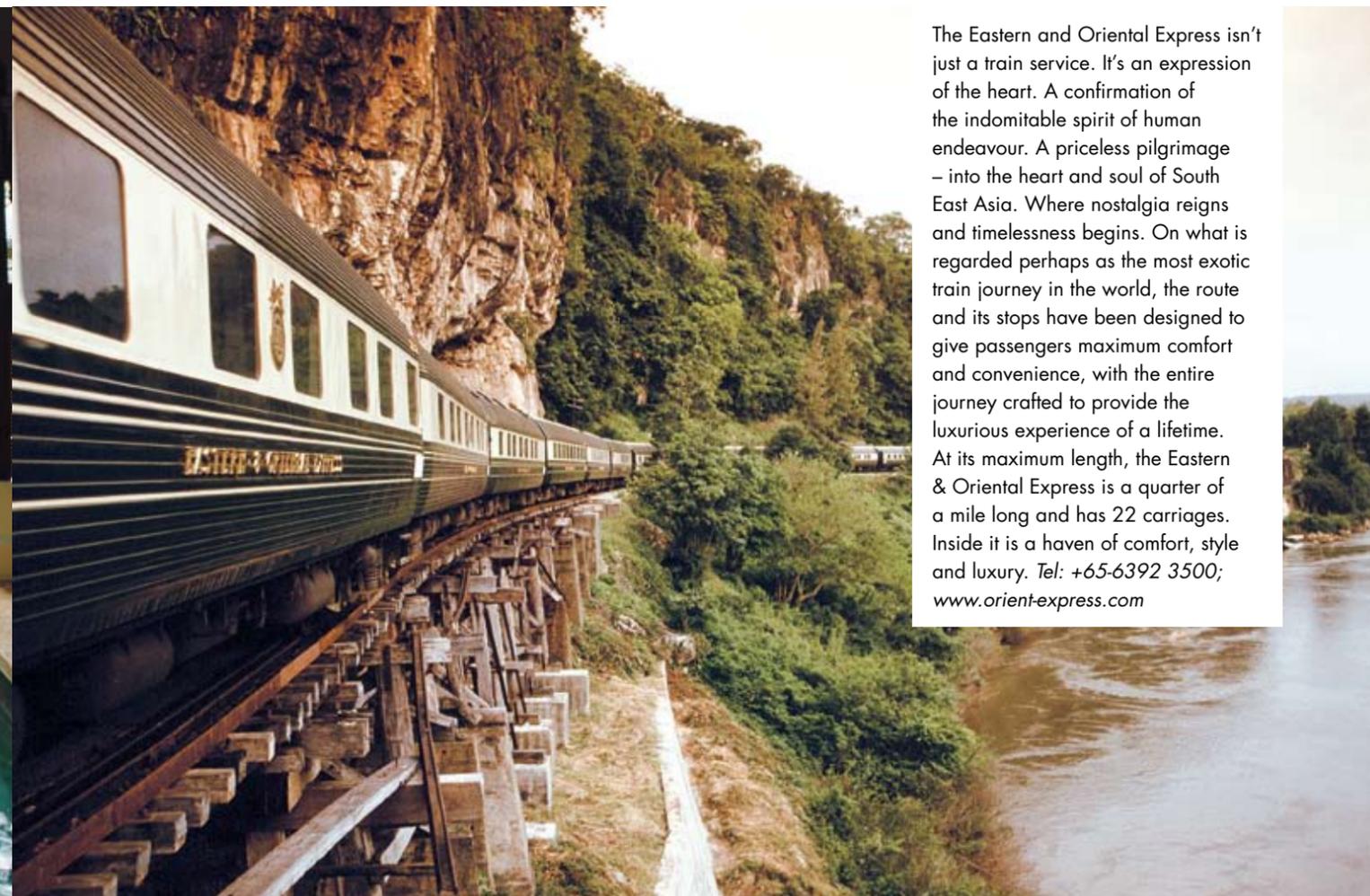
A Haven of History

In this small town that was once occupied by the world's major colonial powers of the Portuguese, Dutch and English, The Majestic Malacca rests peacefully on the banks of the Malacca River. Reflections of this historic trading port resonate within the intimacy and luxury of this beautiful hotel, designed to provide experiences that are anchored in the past, but woven together with every modern convenience.

The Majestic Malacca is the first luxury hotel and spa in the historic city of Malacca. Faithfully restored and lovingly refurbished by YTL Hotels, the 54-room Majestic Malacca resonates with historical significance even while it has been thoroughly updated to cater to the needs of today's upmarket traveller. Architecture, décor and dining all reflect the legacy of this ancient city's history, and take guests on a luxurious journey into the past. The Majestic Malacca also houses the newest Spa Village which offers luxury-spa seekers such delights as the warm-energy treatment of Malaccan palm sugar and honey scrub and a hot nutmeg and rice rolling body massage. An icon of Malacca's past has now become something to be desired in the present. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.majesticmalacca.com



YTL's multiple award-winning Spa Village brand has developed an international reputation within the luxury spa market and grown from strength to strength over the years. Besides the original Spa Village Pangkor Laut, there are now five other Spa Villages – Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, Spa Village Tanjung Jara, Spa Village Cameron Highlands, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali and the Spa Village Malacca. What's unique about all the Spa Villages is that each draws inspiration from the healing cultures of its particular region and blends traditional therapeutic remedies with a modern methodology. Whether in Pangkor Laut, Kuala Lumpur or Bali, the Spa Village is a sophisticated and rejuvenating experience, not just because of the quality of its services but simply because the Spa Village is more than just a place: it's a philosophy. Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.spavillage.com



The Eastern and Oriental Express isn't just a train service. It's an expression of the heart. A confirmation of the indomitable spirit of human endeavour. A priceless pilgrimage – into the heart and soul of South East Asia. Where nostalgia reigns and timelessness begins. On what is regarded perhaps as the most exotic train journey in the world, the route and its stops have been designed to give passengers maximum comfort and convenience, with the entire journey crafted to provide the luxurious experience of a lifetime. At its maximum length, the Eastern & Oriental Express is a quarter of a mile long and has 22 carriages. Inside it is a haven of comfort, style and luxury. Tel: +65-6392 3500; www.orient-express.com

Spa Village Pangkor Laut
Paying homage to the three major cultures of Malaysia, ancient Chinese, Malay and Indian treatments drawing from the country's abundance of natural resources have generated international acclaim and accolades.

Spa Village Cameron Highlands
A unique haven for relaxation where tea is the foundation of the experience. Located in the cool upper reaches of the Malaysian Highlands amidst dense jungles and rolling tea hills.

Spa Village Tanjung Jara
The Spa Village Tanjung Jara is a sanctuary of well-being anchored in the ancient Malay way of life. It features unique restorative treatments handed down by authentic Malay healers.

Spa Village Kuala Lumpur
With treatments anchored in the cultural diversity and rich healing heritage of the region, KL's most stylish urban retreat combines ancient practices with a host of the most blissful spa therapies.

Spa Village Malacca
The newest addition to the Spa Village family, it is also the only spa in the world to base its treatments on the Peranakan culture, which is native to Malacca and is a cross between Malay and Chinese traditions.

The Perfect Vantage Point
The air-conditioned carriages are perfect vantage points from which to tour the region. The Restaurant Cars, Saloon Car and Bar Car are located in the centre of the train while the Observation Car with its open deck area is located at the very end. It is an ideal spot for watching South-East Asia go by as you trundle along the train's magnificent route, passing through several Malaysian states and South Thailand.

Stately Accommodation
The interior walls of the compartments are panelled with cherry wood and elm burr, with decorative marquetry friezes and intricate design inlays. The delicate embroidery work on the pelmets was done in Malaysia, and the bespoke carpets hand-tufted in Thailand. While guests dine at night, the steward transforms the compartment from a living room to a magical bedroom.

The Finest Cuisine
Chefs on board the E&O Express are internationally renowned for their ability to create a tantalising variety of Eastern and European dishes, using the finest fresh seasonal ingredients. The service is also top of the line and equals the world's finest restaurants. Each morning, a breakfast of freshly baked croissants, coffee or tea, juice and fruit is delivered to your compartment to be enjoyed in luxurious privacy.



Set amidst a tropical forest on a craggy cliff overlooking the beautiful emerald green of the Andaman Sea is this lesser known gem on the YTL Hotels portfolio of luxury holiday destinations. Located just 15 minutes away from Phuket International Airport on the island's quiet, undeveloped North Western coastline, Villa Tassana offers the privileged visitor a vacation of modern sophistication married with a hearty dose of Thai hospitality. Spread out over a generous 2,800 square metres, the Villa features 3 large bedrooms with ensuite bath and dressing areas, a 15 metres swimming pool, separate living and dining pavilions, a kitchen and even a maid's room. For those looking to 'get away from it all', Villa Tassana is ideal for a spot of splendid isolation, or for spending quality time with family and friends, all while enjoying nature in all its glory, and warm, homely 5-star service. Tel: +603-2783 1000



The latest jewel in YTL Hotels' stellar collection of properties began life as a manor house stable in the late 17th century. Today, it has been lovingly restored and transformed into an elegant, high-design boutique homestay. Featuring an eclectic mix of interiors spanning the Art Deco period of the early 1900s in the lounge right up to its sophisticated contemporary kitchen, Bray House is an experience of the English gentry lifestyle with bespoke service and an intimate atmosphere. Designer furniture, vintage accessories and vivid splashes of colour create an atmosphere that marries the modern and the classic. Each of the three bedrooms has its own theme: a lullaby of white, for example, or a symphony of Tuscany red in another. The House also has a courtyard and water feature created from a natural spring found in the garden. Tel: +44 1628 771171; email: info@braycottages.com



Thai-Style

The Villa is staffed by one dedicated attendant and a chef who between them will address all your housekeeping needs, unobtrusively coordinate all aspects of your tenancy and best of all, prepare fantastic homestyle Thai dishes for all your meals and even upon special requests. The food is top-notch homecooking so be prepared to fall in love with Thai cuisine.

The Rarest Luxury

The most precious aspect of the Villa Tassana experience is the intimate privacy it affords. Perched above a secluded cove, enveloped by the sight and sounds of nature, away from the madding crowd and with only your own party for company, it truly encompasses the contemporary essence behind the romantic notion of 'splendid isolation'. A rare luxury indeed, if not the rarest.

Island Activities

Naithon Beach, Andaman White Beach and Hin Kaw Beach are a mere five minutes drive away. Guests can also enjoy the first-class spa and sports facilities located at the neighbouring Trisara Hotel. There are three fantastic golf courses nearby, including the exclusive Blue Canyon, and also a range of luxury motor yachts available to explore Phuket's many bays, islands and dive locations.

Ye Olde England

Located in the idyllic village of Bray, near Windsor, experience the heart and soul of old England with its twee period houses, traditional pubs complete with beamed ceilings and fireplaces and a parish church that dates back to 1293. The county of Berkshire, one of the oldest in England, is also blessed with magnificent buildings and picturesque woodlands scenery and riverscapes.

Culinary Excellence

Humble Bray is considered one of the culinary centres of the world housing many famous restaurants. The most internationally renowned are The Fat Duck owned by Heston Blumenthal and Michel Roux's Waterside Inn, which each boasts three Michelin stars. No wonder then that Bray is also home to numerous ultra-desirable residences of many well-known British celebrities.

Sterling Service

All housekeeping needs will be addressed during your stay but the services of a butler and private chef can be accommodated upon request. The House's Concierge service include aiding with restaurant reservations and arranging excursions to nearby Windsor for a private tour of the famous Eton College, Henley-on-Thames, river cruises, golf, horse-riding and other English country pursuits.



The JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur was designed with the business traveller in mind. Located in the city's business district, this five-star deluxe hotel is the ultimate venue for meetings and functions. Facilities include 48 flexible meeting room options (including a grand ballroom) within the property, the adjoining Starhill Conference Centre and the Carlton Conference Centre at The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, all of which are connected via link-bridge. There is also a Business Centre providing a full range of business services. Rooms feature ample workspace, a plush high-back executive chair, broadband connection and other standard communication services (two-line speaker phone, fax modem, voicemail). Tel: +603-2715 9000; www.marriott.com



Based on the philosophy that great service should never merely be reactive and compliant but anticipatory and spontaneous, The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is Malaysia's only 5-star luxury boutique hotel offering a full personal butler service. Its location in the heart of the city's prestigious Golden Triangle district makes for easy access to the trendy Bukit Bintang area: Starhill Gallery, one of the city's premier shopping centres, is linked to the hotel via an enclosed sky bridge. With 365 elegantly appointed guestrooms (including 110 suites and 1 penthouse), 25 meeting rooms, three exceptional restaurants and an award-winning 'tropical' Spa Village, The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is one of the city's finest business hotels where combining business and pleasure is as effortless as the masterly service it provides. Tel: +603-2142 8000; www.ritzcarlton.com



Starhill Gallery

Today's truly outstanding cities blend architecture and design, art and fashion, music and culture with a state of mind. And Starhill Gallery, integrated with the hotel, is an effortlessly elegant and cosmopolitan environment that reflects the essence and spirit of this city. Delivering "A Gallery of Rich Experiences", seven luxurious floors offer exclusivity crafted for those who seek experiences out of the ordinary. Here, the world's premier retailers present a palette of unique personalised shopping experiences, making it easy to combine business and pleasure at the JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

Feast Village

On the lowest level of Starhill Gallery, guests can enjoy a unique dining experience at the Feast Village, where 12 restaurants are brought together to create a multi-ethnic culinary experience like no other in the world. Design draws from nature here; walls are asymmetrical and serve not to separate, but rather provide peaceful enclaves where people feel at rest. Rice paper from Japan combines with slate and ikat from Indonesia, granite from China, silk from Thailand, and timber from Myanmar to create an essence of Asia. The Feast Village is truly one-of-a-kind.

The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur

An entire all-suite wing makes up the second tower of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur. Sumptuous two and three bedroom suites designed and decorated to the finest international standards offer guests a unique standard of accommodation. Each suite includes a dining room and lounge area as well as a gourmet-style kitchen where guests can self-cater or use the private catering services provided by Starhill Gallery's Feast Village. Guests may choose to have the Executive Chef prepare a private dining experience – and every suite comes with its own private butler. It's a home away from home.

The Carlton Conference Centre

A 30,000 square foot, 25 meeting room, three-level facility connected to the hotel at levels 1 and 2. This classically designed, yet state-of-the-art facility allows The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur to host events from 10 to 400 guests. The Conference Center also connects via enclosed sky bridge to the upscale Starhill Gallery, a KL city landmark featuring some of the world's most exclusive brands and dining experiences. Guests can also choose to hold functions in the Member's Lounge or at the adjacent Pool Deck, which is perfect for unwinding after an intense day's meeting.



LET THEM EAT CAKE

OUR RESIDENT LADY WITH OLD MONEY TURNS UP HER NOSE AND POOH POOHS AT THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS. WHAT CREDIT CRUNCH? BY LADY CRISTAL CHAMPERS

I DON'T DO DOOM AND GLOOM; IT IS AGING. With the whole world wailing economic avalanche and the bankers and filthy rich feeling the pinch just because they can't splurge on another private jet or swing from a chandelier swigging champagne during their lavish soirée (yep, I'm speaking from personal experience), I wake up every morning counting my blessings, I mean my G-spots to be precise - glorious, glamorous and gorgeous (what do you think I was talking about, you naughty boy). With a recession-proof inheritance in old money, I can still enjoy the same lavish lifestyle, though admittedly I will have to raid the family treasure chest to sell off some heirlooms gathering dust in the vault.

But alas! My nouveau riche 'sisters' in the Millionaires' Wives Club have to adapt to their husbands' downturn in fortune. Their personal credit cards have been cancelled and their allowances diminished to only four figures. That's disastrous for women who cannot even wash their own hair and cut their own nails. Lady Pru and I decided to help the distraught hedge fund wives to face up to their new status by having a jumble sale of their old designer frocks and shoes to help fund their lavish lifestyles. With the cutback, we don't want our beauty salons, stylists and personal trainers to face financial ruin and jump off buildings. A rescue mission is called for.

My cousin Lady Sabrina, whose financier husband has lost his job, is selling their castle in Scotland and downsizing to a humbler abode. She has to thin out her extensive collection of shoes, handbags and clothes to fit into her new smaller home. To give her moral support and courage to part with her prized wardrobe, I volunteered to help out. As we surveyed her walk-in wardrobe the size of a small village, she found clothes she did not even know she possessed. As for her shoe collection, Imelda Marcos, eat your heart out! The wardrobe is both a mausoleum and museum of top designer labels, some with their price tags still attached, and a cache of jewellery with enough total worth to clear the debt of a small third world country. Without a personal maid in her new home, Lady Sabrina is forced to be a Cinderella without her Prince Charming and it took her over an hour just to figure out how to use the dishwasher and washing machine... and we won't even talk about the microwave oven. Poor Sabrina will never be a domestic goddess.

Aunt Sylvia says we should not pity the rich but help the poor and she believes that it's bad karma coming back to haunt the rich. She has recently discovered Buddhism by accident. She was invited by a friend from one of her charity organisations to see a Lama but she thought her friend meant 'llama', those smelly, spitting animals from the Andes. You see, she is rather fond of animals and runs a sanctuary for abused and abandoned donkeys. Indeed, what attracted her to her husband in the first place were his simian features. With strong stocky body, firm jaw line and a shock of red hair on his head and chest, he does cut quite an irresistible figure.

Anyway, when she met the Buddhist Lama, she was in awe of the holy man and his teachings and subsequently converted to Buddhism. Now Aunt Sylvia, with her halo glowing above her head and her crusade to denounce the decadent lifestyle of the rich, has announced gleefully at the downfall of the rich and mighty, "Let them eat cake!", echoing the words of the doomed Marie Antoinette whose decadence and indulgence made her lose her head. Ouch. ■



ILLUSTRATION EDWARD MAK