

# YTL *Life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine



## School of Life

Renewal and  
Rejuvenation at  
Spa Village Resort  
Tembok, Bali

## YTL People

Zandra Rhodes  
Perrine Crosmary  
Gary Rhodes

## Canal City

Exploring Charming  
Otaru, Hokkaido

Lunar New Year Recipes • Villa Tassana • Savouring Shook! Shanghai



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GALLERY

A Gallery of Rich Experiences

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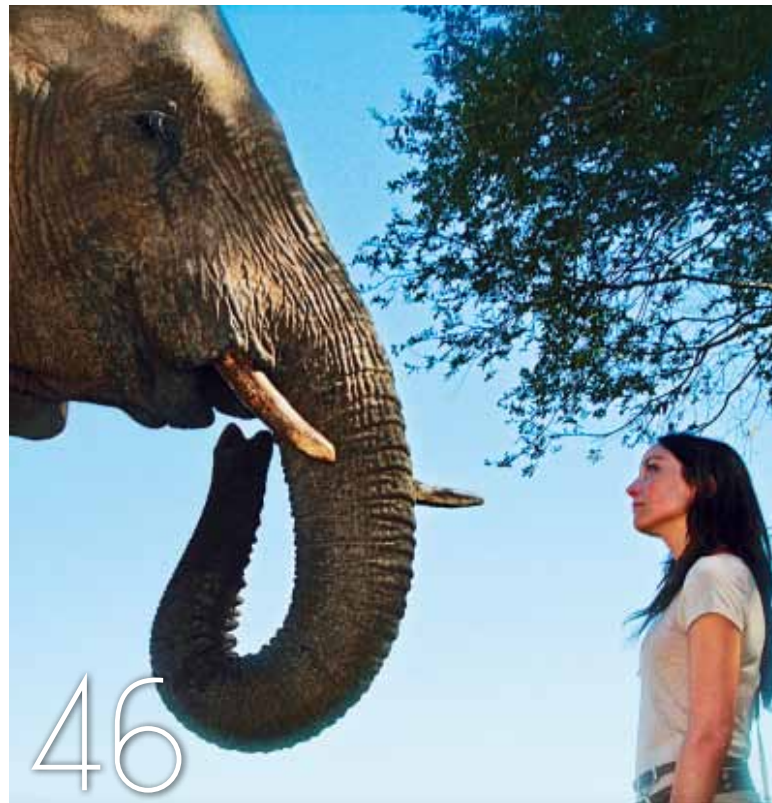
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# Contents



## Life Events

- 10 A round up of parties and events in world of YTL.

## Life Bites

- 22 Hot happenings at YTL Hotels.

## Life on the Cover

- 24 There's no better time than now to heal, rejuvenate and purify spirit, soul and body as we all look towards a better, brighter new year by enrolling at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's School of Life programme.

## Life Feature

- 32 If you happen to be visiting Hokkaido this season, consider stopping by the

charming and historical seaside town of Otaru for a memorable winter's day out.

- 38 Catch a ride on Eastern & Oriental Express' *Epic Thailand* journey to discover a side of the kingdom that you've never seen before.

- 44 Princess Marina Ibrahim of Pahang talks about Pink Jambu and her exciting new collaboration with The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

- 46 Eminent French explorer, wildlife expert and archaeozoologist Perrine Crosmary speaks about her passion for

animals and commitment to conservation.

- 52 The iconic Princess of Punk, Zandra Rhodes, on her views of today's fashion and why she has pink hair.

- 56 The second season of *Asia's Next Top Model* promises more adventure, laughs, tears and the odd catfight or two.

- 60 The new look Vistana Hotels promise new verve, vibrancy and value for guests and business travellers alike.



DISCOVER A DESTINATION SPA WITH ALL THE RIGHT INGREDIENTS.

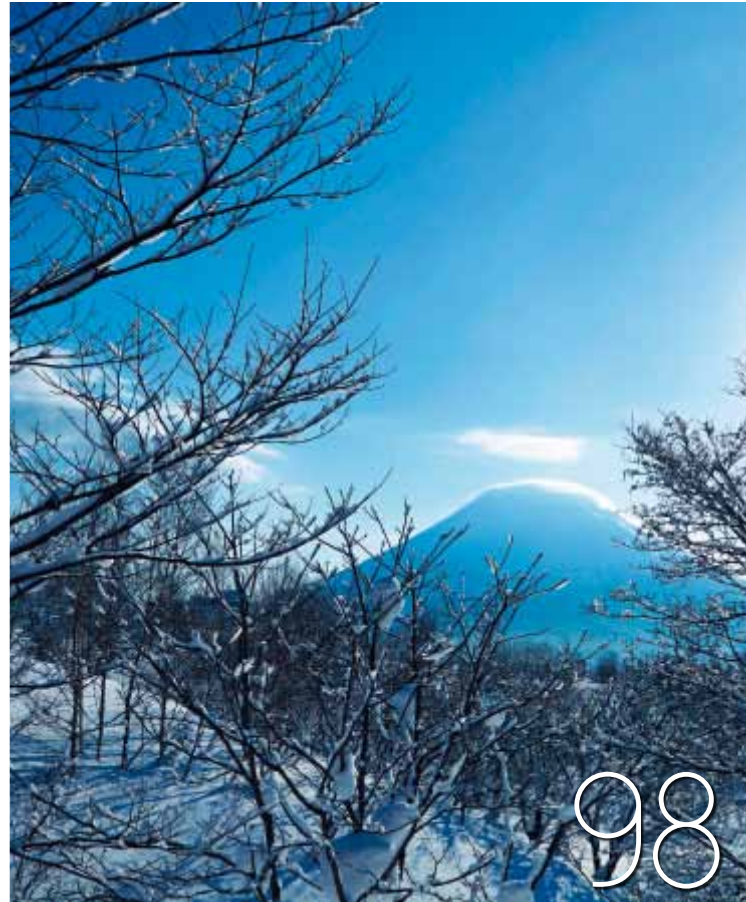
Black volcanic sand. Green towering peaks. Blue Bali sea.

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





80



98

### Beautiful Life

- 62 A new year means new bags to blag!
- 64 When one stays at the Villa Tassana in Phuket, it's all about sophistication, elegance and megawatt glam.
- 74 Celebrate your unique beauty with brands that are all about looking great, inside and out.

### Spa Life

- 76 Ensconce yourself and your loved one this Valentine's Day at the dreamy Cameron Highlands Resort for a weekend of rest, romance and rejuvenation.

### Life Cuisine

- 80 The multiple Michelin starred Gary Rhodes displayed his finely honed skill at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.
- 86 Welcome the Year of the Horse with a feast fit for an emperor.
- 92 Shook! Shanghai dishes up classic Western cuisine with strong Asian accents as well as spectacular views of the city skyline.

### Shelf Life

- 97 Let Asia open your mind and take you on a literary journey this season.

### Life Guide

- 98 Enjoy all the magic and wonder of the winter wonderland that is Niseko, Japan. Luke Hurford, YTL Hotels' Vice President of Sales and Marketing and a former resident of Niseko, shares his top tips on what to see, do and experience while there.

### Portfolio Of Life

- 106 Explore the world of YTL Hotels.

### My Life

- 120 Chef Adam Liaw, winner of the second season of *MasterChef Australia*, talks about the role food has played in his life and shares his secrets on how to stay inspired in the kitchen.

# THE GREEN *gb* LEAF

Niseko Village



## PERFECT POWDER SKI HAVEN

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

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**YTL HOTELS**  
 Treasured Places, Treasured Moments



# YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

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**PROMOTION PACKAGE**

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#### \* Best Exotic Spa Experience Award

(Harpers Bazaar 2012)

#### \* Best Massage in Kuala Lumpur

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#### \* Things to do in Kuala Lumpur

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# A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



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

It is now the heart of White Season at the Hilton Niseko Village and The Green Leaf Resort & Spa – YTL Hotels' two outstanding properties in the heart of Niseko United in Hokkaido, Japan. I am pleased to share the great news that the Niseko United was named 'Best Ski Resort in Japan' by the inaugural World Ski Awards held in Kitzbühel, Austria, last November. This affirms what the international ski cognoscenti has known all along – that Niseko is unsurpassable when it comes to the total snow sports experience, offering the finest powder snow, a pleasant low altitude, affordability and a variety of activities both on and off-*piste*, including the therapeutic benefits of Japanese thermal hot springs, Hokkaido's amazing cuisine and excursions to the many interesting towns that surround Niseko. Make it your go-to destination this year!

It has been, on the whole, an outstanding year for us at YTL Hotels. More good news came our way with two of our Malaysian properties, our flagship Pangkor Laut Resort and the Cameron Highlands Resort, listed by CNN Travel amongst the nine best luxury resorts in the country. Pangkor Laut Resort has long had its fair share of accolades, including being listed 'Number One in the World' by *Conde Nast Traveller UK* as well as 'Best Spa Resort' by CNN Go! and 'Best Luxury Destination in the World' in the World Luxury Hotel Awards, while Cameron Highlands Resort revels in being one of the finest hillside retreats in Malaysia. As YTL Hotels continues to strive being a force for good, it is gratifying to know our guests enjoy getaways like no other. I also want to thank all the unsung heroes in the group, whose passion to serve year after year inspires us all and is a benchmark of our customer service level.

God bless and happy reading.

EVERY LANDSCAPE, TIMELESS

EVERY CULTURE, AUTHENTIC

EVERY EXPERIENCE, UNIQUE



SPA VILLAGE TANJONG JARA  
Malaysia



SPA VILLAGE CAMERON HIGHLANDS  
Malaysia



SPA VILLAGE PANGKOR LAUT  
Malaysia



SPA VILLAGE GAYA ISLAND  
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YTL Hotels is involved in both the ownership and management of the Spa Village brand in the United Kingdom, China, Indonesia and Malaysia.

LUXURY SPAS BY YTL HOTELS

[www.spavillage.com](http://www.spavillage.com)

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Treasured Places, Treasured Moments





# In Seventh Heaven

The seventh edition of the luxury watch and jewellery showcase, *A Journey Through Time*, concluded in great style recently at Starhill Gallery Kuala Lumpur. Held over eight days, connoisseurs and fans of *haute horlogerie* and high jewellery alike were thrilled by the stunning showcases of the finest designs from the best names in the business. The finale of the always eagerly anticipated Starhill Gallery Watch and Jewellery of the Year Awards was, of course, one of the highlights of the annual event. With a judging panel comprising experts and enthusiasts alike, including YTL Corporation's Tan Sri Dato' Dr Francis Yeoh, Joseph Yeoh, Singapore-based watch journalist and blogger Su Jia Xian, Japanese watch expert and collector Hirota Masayuki, **Solitaire**

1. Tan Sri Dato' Dr Francis Yeoh. 2. Dato' Yeoh Soo Min announcing the winner of the YTL Spirit of Classical Art Award. 3. Beatrice Huchthausen, Charmaine Low and Steve Clerici. 4. Peter Davis. 5. Su Jia Xian and Jeremiah Tan.





grown even more as our watch and jewellery sales has surpassed the RM50 million mark.”

The event concluded on a literal high note as Mark Vincent, an affable young Australian best known for winning the third series of *Australia's Got Talent* in 2009, took to the stage, delivering a series of hits, that included popular songs, Puccini's eternal *Nessun Dorma* from the opera *Turandot* as well as, in light of the season, a particularly beautiful rendition of *O Holy Night*. A night to remember? It certainly was. 🎉

publisher Rainer Sigel and independent watch collector Charles Sutanto of Indonesia, all of whom acknowledged the great difficulty of selecting winners for the various categories, seven eventually emerged triumphant.

Jaeger-LeCoultre's *Reverso Cordonnet Duetto* won The Starhill Gallery Favourite Ladies Watch Award, followed by *Maîtres du Temps' Chapter Three: Reveal* for the men. Esteemed brands like Hublot, Bedat & Co, Speake-Marin, Damiani and Mouawad were also winners in their respective categories. “Over the years, *A Journey Through Time* has housed many luxurious brands of watches and jewellery,” said Tan Sri Dato’ Dr Francis Yeoh in his speech. “Thank you to all who have made the event a success every year. Since 2007, *A Journey Through Time* has attracted over a million visitors and, this year, we have

- 6. Carey Ng and Antoine Bakhache.
- 7. Nadege Lubrano and Fabrice Schweger.
- 8. François Renard, Daniela Weniger and Bob Weniger.
- 9. Datin Jane Ng and Dato’ Sean Ng.
- 10. Arianna Teoh, Andrew Jordan and Steffanie Chuah.
- 11. Dariush Djavaheri of Speake-Marin receiving the Judges’ Choice Award from YTL Hotels and Properties Vice President Joseph Yeoh.



12. Models and winners joining Mark Vincent on stage as he sings the final song to round off the night. 13. Tan Boon Piin, Dr Kenny Chan, Amy Chia and Yon Shee Guan. 14. Rashid Wahab and Tasha Abdullah. 15. Tan Sri Dato’ Dr Francis Yeoh, Dani Maurice and Samer Halimeh. 16. Hirota Masayuki, Dato’ Yeoh Soo Min, Dato’ Sri Dr Ng Yen Yen, Dato’ Jimmy Choo and Mark Vincent.





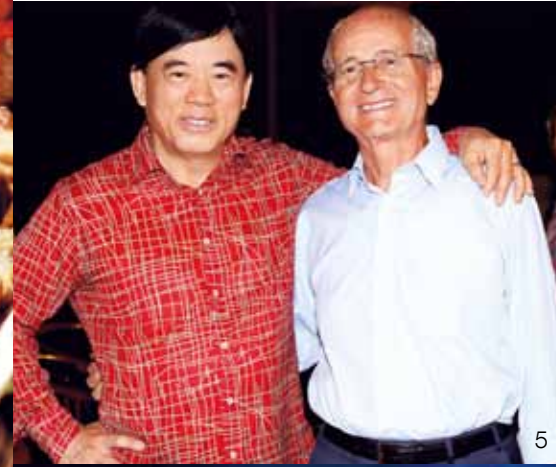


# Diplomatic Diary

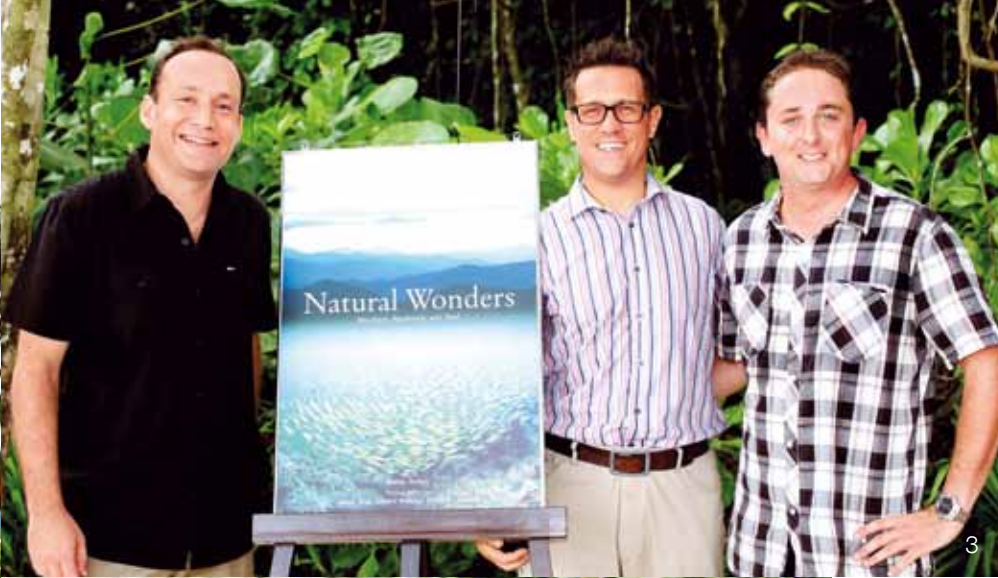
YTL Corporation Berhad's Executive Director, Dato' Yeoh Soo Min, recently hosted several high-ranking lady diplomats to a few days of bliss in Tanjong Jara Resort, Terengganu. Celebrity designer Dato' Jimmy Choo and his wife, Datin Rebecca Choo, were also present during the event at the resort, situated on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia and facing the South China Sea. The ambassadors, who hail from countries like Russia, Argentina, Turkey, France, Cambodia and Ecuador, as well as representatives of the United Nations based in Kuala Lumpur, had the opportunity to experience a light-hearted three-day stay at the resort. The iconic local specialty of *nasi kerabu* (blue-hued herbal rice) was a particular hit, while activities like a guided boat tour, batik-making workshop and traditional village games proved to be both an entertaining and exciting experience for all.



1. HE María Isabel Rendón, Ambassador of Argentina, and Dr Pio Trippa. 2. Dato' Yeoh Soo Min performs the traditional bamboo dance during the village games session. 3. HRH Princess Norodom Arunrasmy, Ambassador of Cambodia, and Dato' Yeoh Soo Min. 4. HE Lourdes Puma Puma, Ambassador of Ecuador, HE Serap Ataay, Ambassador of Turkey, HE Lyudmila Vorobyeva, Ambassador of Russia, and Feodor Ozarenov. 5. Dato' Robert Tan and Dr Pio Trippa. 6. Datin Rebecca Choo and Dato' Jimmy Choo.



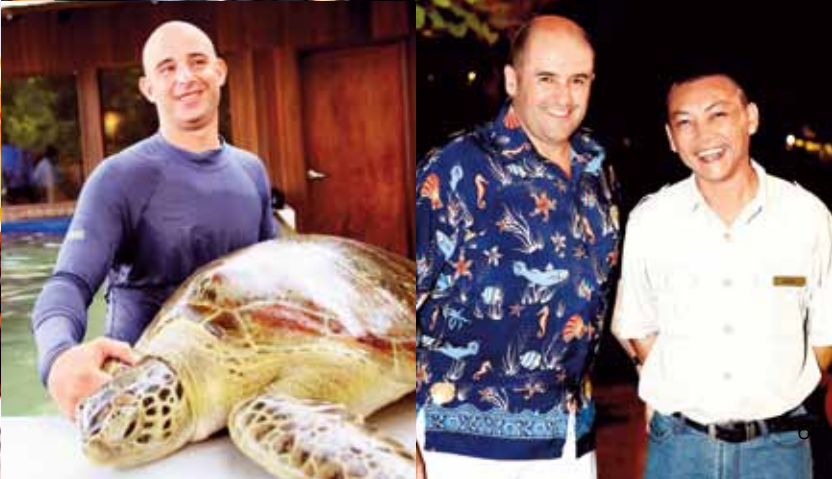




# Nature Dwellers

The recent launch of Gaya Island Resort's new marine centre was greeted with much enthusiasm as it is dedicated to turtle rescue, coral reef restoration and conservation through education. The Gaya Island Resort Marine Centre's opening was further marked by the release of its

first rehabilitated turtle, fondly named 'Bobby' by resort staff, back into the sea. The event was graced by Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun, Sabah's Tourism, Culture & Environment Minister, who said in his opening speech that "the story of Bobby is a happy one. It is a story of hope."



Also present at the launch were YTL Hotels' Executive Director, Dato' Mark Yeoh, and Chairman of the Sabah Tourism Board, Dato' Seri Tengku Dr Zainal Adin. The event also saw the launch of a beautiful new book titled *Natural Wonders - Mountain, Rainforest and Reef* which celebrates the best of nature at YTL properties around the region.

The publication of the book, featuring the most stunning wild life, nature and places of interest in and around YTL properties around the world, engaging education and external outreach programmes are underway to conserve nature and living things from further extinction. After the best of nature at YTL properties around the region. The marine centre is situated at Tavajun Bay, a five-minute boat ride from Gaya Island Resort. It is built close to the shore for better monitoring, while maintaining the sustainability of its unique surrounding environment in both the sea and reefs. With the publication of the book, featuring the most stunning wild life, nature and places of interest in and around YTL properties around the world, engaging education and external outreach programmes are underway to conserve nature and living things from further extinction. After the event, guests sat down for a Kadazan Tribal Barbeque along the coast of Malohom Bay, a natural sanctuary that boasts a spectacular view of Mount Kinabalu on the horizon. Over wine and chatters, guests were entertained with a tribal dancing spectacle, specially prepared for the occasion by native dancers from the Gaya Resort Island. ❏

1. YTL Hotels' Executive Director Dato' Mark Yeoh giving his opening speech.
2. Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun, Dato' Mark Yeoh and Dato' Seri Tengku Dr Zainal Adin launching the Gaya Island Resort Marine Centre.
3. Gilbert Woolley, Jason Isley and Christian Loader.
4. Employees of the marine centre release Bobby back into the sea.
5. Scott Mayback, Gaya Island Resort's resident marine biologist.
6. Mohammad Zuhannes Dzulkifli, Paul Voon and Malai Hashim.
7. Simon Christopher and Justin Juhun.
8. Kirinjit Singh and Laurent Myter, Executive Vice President- Operations Resorts.







It's hard to turn down a weekend in Cameron Highlands. Crisp air, misty mountains and verdant jungle aside, it's even harder when it's a weekend at the Cameron Highlands Resort, a Tudor-inspired retreat complete with plantation-style shutters, timber beams and, every evening, a roaring fireplace to sit by, accompanied by a good book and a dram of Scotch. Naturally, the guest list for its annual Murder Mystery weekend, culminating with its Christmas tree lighting, filled up to overflowing quickly enough. Guest were transported to the highland resort from Kuala Lumpur on Friday and those with competitive streaks didn't waste any time in scouring the hotel for extra clues, giving them an unassailable edge for the evening to come. Others with a more languorous nature headed immediately for the resort's award-winning Spa Village to try out signature treatments using local ingredients like tea, strawberries and roses.



# Of Mist, Murder & Mayhem

The great and the good converged in the mist-swathed surrounds of Malaysia's premier hill station, Cameron Highlands, for the Cameron Highlands Resort's annual Christmas tree lighting tradition and its signature Murder Mystery Dinner.



Once night fell, the party assembled at Gonbei, dressed in character, which ranged from neurotic scientists to fortune tellers and even the Thai silk

1. James Beltran, Ana Garcia de Barañano and Tracy Khee. 2. Samantha Leese and Stefan Oeschner. 3. Revathi Murugappan and Brian Cheong. 4. Rachel Witham and Stuart Jones. 5. Lyndon Felix and Wei-Hsiang Chong. 6. Shikhen Halibullah, Yannick Colot, Deborah Henry and Vinod Rajasimha. 7. Dr Suresh Soosay. 8. Lunita Mendoza, Lydia Soh and Angelia Tan. 9. Lexie Rodriguez and Joshua Ivanovic. 10. Deborah Henry playing a 'murder victim'. 11. Guests trying to solve the murder mystery at the evidence room.







12



king Jim Thompson, who mysteriously vanished in the highlands decades ago. Joshua Ivanovic, in character as the Bartender, played a double role as he also whipped up the most delicious selection of cocktails for the evening, courtesy of his company Cocktail Solutions. Renowned beauty, philanthropist and the evening's guest-of-honour, Deborah Henry, proved to be among the first 'victims', as she was found sprawled on the billiard table by the Highlands

Bar. Other 'kills' soon followed as the evening descended into hilarious mayhem. By the time dessert was served, the game was over and the mystery, finally, solved. Several guests also went home laden with extra prizes for best portrayal of character, best costume and so on. The first night ended on a particularly late note, aided by numerous nips of single malts from the bar. A special silent auction also began in aid of the Fugee School, of which Deborah Henry is co-founder.



15



16

The second night saw the evening graced by the presence of HRH Tengku Puan Pahang, Tunku Azizah Maimunah Iskandariah binti Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, who graciously performed the Christmas tree lighting ceremony, which enveloped the resort with the Yuletide spirit. Carollers performed right on the steps of the hotel as guests made their

way to a special Christmas feast laid out in the Dining Room. The night ended festively with night caps in the Jim Thompson Tea Lounge as guests converged around the grand piano to sing more Christmas songs and, generally, get into the spirit of the season. It might not have been a silent night but there was certainly joy in the world that evening. ❏



12. Fabulous guests striking a pose after the Christmas feast. 13. Laurent Myter, Ben Quah, HRH Tunku Azizah Maimunah Iskandariah, Ana Garcia de Barañano and Jose Ramon Barañano. 14. Paul Friend and Sharon Friend. 15. Brian Cheong and Deborah Bomstein. 16. James Beltran and his sons Juan Sebastian and Juan Santiago, and Brando de Luca Gabrielli. 17. James Frazer and Kate Guest. 18. Toh Puan Seri Wan Hibatul Hidayah, Folco de Luca Gabrielli and Nilou de Luca Gabrielli. 19. Revathi Murugappan tries her hand at making the candy floss for dessert.



17



13



14



18



19



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



01

### The Rites Of Spring

With its menu adjusted in accordance to the seasons, **Spa Village Hangzhou** at The Dragon Hotel offers a sybaritic new treat for spring. A time for new growth and movement, the spring treatment focuses on the health of the liver, while awakening energies and preparing the body to eliminate unnecessary stagnation. Sip on plum blossom tea before a therapeutic bath in perilla leaves and cinnamon twigs, followed by a wrap using lotus seeds and mint as the key ingredients. Lotus seeds are known for their astringent properties while refreshing mint reminds one of spring's fresh, clean nature. Finish off with a soothing session of Balinese massage.

02

### Trail Mix

Located in exotic Borneo, **Gaya Island Resort** serves up yet another distinctive offering with its new Tailored Trails of Borneo, a collection of four unique tours that take you into the heart of Sabah, giving guests a unique insight and experience of the island's rich flora, fauna, culture and history. The Real Kinabalu takes you on an excursion into the countryside, going on walkabout through a native village and culminating in a nature trail at the botanical gardens located at Kinabalu's foothills. For an unforgettable experience, however, sign yourself up for The Lost World, where a helicopter spirits you away to the secret enclaves of the million year-old Maliau Basin, much of which has yet to be explored.

03

### Simply Thai-Rific!

Located along picture-perfect Pansea Beach in Phuket, Thai food lovers staying at **The Surin** are in for a right treat. The **Lomtalay Restaurant** pairs its awe-inspiring panoramic views with an extensive selection of mouth-watering Thai favourites. From crunchy *som tam* (papaya salad) to piquant *tom yum* (a spicy and sour soup), red and green curries as well as luscious mango sticky rice for afters, there are also lesser-known but no less delectable dishes to try. Special Thai cooking classes are also held every Sunday afternoon for those wishing to bring a taste of Thailand home.

04

### Art And Soul

Situated by the beautiful Emerald Bay, the Batik Hut is a charming little spot in which you may shop for hand-printed batik apparel like *sarongs* and *pareos* that are just perfect for the beach, handbags hand-woven from *mengkuang* (screwpine) leaves and works of batik art by local craftsmen. For those with a distinctively creative streak, try your hand at batik painting (classes are conducted in the afternoons and available only upon request) and bring home a unique souvenir of your holiday experience at **Pangkor Laut Resort**.

05

### Tipple Time

Imbibe in an impeccable selection of vintage cocktails amidst the 1930s-era colonial ambience of **The Smoke House** at **The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur**. The personable bar man, Johnnie Yap, and his team serve up a wonderful selection of tipples, ranging from classic punches to cobbles, flips and swizzles. The particularly delicious *Code 55* and *Two Bulats* comes with its own story, which Johnnie would be happy to share with you. Connoisseurs would also be pleased with The Smoke House's range of single malts. A one-for-one offer for vintage cocktails is available, from 1800 to 2000hrs, Thursdays to Saturdays.

06

### Hit The Beach

The idyllic **Tanjong Jara Resort** on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia reopens on 16 January 2014 after an upgrading exercise. Rediscover this sanctuary of luxury that perfectly embodies the gentle Malay arts of service and hospitality. Enjoy a special reopening offer when you book a minimum of two nights' stay inclusive of daily breakfast, lunch and dinner from MYR699 nett per room per night. This East Coast Escape is exclusively applicable till 31st March 2014. For more details, contact the YTL Travel Centre at [travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my](mailto:travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my). ■





life on the cover //

*There's no better time than now to heal, rejuvenate and purify spirit, soul and body as we all look towards a better, brighter new year. At the award-winning Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, enrol yourself into its newly-launched school of Life programme for a head-start your entire being will thank you for.*

Text Diana Khoo Photography Leon Bin Yee & Yong Keen Keong

LIFE

LESSONS

*Find serenity, solace and mindfulness at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's new School of Life programme.*



Perched along Bali's unspoilt north-eastern tip, the award-winning Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali has long attracted the traveller with purity and renewal in mind. With its black volcanic sand beaches, proximity to the island's sacred mother mountain of Gunung Agung and fronted by the deep blue waters of the Bali Sea, this is a patch of paradise that'll take you back to the days long before Bali became a magnet for the international jet-set as well as the global nomad. Now, YTL Hotels' first dedicated spa resort offers yet another innovative programme designed to, not only immerse you in a few sybaritic days of blissful spa living, but also to help bring back balance and an increased sense of mindfulness into your every day; subtle changes and lifestyle lessons that'll resonate long after you've left the tranquil retreat.

Launched in September last year, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's new School of Life programme is designed with the modern-day go-getter in mind. "We noticed an increasing need for a programme like this," says Chik Lai Ping, Vice President of YTL





Hotels' Spa Division. "As the modern lifestyle becomes increasingly stressful, with people overworking to the point of burnout, the School of Life will help people redesign the way they choose to live as well as help educate them on how to achieve greater balance through a healthier, cleaner way of living." The idyllic location, surrounded by banana and coconut groves and far away from the madding crowds of Kuta and Seminyak, certainly helps while an abundance of fresh, natural ingredients – from line-caught fish off the beach for dinner and just-harvested organic coconuts to drink, to riotous gardens bursting with herbs and blossoms for spa therapies – makes living well rather effortless. "You live a simple life here," adds Wati Sharron Hopley, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's Resident Manager, whose own vitality and inner light make her a walking advertisement for the wellness resort. "What we offer is the complete antithesis to the low-energy, high-stress life so rampant today. Here, you eat wholesome food, breathe the freshest air and take time for exercise, all the while learning and putting into practice key tools for a better way of life that you can take back with you when you leave."

The School of Life currently offers stays of four, six or eight nights, with an all-inclusive comprehensive programme that includes spa treatments, healthy meals, exercise routines and even cultural activities. You can, for example, begin your day with a session of sunrise yoga in the garden with Jro Luh Manis, the resort's resident yogini and recreation manager, before proceeding to a healthy breakfast of tropical fruit or



*"Here, you eat wholesome food, breathe the freshest air and take time for exercise, all the while learning and putting to practice key tools for a better way of life that you can take back with you when you leave."*

*Every day on the School of Life programme includes spa treatments, exercise and cultural activities.*



### SPA SCHOOL

Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's School of Life is all about guiding guests on making subtle, more holistic changes as well as incorporating wellness therapies into your everyday life. Here is a simple recipe on how to make *boreh*, a traditional Balinese body scrub.

A traditional remedy to treat minor ailments, *boreh* is a healing paste that consists of several key herbs like turmeric, ginger, rice, cloves, nutmeg, pepper and chili. The paste is usually applied over the affected area and left until it dries. The ingredients for *boreh* vary according to the ailment. In Spa Village Tembok, Bali, *boreh* is used in its signature body treatment of Penganten Melukat.

- 50g ginger, 50g galangal, 50g clove and 100g soaked rice.
- Pound the cloves until it becomes powdery and set aside.
- Grind the rice until it becomes soft.
- Cut the ginger and galangal into small pieces and pound.
- Mix the ginger and galangal together with the rice and grind.
- Add in the clove powder and mix together.
- Your *boreh* is ready to use.

activated Bircher muesli at the sea-facing restaurant accompanied by rejuvenating elixirs and a wide selection of healthy juices. Some guests may blanch a little when they see the School of Life's suggested meal options placed alongside the regular selection of artisanal pastries, crispy bacon and fluffy omelettes, but this is all in-line with the programme's emphasis on training guests to continue making mindful, informed choices when back in the real world. The menus at Tembok are all prepared by Chef Martin Büchele, with input by Samuel Rogalasky, a certified wellness and nutrition consultant. There are also daily creativity classes held at Taman Gili, a small lounge area near the swimming pool, where you may learn a variety of Balinese arts and crafts, from *lontar* drawing (the ancient Balinese art of inscribing on palm leaves) to *canang*-making (handcrafting traditional offerings to the gods made with natural materials like flowers and leaves), ensuring each guest leaves the resort with authentic experiences and encounters of all the cultural richness that Bali is so renowned for. Fresh organic coconuts are also served whole to guests twice a day to aid in the rehydration and detoxification process, complemented by nightly detoxifying herbal and floral baths with ingredients like volcanic clay, neem leaves, marigold petals and pandanus as well as patchouli, tea tree and citronella essential oils. Guests on the School of Life programme are also served nightcaps of the resort's signature detox tea as well as Triphala capsules, a traditional Ayurvedic *rasayana* (rejuvenator) used to cleanse the colon while delivering nourishment to bodily tissue via a broad spectrum of healing phyto-nutrients.

For guests who desire something on a deeper level or are, perhaps, seeking spiritual guidance, answers to longstanding questions or even to achieve a heightened sense of peace, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali may also assist in arranging a visit to the temple of Pura Ponjok Batu, a 20-minute drive from the resort. Here, natural springs burst forth from under the temple rocks to meet the sea and a Hindu priest may be arranged to lead you through the requisite prayers before, finally, purifying you in a ritual seaside bath with sacred spring water. It is a moving and immensely profound experience.

I'd also been gratified to hear of a guest who'd been battling a severe health issue for years and had been surfing the Internet when Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali



*“What we offer is the complete antithesis to the low-energy, high-stress life so rampant today.”*

Guests are served Triphala capsules and the resort's signature detox tea nightly.





suddenly came up in one of her searches. "She said it was as if she knew she had to be here and, miraculously, she made it to a plane, flew halfway across the world and came," confirms Hopley. The said guest ended up staying for a few weeks, feeling safe and sheltered in this haven on the other side of the globe and, gradually, building up the mental, emotional and physical strength to continue on her life journey back home. Certainly, the resort's tranquillity and authentic Balinese hospitality make it easier for one to work towards attaining a greater sense of life balance. "The School of Life is a programme that was designed to introduce people to a healthier and more balanced lifestyle," adds Hopley. The Balinese have a word for a place or element of balance – *penyeimbang*. You'll find it slips off the tongue rather easily after a few days at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali. ■

For enquiries please contact YTL Travel Centre at [travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my](mailto:travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my).

Clockwise, from extreme left: Jro Luh Manis at Pura Ponjok Batu; Lily ponds dot the resort; a traditional jukung on the black sand beach.



**LIFE TIPS**

Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's resident manager Wati Sharron Hopley shares her top tips for life.

**SOCIAL REHAB** – Learn how to turn off your phone, iPad and television and, instead, replace it with reading, walking, joining an exercise class and meeting new

people. Use your time to connect with others, which, in turn, helps you connect with yourself. We have a saying here at Spa Village that 'everything is a reflection of you'. Mull on that point and decide for yourself who you want to be.

**WALK BAREFOOT ON THE SAND** – One of the reasons why we feel so disconnected from the earth is because we literally are. Think about it. Most of our lives are spent with shoes on our feet, which separates us from the natural ground. Make a conscious effort to go barefoot and feel nature every day, be it sand, soil or grass, even if it's just for half an hour.

**ENJOY NATURE** – Whenever there are too many thoughts in my head or I feel overwhelmed and troubled, I simply walk down to the beach, soak my feet in the seawater and just be, staring out at the horizon. Alternatively, there are few things more calming than floating on a warm ocean, soaking up the sun. Remember that we are part of nature and that sunlight helps us feel alive and to survive, not to

mention getting our daily dosage of Vitamin D. If you feel like things are going too fast or slow, or you aren't really sure where you are headed, remember that there is a time and place for everything, and all the roads are taking you there... in its own time.

**BREATHE** – One of the best experiences I've ever had was in nature, at the base of Les Waterfall near Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali. I was so in awe of the beauty around us that I could do nothing but breathe deeply to take it all in, against the backdrop of a beautiful waterfall, lush trees and plenty of sunshine. For me, this was magic.

**CREATE** – There's something about creating. It's all about expression. Choose things that take you out of your daily routine and make you feel liberated and out of your comfort zone, ready to discover new things. It needn't be art per se but keeping a journal also counts as a way of expressing yourself. As does cooking, singing in the car, telling jokes or, my personal favourite, dancing when no one's watching!







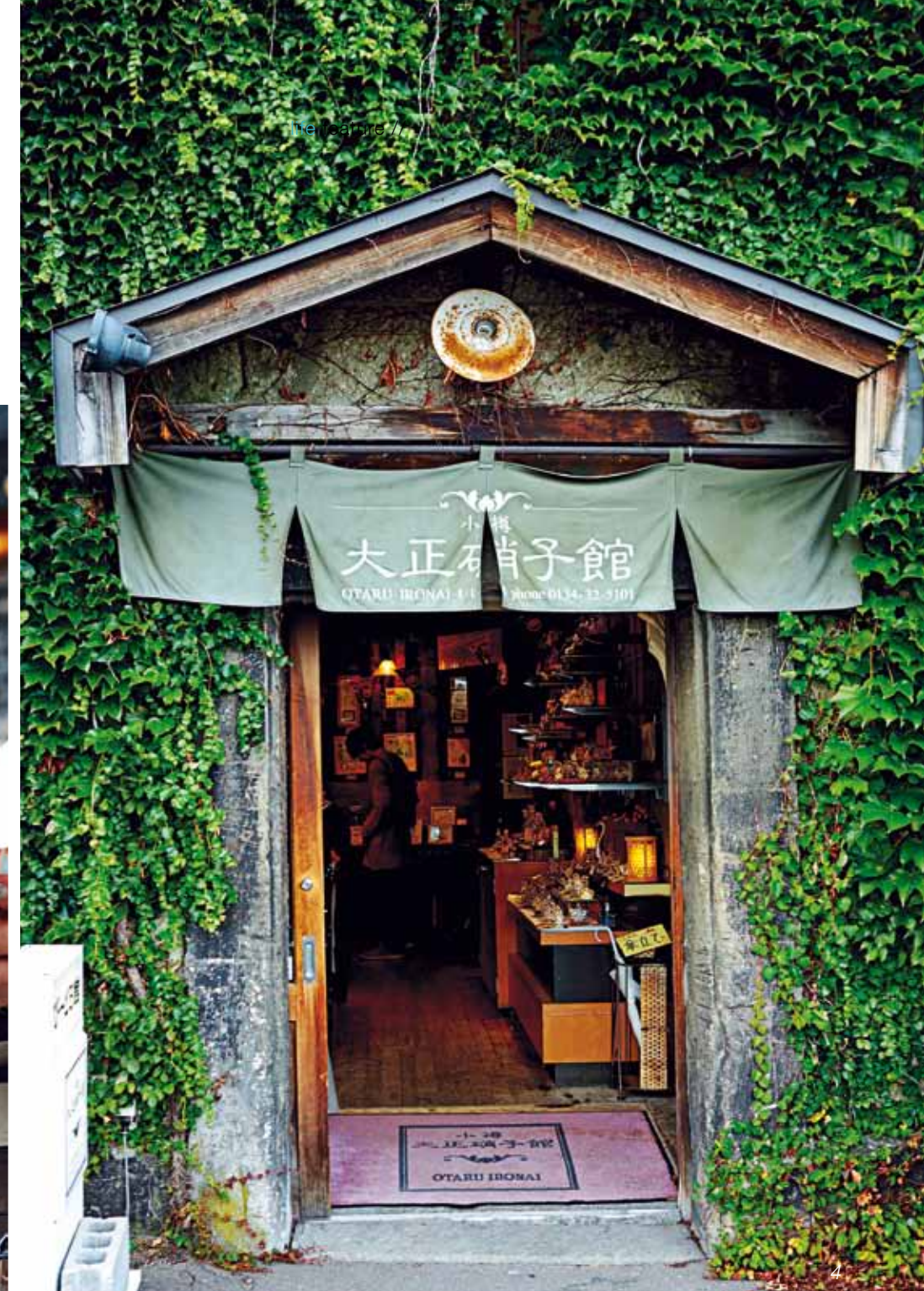
# Canal City

No, we're not talking about Amsterdam but Otaru, Japan. If you happen to be visiting Hokkaido this season, consider stopping by this charming and historical seaside town for a memorable winter's day out.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Yong Keen Keong**

Beloved by Japanese luminaries like Takuboku Ishikawa and Takiji Kobayashi, the northern seaside town of Otaru is as historical and romantic as they come. Located about an hour by car from Niseko, modern-day Otaru is famed for its nostalgic feel and numerous shopping and dining diversions. So, it may surprise some that this was once known as the 'Wall Street' of Japan's north. But, for a long time, Otaru eclipsed Sapporo as the primary city in Hokkaido. Certainly, for much of the late 1800s, Otaru was home to the area's aptly named 'herring tycoons', families who made vast fortunes from herring fishing until the industry collapsed in the 1950s, due to a dramatic decline in herring stocks. The

1. Otaru's most famous feature is its romantic and historical canal area. 2. Katsue Nagano sampling bakudanyaki, a popular savoury fritter filled with bacon, potato, leek, cheese, vegetables and quail's egg. 3. A rickshaw ride is the speediest way to get a quick overview of Otaru. 4. Shopping for gifts and souvenirs is a key pastime in Otaru.



area is still dotted with these former 'herring mansions' and gives visitors an idea of the opulence that was prevalent in Otaru then. Even as you stroll down Otaru's strand today and along its famously picturesque unga (canal), you might notice the city hasn't altered much with time. Its old world charm remains, replete with Victorian-style gas lamps and former brick and stone warehouses that have now been converted into a hodgepodge of restaurants, cafés and shops. The charming town is best

explored on foot, so you may browse and snack on the many local delicacies as you go along (don't miss the famous bakudanyaki – a delicious cross between traditional takoyaki and okonomiyaki – stall across the road from the canal) but, if you'd like a quick overview of what the city offers, hire a rickshaw-wallah (most can be found near the canal area) for a quick half-hour tour. Here's a quick rundown on the top things to see, do and eat on your next Otaru excursion.





5 & 6. From packed snow crabs all ready to be taken home to edible masterpieces prepared à la minute by sushi senseis, Otaru is a key destination for seafood connoisseurs. 7. Salmon chan chan-yaki, a traditional (and delicious) fisherman's meal. 8. Visit Tatsumi Sushi for a true taste of Otaru. 9. Kamaei is an Otaru institution famous for its fish cakes.

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### Oh, Sushi!

For a relatively small town, Otaru boasts of over 200 sushi restaurants, many of them excellent and comparatively inexpensive. As the city is traditionally a fisherman's town, rest assured the catch of the day is always fresh-as-can-be. There is a dedicated *sushiya-dori* or *sushiya yokocho* (sushi street), where raw seafood enthusiasts may explore and then indulge to their hearts' content. We recommend Tatsumi Sushi, which has two branches – one close to the canal and the other along the *sushiya yokocho* – where you can try out all the usual sushi and sashimi (Otaru is particularly well-known for its *uni* or sea urchin), as well as some particular Hokkaido favourites. There's *hokki*, a type of shellfish popular in the area, as well as

a traditional fisherman's hot meal of *chan chan-yaki*, a delicious medley of seafood, vegetables, miso and a generous chunk of rich Hokkaido butter cooked on a sizzling hot plate over a flame. You can also enquire if *hakkaku* – a strange-looking, almost octagonal-angled fish – is on the menu for a true taste of Otaru.

*Tatsumi Sushi*  
1-1-6, Hanazono, Otaru-shi.

### To Market, To Market

There's nothing quite like exploring a local market to get a sense of place. And, for those who enjoy the delicious kerfuffle that is market day, you're in luck as Otaru has several traditional retail markets that boast a wonderful range of locally harvested produce, including seafood caught in

nearby waters. Try looking for a friendly stall and, if language isn't too much of a barrier, examine the goods on offer, which may, depending on the season, range from fresh oysters to tubs of gleaming *ikura* (salmon roe), octopus and an assortment of dried or smoked fish. Most markets, like the bustling Chuo wholesale market and the Rinyu morning market, are closed Sundays but the Sankaku market is open seven days a week, while the Shin Nantaru market is only closed on Wednesdays.

*Sankaku Market*  
3-10-16, Inaho, Otaru-shi.

### Gone Fishing

Steamed fish paste cakes, or *kamaboko*, are a favourite snack among the Japanese. From the basic ones you find in every supermarket to localised specialties like the Tohoku region's bamboo-shaped fishcakes, known as *sasa kamaboko*, Otaru, too, has its own take on the ubiquitous snack. The locals, however, display a particular penchant for deep-fried fish cakes, known collectively as *akegama*. Not far from the town's famous canal is Kamaei. Open daily from 0900-

1900hrs, it is particularly famous for its *panroru* – a fishcake wrapped around a piece of bread and deep-fried. The *panroru*, needless to say, has a huge fan base among the younger generation. Also, don't miss the *hiraten*, which many regard to be the original deep-fried *kamaboko*. For foodies with more traditionalist leanings, browse Kamaei's tempting glass counters that display a host of interesting and flavoured fish cakes, in all shapes, sizes and tastes, and made from various fish, including Alaskan Pollack, Atka mackerel and other local varieties. Choose from a wide range of *kamaboko* and *agekama*, including cheese, scallop, carrot and burdock root, shrimp and even *okononiyaki*, the local version of a pizza-omelette. Wash it down with a bottle of delicious Otaru beer. For those interested, the brewery isn't far at all from the canal, with free admission. Look out for it! *Kamaei Boiled Fish Paste Shop* 3-7, Sakaimachi, Otaru-shi.

### Sweet As Can Be

In Hokkaido, you will notice a particular penchant for sophisticated sweets, rather in the manner of the Parisians. A day



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**WHERE TO STAY**

The Green Leaf Resort & Spa and the Hilton Niseko Village are the perfect places to base yourself throughout the duration of your winter vacation. Both offering ski-in, ski-out facilities and with stunning *onsen* (hot springs), they guarantee to appeal to guests who want a seamless experience of Hokkaido at its finest. Both properties also boast their own luxurious spas and offer excellent dining options. For more information or bookings, visit [thegreenleafhotel.com](http://thegreenleafhotel.com) and [hiltonnisekovillage.jp](http://hiltonnisekovillage.jp)

10. No visit to Otaru is complete without sampling LeTao's famous Double Fromage cheesecake. 11. The Otaru Music Box Museum is well-worth visiting for its fascinating selection and display of beautiful music boxes.



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may stop to refresh or refuel in between exploring the town.

*LeTao Otaru Confectionery*  
7-16 Sakaimachi, Otaru-shi.

**The Sound Of Music**

This charming red brick building, located along Sumiyoshi-cho, houses the Otaru Music Box Museum, quite possibly one of the most delightful places you can encounter in the city, or anywhere, for that matter. Dating back to 1912, the building is a reminder of Otaru's once-illustrious past, standing along the former 'Wall Street' of Hokkaido, and used to be the main office of one of the city's greatest rice and grain merchants. The interiors are an old world delight, fashioned out of zelkova wood, spread over five levels and boasting a huge vaulted ceiling. It is, however, not the structure that would catch your eye but, rather, the hundreds upon thousands of little music boxes, each one a work of art. Some are fashioned according to the

cutesy Japanese style that is so popular, while others are beautiful in their simplicity. You may even design your own music box, adding little accoutrements as well as selecting the all-important melody. It's no wonder that these little musical treasure boxes remain one of the most cherished things to give and receive from Otaru. History lovers might also be interested in the antique museum section, where you can learn how the music box was first introduced to Japan via a Dutch trader in 1852. Adapting the Dutch word 'organ', music boxes soon came to be referred to as *orugeru*, now shortened even further to *orgel*. Here, you will find several fine specimens of beautifully preserved antique music boxes and automata (mechanical dolls). Oh, and don't miss posing for a souvenir snapshot right in front of the building, where a marvellous steam clock, measuring over 5m, stands.

*Otaru Music Box Museum*  
4-1, Sumiyoshi-cho, Otaru-shi. 📍



**SNOW FESTIVAL 2014**

The upcoming Snow Light Path Festival in Otaru is scheduled to be held from 7 to 16 February 2014. Also referred to as 'Otaru Yuki Akari no Michi', it is an annual winter festival which sees the town decorated in lights and small illuminated snow sculptures. Although smaller than the world-renowned snow festival in Sapporo, Otaru's version is particularly charming, concentrating around the historical canal area, and with a wonderfully festive feel. The canal itself will be decorated with candlelit buoys, while the ambience, complete with icicles dangling from the eaves of the stone warehouses, only adds to the winter wonderland experience.



# Thailand On Tracks

Catch a ride on Eastern & Oriental Express' *Epic Thailand* journey to discover a side of the kingdom that you've never seen before.

Text **Helen Oon**

At Bangkok's Hualampong Railway Station, Thai dancers in glittering traditional costumes, fearsome masks and fake swords are acting out a dance drama of good versus evil, accompanied by the hypnotic rhythm of an ancient music score, to welcome guests of the Eastern & Oriental Express. It is symbolic of wishing guests on this six-day *Epic Thailand* journey a safe trip. One of the child dancers leads me by the hand and ushers me into the train carriage, where my cabin steward, Paul, welcomes me with a gracious *wai*. My state compartment is compact and adorned with beautiful wood panelling of cherry wood and elm burr. Every piece of furnishing is designed to cope with the rigours of the train's movements. As the whistle blew, the train springs into life with

a cacophony of groans and squeaks, and off we go, leaving the bustling city behind and heading for the countryside. It ambles through the outskirts of Bangkok, through shanty towns peppered with temples, their upturned roofs catching the rays of the early evening sun. Dinner is a chance to dress up for a welcome reception hosted by Nicolas Pillet, the General Manager of E&O, who speaks with a most delicious French accent. Ulf, the train manager, manages the train with military precision and efficiency. Thanks to him, everything works like clockwork, pulling out all the stops to entertain us with local culture and culinary experiences.

Every day, there are surprises in store for us. On the second day, we visit north-east Thailand, also known as Isan, to visit



Gracious staff, impeccable service and amazing landscapes are among the pleasures of travelling on the E&O Express.



a typical village and observe its lifestyle. We are welcomed to the village of Ban Maichamuak with a *bai sii* ceremony, where village elders tie sacred white threads around our wrists and the temple priest chants prayers. We tour the village where we watch women spinning silk threads extracted from wriggling silk worms, with the finished products – raw silk with intricate designs on *sarongs* – available for purchase. We also call at a local kindergarten where the children, cute as buttons, dance for us with gusto. Later in the afternoon, the train travels through a landscape carpeted with swathes of sugar cane, tapioca and paddy fields until we arrive at the small town of Sikhoraphum in Surin Province, where we take a short coach ride to Prasat Sikhoraphum. There, in the golden evening light, a restored 12th-century Khmer Hindu *prasat* (temple) dominates the landscape with its red sandstone quincunx pattern that is similar to Angkor





Gourmet meals and local Thai experiences are on the menu of E&O Express' Epic Thailand adventure.



Wat's, with five *prangs*, or pagodas, a rare configuration outside Cambodia. Only "state" temples are accorded with this sacred design, denoting its important lineage, with carvings depicting the dances of Lord Shiva. Two Thai elephants with enormous tusks guard the entrance to the temple grounds and we are encouraged to offer them cucumbers as treats, which they literally Hoover up faster than we can feed them. One of them even gives us the perfect photo opportunity when it allowed volunteers to sit on its tusks. Within the temple grounds are stalls offering local Isan delicacies, while a bevy of dancers, splendidly dressed as *apsaras* – supernatural female spirits – and accompanied by warrior guardians armed with



swords, perform on a stage erected among the ruins. It is a most magical evening, as they dance gracefully accompanied by rousing music and fire-eaters.

We arrive, the next morning, at Prasat Phanom Rung, one of the most beautiful and important historic Khmer sites in Thailand. Built as a religious sanctuary near the rim of an extinct volcano between the 10th and 12th centuries in the province of Buri Ram in eastern Thailand, this magnificent temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, was built on an east-west axis, where, at certain times of the year, the sun's rays stream directly through its 15 doors as a sign of divination. The approach to the temple is via a sequence of causeway steps and terraces adorned on both sides with sandstone columns

topped with lotus buds. This leads to raised terraces, where a five-headed *naga*, a serpent-like creature believed to link humanity with the heavenly realms, stands guard along the balustrade. A further 52 steps lead to the main sanctuary on top of a hill with a commanding view of the countryside. Gables and lintels with relief work depicting tales from Hindu mythologies and religious ceremonies adorn the main 23m high tower. As I wander through the sanctuary, exploring every nook and corner of this sacred ground, I can understand why this revered site belongs to the realm of the gods – I could almost hear the chanting of ancient priests echoing through the temple.

Another day, another adventure, and it keeps getting better. On the fourth day, we arrive at the provincial town of Lampang, where we visit Wat Sri Rong Muang, a temple built in the Burmese architectural style of multi-tiered roofs, gables and very ornate pillars. A huge golden Buddha presides in the main altar. Later, we travel in horse-drawn carriages through the town, galloping down narrow lanes to Ban Sao Nak, known as the house of many pillars, a 118-year-old house constructed completely of teak and supported by 116 pillars. This outstanding house has been featured in magazines and television and radio programmes. Today, it is a private museum, with all the original antique furniture and decoration as part of the exhibition. On our visit, we enjoyed an afternoon tea of local snacks and drinks, laid out on the lovely grounds of the house.



Due to repair works on the railway track, we head off north by coach to Chiang Mai, where we spend the night at the fabulous Dhara Dhevi Resort. The resort is styled like a mini village, with sprawling villas and waterways and even a paddy field. Chiang Mai, the country's second largest city, was the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Lanna (1296-1768) and its distinctive architecture features the traditional northern style with Burmese influences. Here, the Lanna culture, dating back more than seven centuries, still thrives with its own local dialect, Kam Muang, and ethnic food, music, dance and art making a comeback and much enjoyed by Thai and foreign visitors. In a small temple in a back lane, an abbot gives us his blessing while a magnificent giant Buddha, clad in gold, sits on the altar with a stern expression.

Bay, our guide, then takes us through a bustling market stocked to the rafters with local food, clothes and bric-a-brac, before we attend a cooking demonstration by a local chef who owns Wanlamun, an award-winning restaurant. She shares the secrets of making the perfect pomelo salad and fried bread with shrimp spread, two recipes I can now add to my repertoire.

As night falls, we head for Baan Suan, a charming villa nestled on the banks of the Ping River, where local people have set up stalls selling handicrafts. After dinner, three graceful dancers, dressed in exquisite costumes and headgear, perform a traditional ethnic dance by a pool, resembling ancient goddesses as they twirl and gyrate, with hand gestures that tell a story. Much to our surprise, they

“In the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre, we see a baby elephant playing football with its keeper and drop in at the hospital where injured elephants are cared for.”



and then visit mother elephants with their babies. We also see a baby elephant playing football with its keeper and drop in at the hospital where injured elephants are cared for.

On the final leg of the journey, the call of the wild beckons as we embark on a jungle trek in the Khao Yai National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site. It is home to 70 mammals, including elephants, deer, wild dogs, gibbons, bears and macaques. Led by Dr Tony Lynam, we trek through the grassland and, though we do not see any, there are paw prints of animals imprinted in the mud, not to mention piles of elephant dung in the salt lick area. In the distance, the call of gibbons echo through the forest. After six days of culinary indulgence on the train conjured up by the amazing chef de cuisine, Yannis Martineau, who effortlessly delivers delicious gourmet meals to our table from a tiny galley kitchen every day, the trek is much needed.

dance into the pool like flirtatious water nymphs, before the musicians step up the tempo and a dancer, wearing a fan-like shaped headdress with the tips alight with fire, sails on the river accompanied by a pageant of little floating lanterns. We are then invited to participate in the releasing of *khom lawy*, or fire lanterns, into the air, a celebration practised during the festival of Loy Krathong, when they are set adrift into the night skies to pay respect to Mae Phra Phai, the goddess of wind and air.

On the final night on the train, Ulf springs a surprise on us... again. We are asked to step outside the train, stationary beside a reservoir, and under skies peppered with twinkling stars, an elaborate fireworks display pierce the inky darkness of the night. It is the mother of all grand finales to an epic journey through Thailand. Agatha Christie reputedly said: “Trains are wonderful... to travel by train is to see nature and human beings, town and rivers, in fact, to see life.” On my journey on the E&O in Thailand, it is all that and more. ■

We leave Chiang Mai the next morning and call in at the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre to learn more about these wonderful creatures. Dr Richard Lair, a specialist in the study of elephants, gives a short talk on the subject and leads us to the lake to see them having a bath



Learn more about these gentle giants at the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre.

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Add a unique touch to your nuptials at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur with Tengku Marina Ibrahim's artistic expressions for Pink Jambu.

# The Princess & the Prints

Princess Marina Ibrahim of Pahang speaks to *YTL Life* about her passion for beautiful prints and her work with Pink Jambu, a Malaysian brand renowned for its elegant and artistic expressions in textiles, and her exciting new collaboration with The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

Text Diana Khoo Photography Soon Lau Hair Esther Hsieh / A Salon Makeup Geraldine Loy / Artists @ Work

Couples planning a wedding amidst the elegant, colonial ambience of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, truly one of the country's *grande dame* hotels, might wish to consider adding a bespoke sartorial touch with a uniquely local twist courtesy of Pink Jambu, a Malaysian brand celebrated for its artistic expressions of *batik* and *songket*.

Established in 1992, Pink Jambu was conceptualised by Tengku Marina Ibrahim, a member of the royal house of Pahang. Her late father was the Tengku Ariff Bendahara of Pahang, while her uncle, brother to her late father, is the reigning Sultan of Pahang. Having spent her formative years in Pahang as well as Kuala Lumpur, Tengku Marina then travelled to England for her tertiary education. After completing her O and A Levels, the petite princess then further honed her interest in art and design by completing a foundation art course before moving on to Kingston University, where she majored in three-dimensional design and interior and furniture design. Her strong foundation in the arts, coupled with a natural, instinctive

flair for design, has led to the success of Pink Jambu as a brand, offering hand-painted, artistic textiles that adorn a variety of products, from apparel to home accessories as well as accent pieces.

Citing nature as her primary source of inspiration, it's easy to see the fluid swirls and organic motifs that are prevalent in almost all her creations. Through tenacity, the princess has also worked on several collaborations, including, most recently, with a celebrated *kyo-uzen* Japanese dye master, Akira Yamamoto, as well as uniform projects and interior design for restaurants, hotels and corporate offices. One of the latest offerings in the Pink Jambu portfolio, however, would be her partnership with The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

With her collection on sale already in the property's Majestic Spa, it made sense to take the relationship one step further with the introduction of a bespoke pre-wedding package made available to couples and their families who will be celebrating their nuptials at the hotel. "We thought it a lovely idea to pre-empt or extend the happy

occasion with a special wedding package that offers the bridal party unique, bespoke wedding apparel that can be worn for the dinner the night before the wedding or perhaps during the day, in between the many ceremonies," says Tengku Marina.

Couples may also choose to use this as a unique avenue in which to gift the people closest to them with special *batik* fabric or a special gift of a custom shawl or *sarong*, perhaps, to mothers-in-law. "Everything will be coordinated and the family may also choose, for example, to revolve the designs around a central motif, like an orchid or a lily. It's a lovely idea to make dressing up for the event even more special as well as a wonderful keepsake from a once-in-a-lifetime occasion." Although Tengku Marina concedes the right to designing the actual wedding dress, she says she can, however, agree to customising the fabric. "The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is such a special, exclusive venue and what nicer way to accentuate the special day than with something bespoke that the whole family can wear, keep and remember?" What better way, indeed. ■



# Work on The Wild DIS

Eminent French explorer, wildlife expert and archaeozoologist Perrine Crosmary speaks about her passion for animals as well as her deep commitment to conservation and improving the links between man and nature.

Text **Diana Khoo**  
Photography **Jean-Baptiste Erreca, Halim Berbar & Bertrand Eliotout**



1. Wildlife expert Perrine Crosmary meets an elephant in Zimbabwe.

"I grew up always wanting to save the planet," says Perrine Crosmary. A familiar name to nature-loving Francophiles, Crosmary is one of the stars of *Les Nouveaux Explorateurs*, a French documentary series on Canal+ that features 13 adventurers, each focusing on a unique passion, ranging from food to music to sport, and exploring its different guises around the world. Crosmary's area of expertise is, naturally,

wildlife. Today, sipping tea from fine bone china and nibbling on afternoon tea dainties at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's drawing room, Crosmary, with her soft blue eyes, tousled auburn hair and petite frame, hardly fits the stereotypical image of a grizzly explorer and wildlife expert. "I remember feeling so sad when my parents told me that saving the world was too hard but I still pursued my dream."



“Being in nature shows you just how little you need in this world. I know as I’ve experienced it and, I can tell you, it’s immensely liberating!”



2



know their roots – who they are, where they come from – as that’s the only way we can truly know ourselves.”

More than just a television host and wildlife expert, Crosmar also believes in taking affirmative action. Together with five biologist friends, Crosmar and her husband founded Human Initiatives to Save Animals (HISA) in 2011. Based in Bordeaux, the NGO’s primary responsibilities include project monitoring, preservation of mountain gorillas in Uganda’s Bwindi Forest National Park as well as lions in Hwange. “I want to take action myself,” says Crosmar with trademark passion. “Wherever I travel to, I always try to find a project I can link up with HISA. I’d like to get some work done in Malaysia as well. I can see there are ongoing efforts in place already, but I’d really like to help as well. When I was in Taman Negara, I noticed that there are problems between wild elephants and the Negritos, who need to protect their crops. What HISA ultimately does is find solutions for people and animals to live together.” In a world where man and wildlife consistently compete for limited resources, HISA is adamant that there are always ways and means to avoid conflict. “There are always options,” points out Crosmar. “I don’t believe electric fences and the like are the only solutions. Research has shown that beehives, for example, are natural repellents against elephants.” Certainly, there are sustainable and organic options that would prove doubly beneficial. Citing Crosmar’s beehive example, farmers in Kenya are experimenting with innovative beehive fences which, research has shown, have proven 97 per cent successful in deflecting attempted elephant raids. This was due to the natural discovery that elephants have a natural fear of bees as, though their thick hide might prove impenetrable, they are vulnerable around the eye area as well as the inside of their trunks. What made this initiative extra attractive to the farmers was the added income from sales of the honey, proving that ecologically sensitive and socially sound solutions exist. All it takes is tenacity and a will to work around existing problems. “Greater awareness and efforts will show results over time,” says Crosmar confidently. “Technological advancement will also help a great deal, so I am very hopeful we will, in the near future, find better ways for man and animals to live together.”

These days, Crosmar tells of exotic days spent tracking mountain gorillas much the way the eminent Dian Fossey did, or of filming wild elephants in Zimbabwe’s Hwange National Park. “I lived there for three years, as a matter of fact,” notes Crosmar. “I remember how, every day, I would find fresh animal footprints and the excitement I felt.” Coming a long way from her childhood explorations of digging for worms or looking for frogs and tadpoles to ‘rescue’, Crosmar recently spent a month in Malaysia, staying at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur and Tanjong Jara Resort, while exploring the length and breadth of the peninsula. Filming more fodder for her fans, Crosmar also discovered the venomous snakes that live around Perlis’ network of caves and limestone hills, met with indigenous Negrito communities in Taman Negara, the country’s renowned national park, and learnt more about how man and wildlife can better co-exist. “I am always excited to meet people who still have strong links with mother earth. The first tribesmen I encountered was in Tanzania, and they still hunted like their forefathers did, living off the bush land. I think it’s so important to see people who really

“Malaysia is still such an amazing destination... so rich in nature,” she continues. “I want to learn more about the country



3

2. The Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe, where Crosmar’s Human Initiatives to Save Animals organisation monitors the lion population. 3. Perine Crosmar in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur’s Orchid Conservatory during her recent visit to Malaysia. 4. Crosmar’s painting of a lion with a collar. 5. Crosmar taking it easy in Tanjong Jara Resort, Terengganu.



and its wild places. Taman Negara, for example, is amazing... each leaf, each twig, is a marvel of nature. And what I am also surprised by is the high presence of wildlife everywhere – from the snakes in Perlis to your jungles filled with tigers, pangolins, bats and a host of other creatures. I feel a good spirit here in Malaysia. The people want to keep their tigers and I think conservation efforts here are strong.”

Although just 35, Crosmary has already travelled and explored much of the world's wilderness, and it's a way of life she is passing on to her young son, who shares her great love for nature and animals. "He's 10 now but, from the ages of three to six, lived with me in Zimbabwe and even attended a bush school," she smiles. Home for the family is now significantly more urban, if a charming small town in France could be considered that. Although Crosmary, as a rule, doesn't like keeping pets, preferring them to be free, the household still boasts an impressive menagerie, with a free-roaming rabbit ("I have to be so careful with it as there are hunting dogs in the area"), two spiders named Isabella and Beatrice for tackling pesky mosquitoes, pet leeches (yes, leeches) as well as the plankton and hydra, a type of jellyfish, that she enjoys breeding. "Life here is different from the bush, where you really appreciate and enjoy all the small things," she shares. "Being French, I, of course, enjoy being well-dressed and eating good things but, if I had to choose between a life in the wild or a living a life of money and privilege, there's no question – I'd walk on the wild side. While in Zimbabwe, I found it such a great privilege being able to say to my family: 'Ok, let's go see lions tonight' or enjoying a beer with wild elephants nearby. I also find living in the wilderness, among tribesmen, easy enough and an experience I'd love to have more frequently. As long as I have fresh water and a bit of soap, I'm alright. Being in nature shows you just how little you need in this world. I know as I've experienced it and, I can tell you, it's immensely liberating!"

Today, looking demure in an embroidered cream top and khakis, it's hard to imagine Crosmary in the wild but, a quick glance at the work she does for her television, and it becomes easy to see how she sheds her city skin for something more basic and primeval. "It's something I've had in me since I was a little girl," she volunteers. "I had seen a documentary about a rhino which had its horn removed while still alive. I remember crying terribly for days afterwards and realised that poaching was something I wanted to fight against." Her childhood epiphany led her to study zooarchaeology in Paris, followed by a stint working in Nairobi, where the devastating effects of poaching and habitat loss hit closer to home. "I was working with boxes and boxes of bones at the museum there, and it suddenly



life feature //

dawned upon me: why am I working with bones when there are still so many animals left to save?" As Crosmary continues to criss-cross the globe, sharing her adventures with her fans on *Les Nouveaux Explorateurs* as well as continuing to raise awareness for the need to protect what's left of the world's precious wildlife, it's clear she's living her childhood dream of saving the planet - one animal at a time. ■



### Perrine's Pointers

*Everyday tips for living in nature.*

- Realise that one of the most serious issues facing wildlife today is trafficking. It is serious. Never buy products made from endangered species!
- Habitat loss is another problem. Find a way to combine growth and economics with conservation and preservation. Try to end deforestation. It is imperative to protect what we have because what we lose may be lost forever.
- Even as individuals, realise there is so much you can do. Try to reduce the use of plastics in your home and never use pesticides or products that can harm nature.
- Plant a tree.
- Try and compensate for the carbon footprints you leave. It starts with one's willingness to do so.
- Always find the ecologically-sound solution for dealing with issues, be it an ant problem or elephants. If you don't know what to do, always speak to someone with the knowledge and ability to help you. Do it right.
- Never forget that we, man and nature, are all inextricably linked.





# Colour Me Rhodes

From Diana, Princess of Wales, to Freddie Mercury, legendary fashion designer Zandra Rhodes has dressed some of the most famous bodies of the 20th century and put her inimitable stamp on the international world of fashion. Ong Chin Huat has tea with the iconic Princess of Punk and finds out what she thinks of today's fashion and why she has pink hair.

Facing page: Zandra Rhodes at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, where she stayed during her stay in Malaysia. This page: Rhodes' designs reflect her flair for the dramatic.



“Rhodes’ clothes are for no shrinking violet. Bold, colourful and statement-making, her clothes make no apologies for their eye-catching qualities and have a “take me as I am” attitude.”

When Zandra Rhodes walks into a room, she lights it up with a kaleidoscope of vibrant colours and hues, brightening up her surroundings and the people within her orbit. Her effervescent personality adds to this effect, making her a joy to meet. “I just love designing for opera,” says Rhodes, on her first trip to Malaysia recently. “I recently designed the set and costumes for *Aida*. I love dressing those size 18 divas and making them feel like fairy princesses. I think it’s just fabulous. I try to translate what they are singing with my fashion,” she explains. (Rhodes was in Kuala Lumpur recently as an ambassador of the GREAT Retail Fashion Campaign, where she held a fashion show as well.)

Rhodes talks fondly of opera as a new-found passion, but it seems befitting that someone with a sense of the dramatic, combined with a glamorous and whimsical aesthetic, would find designing for opera such a pleasure. One of her current projects has been putting together ideas for the Richard Strauss opera, *Salome*, based on a femme fatale whose ‘Dance of the Seven Veils’ was possibly the forerunner of the modern-day strip tease. It’s little wonder that both *Aida* and *Salome* are based on two very strong women, not very different from some of those that Rhodes has designed for – from Diana, Princess of Wales, Jackie Onassis and Elizabeth Taylor to Paris Hilton, Kylie Minogue and Isabella Blow – all icons of style and beauty that all share a tensile strength in character that somehow complements the designer’s work.

Which are not for the shrinking violet – bold, colourful and statement-making, Rhodes’ designs make no apologies for their





eye-catching qualities and have a "take me as I am" attitude, not unlike the designer herself. Asked about her pink hair, she laughs: "Pink is a useful colour. It hasn't always been pink; it was green when I started in the 1970s, but pink is very easy to use, so it stayed." Obviously one who believes in colour therapy, she explains that colours feature so much in her work simply because they makes her happy.

Born in Chatham, Kent in England, it was Rhodes' mother who sparked her interest in fashion. Her mother was a fitter in the House of Worth in Paris and, later, a lecturer at the Medway College of Art. Rhodes herself studied at Medway before going on to the Royal College of Art in London, where she majored in printed textile design. In the early days, her designs were considered too *outré* by traditional British manufacturers, so, with her trademark *chutzpah*, she decided to make dresses with her own fabrics and, as a result, pioneered the unique way of using textiles designs to influence the shapes and silhouettes of the outfits she made.

As one of the new wave of British designers who put London on the international fashion map in the 1970s, earning herself the moniker "Princess of Punk", Rhodes designed clothes for Marc Bolan, frontman of glam rock group T Rex, as well as

Freddie Mercury and Brian May of Queen. Indeed, her tales of Freddie Mercury coming into her studio and trying on the clothes she was designing and prancing around to see how he felt in them, transports her back on a nostalgic trip, if only in memory. But, reminiscing about the past is not something Rhodes does often. Her current and future projects occupy most of her waking hours. "My life is so busy at the moment," she says over tea in the serene Reading Room of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, which hosted her stay as one of the sponsors of GREAT Retail Fashion Campaign. "I should write a new book on my work but I need to find the time for that." She says she still has to come up with new collections for two huge charity fashion shows this year – "I represent Breast Cancer awareness in the UK because of my pink hair!"

Rhodes has won a slew of awards and accolades from the fashion industry, most notably the 1972 Designer of the Year. She was elected Royal Designer for Industry by the British Royal Society of Art in 1974 and appointed a Commander of the British Empire by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1997 in recognition of her contribution to fashion and textiles, and has nine honorary doctorates from universities in both the UK and the United States. And, like a true designer, when she talks about her current collection, her eyes light up beneath their kohl rims. "It was a total surprise to



*Diana, Princess of Wales, wearing a Zandra Rhodes cocktail dress, at a reception held at the British Consulate in Dubai in 1989.*

everyone," she says. "We had white wigs and everything was in black and white instead of colour." The collection, which had a sharp silhouette, "was very belted, had lots of footless tights, floating jackets and transparent net skirts". She finds doing one-off "couture" pieces very inspirational because "you get to know how someone feels in your designs."

As for designers she admires, Rhodes, after a long pause, mentions Jean-Paul Gaultier, whom she says is always interesting, followed by Giorgio Armani, who makes gorgeous classics and is a master of what he does, even though, she hastens to add, "I wouldn't wear his clothes." Up-and-coming Mary Katrantzou, with her signature computer prints on fabrics, is also on her list. "Fashion today has so many facets – there is dressed up, casual and so many other looks in between with all these new kids. It's got to be different with new blood but I hope they will still like my old blood in it."

Despite her modern outlook, Rhodes feels that fashion should not be throwaways. "The world is not big enough to keep making rubbish dumps." As for her old clothes, she is lucky enough to have her own museum in London. "I have to be so careful that I don't stain my clothes as I save them for my museum," she chuckles. The Fashion and Textile Museum is located in



a building near London Bridge, which also houses her studio, factory and her apartment at the top. The museum is dedicated to showing the work of fashion and textile designers from the 1950s onwards, and has curated several notable exhibitions including *My Favourite Dress*, *The Little Black Dress*, and her very own *Zandra Rhodes: A Lifelong Love Affair with Textiles*, which has since travelled to several countries including, most recently, at the National Textile Museum in Kuala Lumpur.

Conventionally, Rhodes thinks that a well-dressed person is someone who dresses appropriately for the occasion and what they have to do. "This applies equally when you are casual. When you meet your bank manager, you don't need to be totally uptight. You just need to be dressed suitably – but that doesn't mean you can't make an outrageous statement. You can, with clever taste." And, as for the way people are dressed today? "Oh dear!" she breaks out into a hearty laugh. "Well, today there is a fabulous normal casual look... but, as you can see, I didn't pass my normal casual exam!" ■



# Role Models

As far as reality TV goes, the *Top Model* franchise can't be beat for glamour and drama. The second season of *Asia's Next Top Model* promises more adventure, laughs, tears and the odd catfight or two. **Ong Chin Huat** spends a day on set with the judges and contestants and discovers what it takes to get on top and how ducklings are transformed into swans.

It was the last interview of the day but, after a gruelling four-hour press conference and numerous media sessions, the three judges of *Asia's Next Top Model Season 2* looked slightly drained. Perched on a plush sofa in the luxurious surrounds of the Presidential Suite of The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, which also served as base camp for the 16 contestants while filming in Kuala Lumpur, the judges were in glamour mode and looked like a million bucks, or maybe three million. Tired as they were, when the time came for the photo shoot, all three sprang to life, like the true professionals they are in their respective fields, the minute the lights came on and the photographer was ready, striking poses and changing expressions with each click of the camera.

There was Adam Williams, the larger-than-life movement coach. Animated, lively and born with a permanent funny bone, he had the models in stitches throughout the entire two months of filming. Snazzy in a denim shirt topped with a pristine white wing collar and a midnight blue velvet dinner jacket complete with white high-tops, somehow you get the feeling Williams doesn't tolerate any shrinking violets in his wardrobe. With a background in theatre, where he's played the lead roles in musicals such as *Chicago*, *Saturday Night Fever* and *The Full Monty*, Williams is a natural on stage and in front of any camera.

Next is Joey Mead King. Oozing glamour from every pore, she's the mentor to all 16 contestants and lends them a shoulder to cry on. Today, however, that shoulder is seeing happier times. Draped in a striking orange one-shouldered sheath dress cut on the bias, which provides volume on her lean and lanky frame, and beaded white Jimmy Choo heels, this Ford Models alumna is no stranger to the TV either as she was the first Filipina VJ for Channel [V].

And, finally, there's Mike Rosenthal, resident photographer and the more stoic and contemplative of the trio. An

"internationally celebrated pixman and movie director, Los Angeles-based Rosenthal has photographed Hollywood stars like Halle Berry, Charlize Theron, John Travolta and Robert De Niro. Looking dapper in a blue brocade jacket and silk pocket square topped on a white V-neck T, his ensemble exuded a cool nonchalance only the very hip can carry off.

For this 13-episode season, everything was bigger and bolder. "On the second season, even I as a judge have been challenged," says Mead King. "I tried out some of the activities the girls did and I asked myself, 'Wow, how did it feel like for them?'" The stunt she was referring to was the first-ever photo shoot atop the KL Tower, where at 421m high, anybody would be frightened, let alone an acrophobic model. "With a helicopter whizzing around their head and the girls wearing stilettos, it was nerve-wrecking. I was definitely very nervous. The girls were very brave." Apart from these death-defying sessions, Mead King says it was challenging as a judge also because she was more involved and connected with the contestants. "I had a vested interest in them as a mentor and judge, as I wanted them to excel and, when some didn't perform, I got frustrated." Mead King questioned herself many times and asked how far she wanted to go to help the slackers.

Williams concurs: "It was a very interesting position to be in because we were nurturing and encouraging them during their assignments and, then, we had to critique them when it came to judging time." Rosenthal interjects: "You get emotionally invested in the girls and the work itself, and it's very difficult to remove yourself from either."

He adds that judging wasn't as easy as some people thought. "It's hard because, on the one hand, you want the other judges to know what the girls went through, but on the other, it's also nice to have some people objectively looking at the work and just



Photography: Law Soo Phye



## Not All Fun And Games

*With three decades as a highly successful model behind her, Nadya Hutagalung seems to be the perfect host and head judge for Asia's Next Top Model.*

As far as longevity is concerned, Nadya Hutagalung has defied the odds. Having started modelling at 12, she's grateful she still has what it takes to be standing in front of the camera for the last 28 years. "I started modelling because I wanted to earn some extra pocket money," says the Australian-Indonesian beauty. "My godfather was a top fashion photographer and his wife was an editor at *Elle* and I had their support from the start." Lucky her. She began her career in Japan and, at that time, the business was dominated by blonde-haired, blue-eyes girls. She stood out and didn't quite fit in. But she persevered and parlayed the exposure modelling gave her to get into television. She then became one of the first VJs on MTV Asia back in 1995.

Today, her goals in life are loftier. The mother of three is an eco-warrior who champions environmental conservation and sustainable living. Being Singapore's Ambassador for the World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour as well as being the Earth Hour Global ambassador, Hutagalung and her husband, Singaporean champion swimmer Desmond Koh, made headlines by building one of the republic's first eco-homes from scratch. She's also on the board of The Green School in Bali and, now that filming is over for *Asia's Next Top Model*, she's focussing her energy on an ivory reduction campaign.

"I saw the way the world was changing 21 years ago when I went diving in Thailand," says Hutagalung, explaining how she got involved in environmental advocacy. "I saw how pollution ruined some of the most beautiful diving spots there. Marine life was all gone and the corals were bombed. There was so much damage, I thought I had to do something about it if only for my kids. I felt it was my responsibility as a parent."

Tying in with her concerns about the environment is her health and beauty regime. "I am very healthy in what I consume," she says. "I'm 80 per cent vegetarian and I don't drink – well, maybe I have one drink a year. I do Pilates and I sleep without the air-conditioning on."

Having been the host and head judge of the first and second seasons, how different were the two? "There's more drama in the new season. It's more glam and has more fashion. The challenges were wilder. Some stunts the girls did were more like what one would expect to see in *The Amazing Race*." She says the producers learnt from the first season and made improvements to the second. "The styling is slicker and it's more scenic. It's a better show overall."

"We also had a strong panel of judges and everyone brought their own strengths and qualities from their respective backgrounds." As for the contestants, she says she loved them all. "Each one worked hard and it was difficult to send someone home at the end of each episode," she says. "I think fashion and beauty is not something easily defined as it changes constantly and the models have to represent that." Hutagalung says that the traditional idea of beauty might not always be applicable in the modelling industry today and stresses that it wasn't a pageant beauty queen the show's producers were after. She also looked out for specific criteria when judging the contestants. "I looked for girls who were evolving from episode to episode," she reflects. "I wanted to see which girl took lessons they learnt and used them

in the next challenge. I wanted to see them progressing – girls that gave us more than one look; those who could be transformed and were versatile, and pushed the boundaries got my vote. If they stepped up to the plate and worked hard, they passed my test."

And which hotel passed her test during the two-month shoot? "My favourite has to be The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur. It was where I set up camp and was my home away from home. The service was great!"

She dismisses critics who think modelling isn't a serious profession: "Any profession is serious if those working in it take it seriously. One thing I tell the girls is that I am very blessed that still be working, doing endorsements and covers of magazines. The key is to be professional – look after yourself, have a healthy outlook, work hard and be on time if you want a long career. Modelling is not all fun and games and parties."



*Nadya Hutagalung is Asia's Next Top Model's host and head judge.*

"You get emotionally invested in the girls and the work itself, and it's very difficult to remove yourself from either."



*The second season of Asia's Next Top Model premières on Star World in Asia in January 2014.*

judging it on the merits." Rosenthal acknowledges that being in confined spaces and made to work together every day, as the 16 contestants were, was a recipe for friction. He admits it was realistic to fall into disagreements under those circumstances. "We are all hired for our different personalities and we get elevated in different situations."

That aside, Mead King concedes this element was key because all the judges stayed true to themselves. "When you have such diverse characters defending what they believe in, you get camaraderie and you get clashes. I think you get this in any show which is a competition and when it involves the beauty industry, because it also represents different aspects of the viewers." As a former model, Mead King should know. "I saw myself in those girls, which is why I got so emotional," she says. "I learnt the trade from my bad experiences. But that was over many years. These girls are having it in one shebang."

And what a shebang this production was. With a multi-million dollar budget, filming took place in locations all over Malaysia and Hong Kong. Recalling some of the places they visited, Williams was blown away by Pangkor Laut Resort during their stint filming there. "Arriving by boat, I was unaware of the grandeur of the

place. It was breathtaking and a 'wow' moment for me," he says. Feeling like a pampered prince, Williams waxes lyrical about MUSE Pangkor Laut Estates, where he was assigned his personal chef, butler and staff whom, he says, gave him 200 per cent attention round-the-clock. Rosenthal concurs: "Pangkor Laut Resort is such a magical place. It was a multi-sensory experience for me. The sounds of the cicadas and jungle, the smell of the greenery and rain, and the fact it was so secluded, plus the light was so special."

Being the cultural and history buff that she is, Mead King was impressed with the old-world charm of The Majestic Malacca. "I loved the detail and history of the hotel," she says. "I would go back there with my husband."

So, what makes a top model? Rosenthal, a veteran of 14 seasons of *America's Next Top Model* surmises: "It's not necessarily the best-looking girl or the one with the best body. A girl who is beautiful but difficult still wouldn't give you what you need. Aside from having the height and look, it's about being easy to work with, being inspired and bringing something surprising to the shoot. Someone who is flexible even though it's freezing cold or scorching hot. You want a model who will deliver her best for the project on hand." ■



# Times Change, So Do We

The new look Vistana Hotels, located in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Kuantan, promise new verve, vibrancy and value for guests and business travellers alike.

The Vistana group of hotels will soon unveil a fresh new look after an extensive refurbishment and rebranding exercise. Designed with the business traveller and the on-the-go guest in mind, Vistana Hotels will serve up its new approach to delivering guest experiences via its three V's of Vibrance, Verve and Value. This philosophy is all about creating the right vibes and experiences for guests that move with the times; while delivering value and ensuring every business and travel need is met in a practical and efficient manner. Whether you're checking in to the Vistana Kuala Lumpur for a few days of important meetings or perhaps visiting the properties in Penang or Kuantan for a bit of business mixed with pleasure, you'll find the all-new Vistana experience to be enjoyable, more than comfortable and positively seamless from check-in right through to check-out.

The rooms will be refreshed with a comfortable spaciousness. Amenities will be by the Mangosteen Collection, created exclusively for Vistana, while the warm hues and inviting furniture will also prove welcoming after a busy day. Business travellers will also appreciate complimentary Wi-Fi connectivity throughout the property, from public spaces to in-room, while every attention to detail has been paid to optimise productivity and accessibility. This includes functional, roomy workspaces in



Vistana is all about creating the right vibes and experiences for guests that move with the times while delivering value and ensuring every business and travel need is met in a practical and efficient manner.

the guestrooms to efficient and engaging service as well as Vistana's own Hub247 – an all-day business solutions centre that's perfect for casual networking and business support services. For more serious items on the agenda, well-designed and spacious meeting rooms will be focal points of every Vistana Hotel, ideal for corporate presentations and seminars, while larger-scale events may be held at the ballroom, the perfect space in which to hold conferences, banquets or even social celebrations.

Naturally, every guest needs to refuel and recharge and the Vistana has thoughtfully created the Cafe, which will offer breakfast, lunch and dinner, featuring both Asian and Western cuisine. For those with tight schedules, the new Barista concept – a grab 'n' go corner and the perfect spot for a fresh-brewed caffeine jolt – ups the convenience and time-saving ante a couple of notches higher. And for the on-the-road corporate warrior, there's no better way to start (and end) the day than on a high-energy note. With that in mind, Vistana's new 24/7 gyms will make working out a breeze, with top-notch FreeMotion fitness equipment as well as personal workout options. Checking out will also be made all the more easy at the reception, with its lively, engaging staff. Who knows? You might just find yourself tempted to check right back in again. ■

*The refurbished Vistana Hotels promise pleasurable experiences for both business travellers and on-the-go guests.*

*To make a booking, visit [vistanahotels.com](http://vistanahotels.com)*



# To Have and to Hold

A new year means...new bags to blag! Now that you have a new annual quota of carry-alls to fill, here are some of the most covetable handbags this season.



## Shiatzy Chen

Famed for her designs which marry Oriental chic and Parisian-inspired elegance, it's no wonder **Shiatzy Chen** is often referred to as the 'Chanel of the East'. Following on the great success of her women's and menswear collections, add an exotic touch to your ensemble daily with one of her beautiful accessories. We particularly love her handbags which are always delicately-designed, accentuated with ornaments in silver, jade, embroidery and other unique elements.



## W = Wow!

Always desirable, always innovative, the house of **Louis Vuitton's** *Whit* bag is ideal for the modern, on-the-go woman who wants all the elements of classicism, sophistication and style without sacrificing comfort and quality. The bag's tight lines suggest the penmanship of a 'W' while generous, geometric lines keep it supple yet not limp. Artistically-crafted, it comes in several variations, including rare leathers with the emblematic Monogram canvas, a velvety tufted effect or tapestry-inspired leather.



## It's All About Colour

Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli at the house of **Valentino** have also given their accessories collection an injection of colour. Electrifying hues of blue and pink are paired with touches of prints and rock chick studs for a look the modern yet stylish woman will definitely appreciate.



## Anya Hindmarch

If you're planning your trip to visit YTL Hotels' charming Bray House in Berkshire this season or perhaps preparing your wardrobe for when The Gainsborough Bath Spa opens in summer, work the look of a Sloane Ranger with **Anya Hindmarch's** delightful *Ebury* featherweight handbag in natural python. Brit chic, indeed!



## So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades

Make a statement this season with **Sergio Rossi's** eye-poppingly bright new bag in all the hottest (literally) colours and a zany geometric design. Imagine it adding punch to an all-black outfit or simply brightening up your look and mood? Dressing up has never been more fun!



beautiful life //

# Island amour

*Leave the hippie chic to Ibiza. When one stays at the Villa Tassana in Phuket, it's all about sophistication, elegance and megawatt glam. Here, some of Malaysia's top designers show how to work the villa look.*

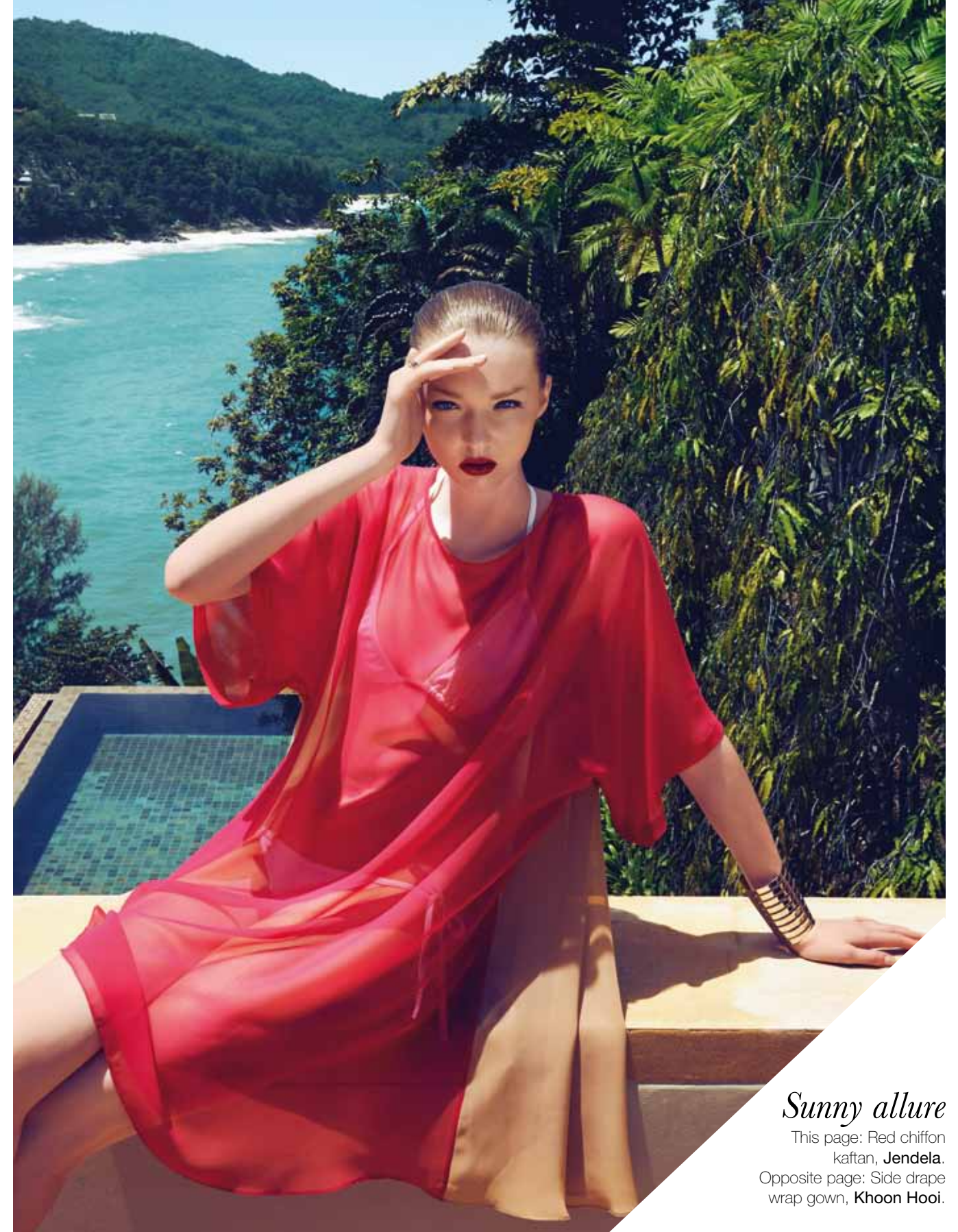
Photography ChinToo Styling Calvin Cheong Hair & Makeup Shawn Goh  
Model Diana Domanicova/Icon Models Location Villa Tassana, Phuket



*Plumed  
charm*

Ostrich feathered lace  
bolero, **Albert King**.  
Embroidered mesh  
mermaid gown, **PU3**.





*Sunny allure*

This page: Red chiffon  
kaftan, **Jendela**.  
Opposite page: Side drape  
wrap gown, **Khoo Hooi**.



*Grace in  
repose*

Sequined long dress,  
Bernard Chandran.



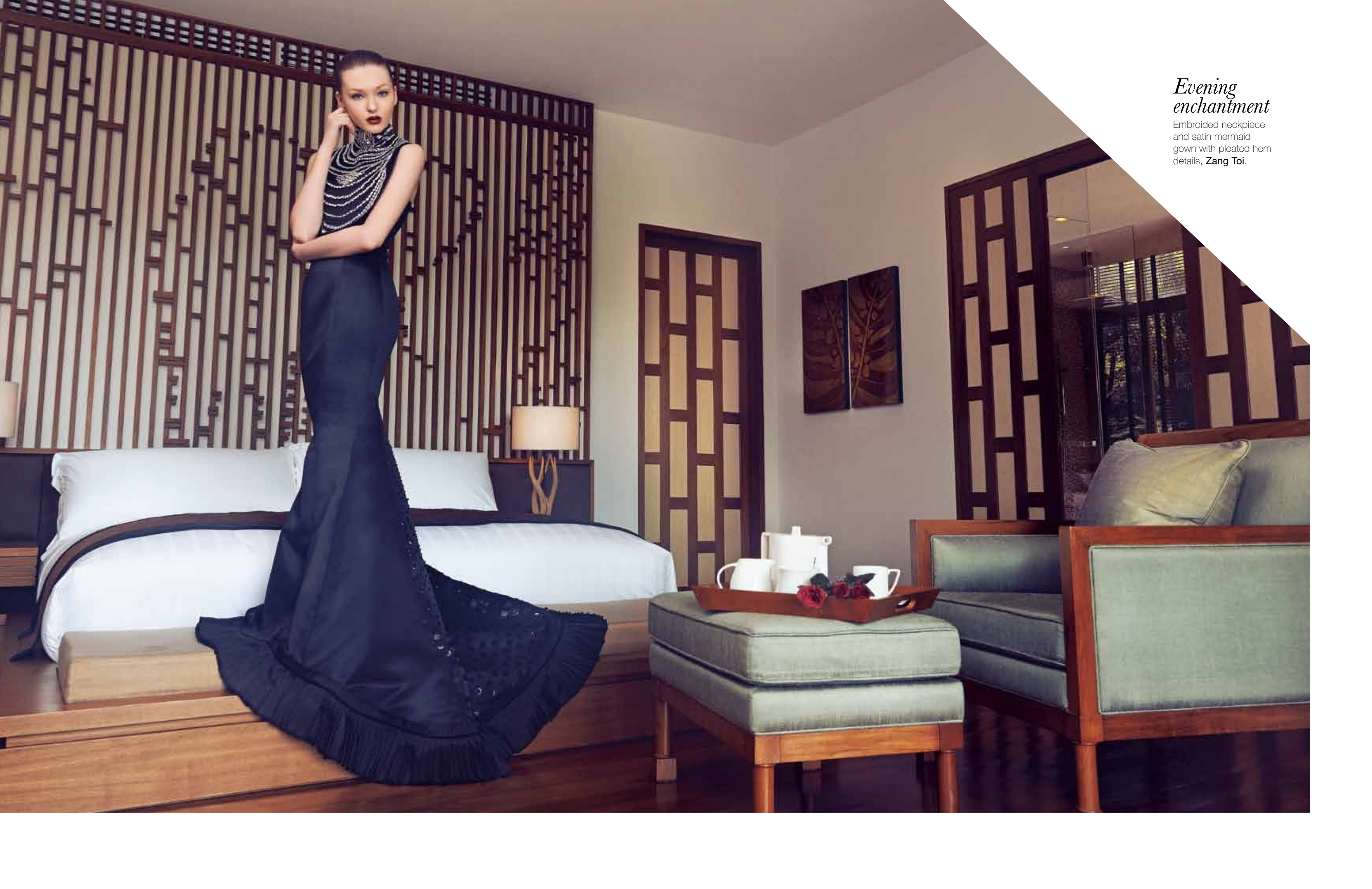




*Vision in lace*

This page: Red lace on silk layered gown, **Albert King**.  
Chiffon batik kimono kaftan, **Pink Jambu**.





*Evening  
enchantment*

Embroidered neckpiece  
and satin mermaid  
gown with pleated hem  
details, **Zang Toi**.



beautiful life

# You Gotta Glow With It

It's a New Year. Celebrate your unique beauty with brands that are all about looking great, inside and out.



## Natural Radiance

The name 'Amala' might offer many different meanings, ranging from 'most pure' in Sanskrit to 'revered mother' in Tibetan, but few can dispute its holistic skincare and wellness range. Star products include the *Blue Lotus Purifying Face Polish*, the *Desert Fig Soothing Lip Salve* and the *Jasmine Hydrating Yogurt Mask*. It is also heartening to note that **Amala** reinvests five per cent of its profits back into its fair trade farm network while collaborating with expert growers to help preserve traditional, organic farms and their way of life. Now, that's what we call beautiful!



## Balanced Beauty

Its name is derived from the Sanskrit word for 'beautiful woman', so go ahead and feel thoroughly gorgeous with **Sundāri's** distinctive anti-aging skincare products, all made from nature's purest ingredients and rarest essences, and blended through a mix of modern science and the ancient life-science of Ayurveda, resulting in a holistic approach to wellness and beauty. What we can't get enough of? The *Neem Eye Cream*, the *Chamomile Eye Oil* and the *Gotu Kola* and *Indian Asparagus Mask*.



## The Good Earth

One of the most exciting organic wellness brands on the market right now, **ilā** goes beyond organic, harnessing the earth's natural vibrations to deliver products that touch the physical as well as the mental and emotional. Founded by qualified nurse, aromatherapist, yoga teacher and healer Denise Leicester, ilā offers luxurious skincare crafted only from the finest natural plant and mineral ingredients, wild-harvested in remote, untainted regions by artisan producers who value traditional, sustainable practices. Hollywood star Gwyneth Paltrow is a big fan and beauty editors all over the world have lavished tonnes of praise on its myriad products, which include its *Face Oil for Glowing Radiance* and the *Bath Salts for Inner Peace*. All ilā's formulae are also blended using traditional techniques on a farm in England's Cotswolds. It is truly fitting, then, that its name means 'earth' in Sanskrit.



## Outer Beauty, Inner Health

With a company philosophy based on the very sound principles of 'outer beauty, inner health', **Kerstin Florian** shines for its efficacious range of skincare products. "We see well-being comprised of four core lifestyle practices," says Charlene Florian, the brand's Vice President of Corporate and Creative Development. "These include proper nutrition, exercise, peace of mind and care of the face and body." From its nourishing *Multi-Vitamin Day Crème* moisturiser to its cooling aloe gel, know also that all Kerstin Florian products are based on natural resources like thermal mineral water, herbal extracts and essential oils.





*Spa Village Cameron Highlands' Semai rituals for him and her recreate authentic therapies using indigenous ingredients inspired by the local Semai tribe.*



# Highland Fling

Ensnounce yourself and your loved one this Valentine's Day at the dreamy Cameron Highlands Resort for a weekend of rest, romance and rejuvenation.

Text Diana Khoo Photography Yong Keen Keong & YTL Hotels

Located along the spine of the Titiwangsa mountain range, Cameron Highlands, one of Malaysia's best-known holiday destinations and the preferred hill station of the elite during the colonial era, remains a verdant, mist-covered haven for those seeking respite from the heat and humidity of the lowlands. Surrounded by mossy forests, dense jungle and exotic flora, the highlands is an outstanding example of a tropical mountain ecosystem. Rambling jungle trails reward the adventurous and the intrepid with sightings of wild miniature orchids, pitcher plants and vibrant rhododendrons or, perhaps, a sight of a lush waterfall. There are also several Orang Asli (indigenous people) settlements dotting the area, the most notable of which is Pos Rantau, one of the oldest Semai tribal villages in the highlands. Imbued with a deep knowledge of the healing herbs, plants and flowers of the area, it is from them that the award-winning Spa Village Cameron Highlands draws inspiration for its range of wellness rituals.

Created in the vein of the company's other Spa Villages, with each property uniquely reflecting the destination's individual healing

therapies, Spa Village Cameron Highlands is renowned for its spa menu that features produce from the surrounding jungle, tea from the celebrated tea plantations dotting the landscape, as well as knowledge drawn from the Orang Asli who have long utilised a variety of plants, from roots to leaves and bark, in traditional cures. One of Spa Village Cameron Highlands' signature treatments is, without doubt, the Semai – a special couple's treatment that combines traditional medicinal ingredients of the Semai people with healing therapies like steam and herbal baths, massage and scrubs.

Begin your Semai experience with a traditional welcome of purifying hot towels, scented with lavender and rosemary, and cups of hot chamomile in the spa's airy, light-filled reception. Once ready, your therapists will lead the both of you past relaxation pavilions and gurgling fountains to a private treatment area where, once changed, you may soak for about 15 minutes in specially drawn baths infused with shredded pandanus leaves, *kemangi*, green tea, ginger and kaffir lime slices. As you luxuriate, scrub your knees and elbows with a prepared mixture of crushed sugar before lightly



**OTHER TREATMENTS TO TRY WHILE IN THE HIGHLANDS**

**ROSE GARDEN**

Roses are a common sight in the cool highlands and the first rose garden here was established by a Scotsman in the 1950s. This two-hour spa journey comprises of a yellow rose tea bath, designed to battle the effects of stress, an aromatic rose petal body scrub and a blissful and nourishing rose aroma massage.

**CAMERON'S MINT**

Renowned for its healing properties, mint is excellent for improving circulation while boosting the immune system. Begin with a mint tea bath (ideal for aching muscles after a hard day's trek or golf game), followed by a mint and thyme body scrub or body wrap before finishing with a mint muscle relief body massage.

**FRESH STRAWBERRY ESCAPEDE**

Cameron Highlands is studded with many strawberry patches, which thrive in the invigorating climate, and it is long known that strawberries relieve depression, infections and fevers as well as ailments of the kidneys, liver and blood. Here, begin with a strawberry tea bath before a full body buff using an aromatic mixture of fresh strawberries, yoghurt and crushed oatmeal. Finally, end with an aromatic strawberry massage. Soothing, sensuous and sublime.

**CHRYSTANTHEMUM AND AVOCADO ESCAPEDE**

Rich in Vitamin E, avocados are nourishing while chrysanthemum has a long history of medicinal use. Ease tensions away in a chrysanthemum flower bath before being massaged all over with avocado oil and wrapped in warm sheets to allow the rich oils to fully penetrate your skin. In the meantime, your therapist will treat you to an avocado scalp massage designed to nourish the hair while stimulating growth.

*All the above two-hour spa treatments may be performed for couples or individuals and are priced at RM700++ and RM400++, respectively. Spa Village Cameron Highlands' treatment hours are from 9am to 9pm, with the last treatment starting at 8pm. You may also choose to combine any of the above treatments with a two-course dinner for two at the resort's The Dining Room for just RM1,150 nett as part of the hotel's Romantic Evening Experience package. Please note it excludes the Colonial Classic Menu and alcoholic drinks and beverages.*



exfoliating your face with crushed tea leaves and honey. Tea bags are also prepared should you wish to relax or simply enjoy the experience while sipping on glasses of cold honey and lemon water. An Urutan Batin massage for him and a Minjau Asli massage for her follows, combining the healing, sweeping strokes and fingerwork of traditional *urut* (massage) with an ointment of coconut oil, tea and black pepper to nourish and soften skin in preparation for the *batin tangas wap* (steam bath) for him and a Muhak herbal sitz bath for her.

Your therapists will then proceed to scrub the both of you down with a creamy mixture of crushed rice, turmeric, galangal, green tea and jasmine; once again, drawing from the abundance of ingredients found in the area, and all of which have the ability to treat, heal and soothe effectively yet naturally. Rinse off under a hot shower and proceed to the nearby relaxation pavilion, where you will be served hot ginger and jasmine tea accompanied by oatmeal biscuits and homemade strawberry jam. Linger a while to enjoy each other's presence amidst the greenery and refreshing highland air, which is often broken by the constant sound of birdsong. It is at this moment I am reminded of the phrase 'to head for the hills'. Luxuriating in post-spa bliss, it now makes more sense than ever. ■

*The Semai experience is priced at RM1,000++ for two and takes approximately three hours.*



*The Semai experience includes a botanical bath, a traditional massage, a steam or sitz bath and a traditional body scrub with locally-sourced ingredients.*



# Making Lemonade out of Lemons

Known as the chef's chef and an ambassador of British Cuisine, the multiple Michelin starred Gary Rhodes was in town recently to display his finely honed skill at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur. **Ong Chin Huat** discovers his most memorable meals and why snake soup will forever be on his mind.

Perhaps what's most telling about Gary Rhodes' style of cooking and which serves as a testimony to how well-tuned he has refined his craft was when someone he met recently at the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur told him about a dish he had in his restaurant a while back. "It was smoked haddock topped with Welsh rarebits that was lightly glazed with a tomato and chive salad on the side. It was very simple," says Rhodes, who has the same profound way of describing food and ingredients as a museum curator would talk about a masterpiece. "He asked me when I was going to put that dish back onto the menu and, in fact, it is one I am re-creating for the opening my new restaurant."

With the passion and zeal only someone who has a genuine interest and love for his profession can elucidate, Rhodes says cooking, for him, goes beyond tantalising his guests' taste buds and filling their tummies. "It's about creating a memory in someone and, even though it may have been a dish he had about 10 years ago, he still talks about it today."

Having been awarded six Michelin stars and a host of other prestigious culinary awards, Rhodes may have already reached the pinnacle of his career, but he isn't content to rest on his laurels and is constantly striving to improve his craft. With humility laced with self-effacing humour, Rhodes, who was in Kuala Lumpur recently as an ambassador of the GREAT Retail Fashion Campaign, says that the beauty of the industry he is in is that he never stops learning. "I spent some time travelling all around China and realised I really didn't know that much about Chinese cuisine. It changes from region

to region and I have set myself a task to learn more about Oriental cuisine." He adds: "Gaining Michelin stars and other achievements is lovely, but cooking, for me, is really about discovering the world."

Which is something at the top of his bucket list: "I've never been to South America; I know nothing about Mexican or Argentinean cuisines, and there's so much to discover. My task is to make sure I can experience all the different foods when I go on holiday." Indeed, he says that when he finishes his work, he plans to go around Kuala Lumpur, trying out all the different street food our city has to offer. A gastronomic adventurer by nature, there is nothing Rhodes wouldn't try. "I've eaten some strange food in my times. Once, in Hong Kong, I went to a snake bar, where they served, among other things, snake soup, which I found quite delicious. A lady came out while I was having my soup and took a live snake and slit its gall bladder with a knife, and squeezed a dark and disgusting liquid into a tumbler and offered it to me. I knocked it back and, although it was bitter, the soup tasted so much better after that."

Snake soup, however, was not featured on the menu he created for The Colonial Café at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur during the GREAT Retail Fashion Campaign. Instead, the delectable fare on offer in the



specialty commissioned Rhodes Menu consisted of smoked salmon terrine served with a unique sweet lemon asparagus salad, followed by a main course of roast duck breast and crisp duck pancake with a side of confit potato with red wine and blueberry sauce. Rhodes' signature iced Lemon Fool completed the three-course meal.

As an ambassador for British cuisine, Rhodes is known for his unique mastery of great British classics – a skill which enables him to re-introduce the British people to its rich gastronomic heritage – something which no other chef has succeeded in doing. “I don't like the term ‘Modern British Cuisine’,” Rhodes says emphatically. “It's a term the media created rather than one which came from a chef. I have a book called *New British Classics*, which is what I prefer calling it. What I've done is to take the great old classic recipes and refine them. I made the sauces less flour-based or overly starchy, and made sure everything had a more natural flavour.” Rhodes emphasises that balance is key and that many who have attempted modernising British cooking lose the dishes' true originality. “Every area of the world has great food – French food is famous, as is Italian, Chinese, Malaysian and Thai. British food has only just been taken notice of. In many parts of the world, it is still not respected. I would like to show people what British food is about and that it can rival any of the major cuisines of the world.”

So, what does the man who is revered by his peers as “the chef's chef” like to cook at home for himself and his family? He ponders for a while before answering. “Hmmm... it really depends on the mood I am in,” he says stoically. “One minute I may want something very simple, like a risotto where I can put anything I like in it, like shellfish or meat, wild mushrooms and parmesan. Or I may fancy just a simple pan-fried fish with a squeeze of lemon, a twist of pepper and a touch of rock salt and a little bit of spinach.” On other occasions, Rhodes professes to crave a roast with all the trimmings.

In hushed tones, he confides: “The truth is, my wife does most of the cooking at home.” But, he adds: “I do the washing up!” With the hours he keeps and the intensity of his

“Instead of taking photos of food as most people tend to do these days, Rhodes rely on his taste buds as reminders of memorable culinary experiences he has had.”



*The specially commissioned Rhodes Menu at The Colonial Café featured a main course of roast duck breast and crisp duck pancake with a side of confit potato with red wine and blueberry sauce.*





workload, Rhodes admits that he is very particular about his food. "If it's something simple like risotto or fish, then I insist on doing the cooking. But, if we are having a roast, I'll leave that to my wife. It's too much work for me." His wife, Jennie, was a former chef, while his two sons, Samuel and George, although not chefs, are also in the food business. "When my sons were young, I taught them about food and cooking. They understand food very well as it is their life. I told them that, apart from needing food to survive, you have to respect it, understand it and enjoy it. Don't eat it out of habit, but treat it with as much respect as the person next to you."

Food aside, respecting his body is also on his agenda. Trim and fit, Rhodes' physique isn't one of a typical chef. He laughs where asked how he keeps lean. "I am on my feet the entire day in the kitchen and it's non-stop running from station to station. I would love to know how many miles I have done!" Having said that, he admits to going to the gym at 6am the morning of this interview and works out with weights about five times a week.

And, instead of taking photos of food as most people tend to do these days, Rhodes relies on his taste buds as reminders of memorable culinary experiences he has had. His eyes light up when he recalls a trip to Naples, the birth place of pizza.



"I am somebody who wants to understand my customers – what are their needs, what do they want to eat and how do you keep them coming back time and time again."

"Never before in my life have I had a pizza which took just two and a half minutes to cook in a stone oven which was 600°C, which was crisp on the outside, slightly burnt on the edges and soft toward the centre. There was an explosion of sweetness from the tomatoes and its richness contrasted against the slight bitterness of the burnt edge of the crust. It was, for me, one of the greatest culinary experiences of my life."

Apart from that pizza in Naples, he considers a breakfast he had at Jean-Georges Vongerichten's restaurant in New York and a three Michelin-starred restaurant in Paris, where he had a rhubarb soup with parmesan and truffles, as undoubtedly some of the best dishes he has ever eaten, meals he would be talking about for the rest of his life, and this is something he hopes to give those who come to his restaurants.

The oft-used expression of a lemon to denote something defective doesn't exist in Rhodes' vocabulary. In his book, it comes out tops instead. "In British cooking, we don't use a lot of spices apart from salt and pepper. Therefore, something I always have in my kitchen is lemons. They are so versatile – you can make a lemon milkshake, an iced drink or dessert. You can use the skin to make a sponge cake or tart. It goes with fish – you can make a lemon butter sauce and hollandaise, as well as a vinaigrette with lemongrass, peppercorns, black pepper, lemon zest and juice. The flavours are sensational and it works with so many things."

Presently based in Dubai, Rhodes says that his one Michelin-star restaurant, Rhodes W1, at the Grosvenor House Hotel is his favourite. "It's close to my heart as it's the first one I opened in Dubai seven years ago. It's now undergoing a refurbishment as it has the seven-year itch!" he jokes. Asked about the secret behind the successful restaurants under his belt, he confides: "Many chefs just cook for themselves

*The Rhodes Menu starts with a smoked salmon terrine served with a unique sweet lemon asparagus salad (left) and ends with the chef's signature iced Lemon Fool (below).*



rather than for people. It's what they feel customers should like, more than understanding what they actually like. They think, 'This is my style and I'm not going to change it. It's my expression, how I put food on a plate and you are just coming to pay for it and enjoy it'." Rhodes pauses before continuing: "I can't work like that. I am somebody who wants to understand my customers – their needs, what they want to eat and how do you keep them coming back time and time again."

And where does he go back time and time again, other than his own restaurants? "My absolute favourite restaurant is in the UK, near our home in Kent. It's a Cantonese restaurant called Xian and run by a wonderful family. We've been going there for the last 20 years. The food there is sensational!" ■





# Lucky Lunar Feasts

The Year of the Horse is upon us! Welcome in the Lunar New Year with a feast fit for an emperor. Let Leung Kuai Hong and Wong Wing Yeuk, the Executive Chefs of Li Yen at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, and Shanghai at the JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur, respectively, show you how.

It is no secret that one of the most food-obsessed people on the planet are the Chinese. Every occasion is an excuse to feast and, unsurprisingly, the biggest event in the Chinese cultural calendar is the Lunar New Year. Celebrated for 15 full days, the Chinese New Year falls this year on 31 January and sees the ushering in of the Year of the Horse. One of the most important feasts for this season of celebration and renewal is the family reunion dinner, held the night before the

first day of the New Year. Family members will come together, from near and far, for this auspicious occasion. In the past, where the preparation of the feast will fall to the matriarch, aided by her daughters-in-law, it is becoming increasingly common to celebrate at a restaurant or hotel. The only things that remain unchanged are the dishes, all of which are served in abundance and carry auspicious meanings and seen as representations of luck, laughter and happiness.

## Of Feasts, Fortune & Family

Here are some essential ingredients needed in every lucky Lunar New Year family feast.

**Dried sweet barbecued pork** – Sweet, chewy and tasty, this is an essential element in every Lunar New Year's 'tray of togetherness' snack platter. Essentially thin sheets of sweet pork, it has a wonderful grilled flavour and is best enjoyed on its own.

**Fatt Choy** – Also referred to as 'sea moss', this is an important ingredient as its name, in Cantonese, literally translates as 'prosperity vegetable'. Wonderful in braised dishes and when paired with shitake mushrooms.

**Ninko** – A sweet, sticky cake made from glutinous rice, thick syrup and sugar, this is a particularly auspicious treat as the word **ko** can also mean 'tall' or 'high', signifying the achievement of greater heights for the coming year. These cakes are an essential offering to the Kitchen God as it is believed the exceedingly sticky-sweet cake will serve to either sweeten the deity's report to the Heavenly Jade Emperor or, as wags will

say, prevent him from speaking too much. This is especially delicious when deep-fried with sweet potato.

**Dried oysters** – A Chinese New Year favourite, it often features in soups, braised dishes and casseroles as its name in Cantonese, *hoe see*, sounds like the words for good fortune and good deeds.

**Mandarin oranges** – A symbol of wealth and luck, this is a must-have: to eat as well as to display. This is due to the fact that the Chinese words for 'gold' and 'orange' sound alike. A caveat – group them any way you like, except in fours, which sound like the word for 'death'.

**Pomelo** – This auspicious fruit is another symbol of prosperity and status, and can be enjoyed raw or in *yee sang* salads.

**Fish** – In Chinese, 'fish' sounds similar to the word for 'abundance' or 'surplus', so it's a must to have a whole fish dish served up (usually steamed, with soy sauce) during every feast, with head and tail intact, symbolising a good start and end to the coming year.

**Prawns** – In Chinese, the word for 'prawn' or **har** sounds like laughter, so it is believed a dish of prawns or shrimps is a must for a year of happiness ahead.

**Noodles** – A symbol of longevity, this is a key dish and normally served at the end of the meal, just before dessert. Another caveat – do not ever use a knife to cut the noodle but, instead, use chopsticks to portion them long and whole when serving or eating, as cutting noodles symbolises the cutting-short of one's life.





Chef Leung Kuai Hong of Li Yen at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's auspicious dishes for the Lunar New Year.

### Pan-Fried Cod Fish With Mustard Sauce

**Ingredients:**

- 4 pieces cod fish
- A pinch of salt & pepper
- 3 tablespoons Thai chili sauce
- 1 tablespoon mustard

**Preparation:**

1. Pan fry the cod fish until flaky.
2. Mix the Thai chili sauce with the mustard and cook until it simmers.
3. Remove the dregs from the sauce before using it to top off the cod.



### Stir-Fried Shrimp With Scallops, Celery And Walnut

**Ingredients:**

- 2 cloves garlic
- 100g celery
- 50g walnut
- 100g shrimp
- 100g scallop

**Preparation:**

1. Deep fry the walnuts.
2. Blanch the shrimps, scallops and celery.
3. Stir fry the scallops, shrimps, walnuts and celery with garlic until fragrant. Serve on a bed of crispy noodles and garnish accordingly.

### New Year's Eve Poon Choy

(Note: served in claypot)

**Ingredients:**

- 6 head of Australian abalone
- 6 Japanese dried scallops
- 6 dried oysters
- 6 sea cucumber
- 6 braised mushrooms with oyster sauce
- 6 boiled prawns with supreme stock
- 6 slices roasted duck
- 6 slices simmered chicken in bouillon
- 6 slices braised pork with Nam Yee sauce
- 6 curry fish balls
- 6 deep-fried cuttlefish ball
- 6 pieces bamboo pith
- 6 pieces sea moss
- 1 head Tian Chen cabbage
- 6 pieces deep-fried bean curd skin

- 6 pieces white carrot
- 6 pieces duck web (deboned duck feet)
- 6 Chinese sausages
- 6 trotter root
- Abalone sauce, to taste

**Preparation:**

1. Arrange the Tian Chen cabbage, deep-fried bean curd skin and white carrot at the base of the dish.
2. The braised pork with Nam Yee sauce go in next, occupying the middle section.
3. Place everything else on top of the existing ingredients.
4. Top it off with abalone sauce and let it cook in the claypot until fragrant.





**Chef Wong Wing Yeuk**  
of Shanghai at the JW Marriott  
Kuala Lumpur's choices for  
the Chinese New Year.

### Lobster Yee Sang

**Ingredients:**

- 1 generous portion of lobster
- 1 head of cabbage
- 1 carrot

**Seasoning:**

- 50g sour plum sauce
- 5g mustard
- 50g peanut sauce
- 30g water
- A few sprigs of coriander
- Corn oil and lemon or lime juice to taste

**Preparation:**

1. Cut the cooked lobster into bite-sized pieces.
2. Julienne the carrot and cabbage.
3. Put all the ingredients onto a plate with the coriander in the middle as garnish. Then mix all of the seasoning into the plate.

### Geoduck Clam Yee Sang

**Ingredients:**

- 1 piece geoduck clam
- 1 head of cabbage
- 1 carrot

**Seasoning:**

- 50g sour plum sauce
- 5g mustard
- 50g peanut sauce
- 30g water
- A few sprigs of coriander
- Corn oil and lemon or lime juice to taste

**Preparation:**

1. Cut the clam into bite-sized pieces.
2. Julienne the carrot and cabbage.
3. Put all the ingredients onto a plate with the coriander in the middle as garnish. Then mix all of the seasoning into the plate.

### Steamed Glutinous Rice with Cubed Abalone and Chinese Waxed Meat Wrapped in Bamboo Leaves

**Ingredients:**

- 2 bamboo leaves
- 15g Chinese waxed meat
- 30g glutinous rice
- 50g pork ribs
- 5g abalone cubes

**Seasoning:**

- ¼ tablespoon dark soy sauce
- ¼ tablespoon light soy sauce
- ¼ tablespoon salt
- ¼ tablespoon oyster sauce
- Sesame oil to taste

**Preparation:**

1. Cook the glutinous rice by stirring it until fragrant.
2. Season the pork ribs with the soy sauces, salt and oyster sauce for 30 minutes.
3. Wrap the glutinous rice with the meats, abalone and pork ribs inside the bamboo leave. Steam it for 30 minutes.



### Deep-Fried Water Shrimps With Tomato Sauce

**Ingredients:**

- 300g shrimps
- Finely chopped garlic

**Seasoning:**

- 10g ginger
- 10g green onion
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons tomato sauce
- 5 tablespoon water

**Preparation:**

1. Stir fry the shrimps lightly and set it aside.
2. Stir fry the garlic until light browned and fragrant, add all the seasoning, followed quickly by the shrimp.
3. Serve immediately.

### Braised Pork Trotter With Sea Moss

**Ingredients:**

- 1 regular-sized pork trotter
- 1 packet of sea moss
- 1 full head of Chinese cabbage (siu pak choy)

**Seasoning:**

- 3g star anise
- 3g cinnamon
- 5g green onion
- 10g salt
- 50g crystal sugar
- 100g red rice
- 2 litres water

**Preparation:**

1. Blanch the pork trotter and then put all the ingredients, including the trotter, into a pot with the water and cook for two hours or until the meat is tender enough to fall away from the bone. ■





# From Starhill to Shanghai

Shook! Shanghai dishes up classic Western cuisine with strong Asian accents, while affording spectacular views of the city skyline from its swanky address at the Swatch Art Peace Hotel.

Text **Vivian Chong**

When you have a coveted location overlooking the much-photographed Bund, the cosmopolitan Shanghai's waterfront views are an integral part of the attraction and enjoyment of your guests. Shook! Shanghai, the first and only overseas branch of Starhill Gallery Kuala Lumpur's stalwart fine dining establishment that opened in 2010, certainly knows how to make the most of it. The main dining area looks right out to the popular promenade, while a rooftop bar affords uninterrupted views of the stretch along East Nanjing Road,

*Sup in style at the elegant Shook! Shanghai.*



where majestic Art Deco buildings once housed the banks and finance centres that made up what was known as the Oriental Wall Street. And, if that wasn't enough, the restaurant has also cleverly installed mirrors on the window panels along the left periphery, so that more guests can savour the sought-after vista, or at least its reflection.

Shook! Shanghai's decor is a showcase of **chinoiserie** fineries, highlighted by red wooden panels that support traditional Chinese geometric patterns and columns embellished with dragon motifs, while thick velvet furnishings dress various details. At the entrance, a large number '5' indicates the level where the restaurant is located and

“Shook!’s cuisine is not only diversified in its flavours, but is also flexible and can be adapted to accommodate guests’ requests and suit individual palates.”







“Shook! has always emphasised a laidback and comfortable ambience that’s not unlike dining at someone’s home, and the sharing of food is encouraged.”

*From cool cocktails at the Time Bar to sophisticated, Asian-accented cuisine, don't miss Shook! Shanghai on your next visit to the Paris of the East.*

masterpiece constructed in 1907 to house the southern wing of the landmark Peace Hotel.

While its menu differs from that of its sister restaurant in Kuala Lumpur, Shook! Shanghai keeps to the same signature style of Western classics punctuated with Asian flavours. The influences of Chinese, Japanese, Thai and other South-East Asian cuisines can be tasted across the menu, including dishes that are the favourites of the owners, such as the Yeoh Family Style King Prawn Noodles. The popular Malaysian dish may, at first glance, appear somewhat pedestrian among the more sophisticated offerings but Shook! has always emphasised a laidback and comfortable ambience that’s not unlike dining at someone’s home, and the sharing of food is encouraged. The inclusion of such dishes affirms that sense of homeliness without taking away what is ultimately a chic dining experience.

Food & Beverage Director/Executive Chef Matthew Ona joined Shook! Shanghai in 2012 and leads the culinary team in upholding the fine quality that had been established by his predecessor, Kevin Cape, since the restaurant’s opening. The Minneapolis-



leads to a shiny marble-covered walkway flanked by vertical wine cellars. The dark floors are lit up by candlelight, creating an intimate ambience that hints at the dining experience that lies ahead. Private rooms and a dining area, divided into several cosy sections, sit on the left along with the chicly dressed Time Bar, where you can imbibe pre-dinner cocktails.

Across from the bar is where all the culinary action takes place, in the showy open kitchen that’s been dubbed ‘the Ferrari of show kitchens’. It looks out to the main dining room, where the dark floors are offset by all-white walls. In place of art pieces that usually adorn restaurant interiors, Shook! makes a nod to the hotel it resides in – the world’s only Swatch Art Peace Hotel – by displaying



iconic timepieces designed by the watch brand over the decades. It adds a sense of fun to the elegant setting and serves as a delightful contrast to the storied walls that enclose the building, a stunning Renaissance-style

born, American Culinary Federation-certified Ona has years of culinary expertise tucked behind his apron, having worked in some of the toughest kitchens in the United States, including Thomas Keller’s renowned French Laundry in the Napa Valley. Ona’s approach to a good meal is simple: “Appetisers should be fun and exciting; for mains, keep it safe; desserts should be comforting.”

His ethos translates into starters like the Spicy Lemongrass Broth, a *tom yam*-like **consommé** that is poured tableside into a bowl of succulent

poached shrimps, *enoki* mushrooms, citrus and cilantro. Zesty, with a nice dose of heat, it’s certainly an appetising kick-off. Another popular entree is the Pacific Salmon Tartar, the fresh fish given a lovely lift with crushed cilantro avocados, oven-roasted tomatoes and, for a touch of the Orient, a ginger *miso rosé* sauce.

Shook!’s cuisine is not only diversified in its flavours, but is also flexible and can be adapted to accommodate guests’ requests and suit individual palates. Not that you’d want things any differently if you order the Australian Wagyu Beef

Ribeye Steak, a juicy and generous cut served over a bed of silky potato puree and grilled asparagus, drizzled over with a Cabernet Sauvignon reduction. It’s just the dish to order if you’re craving a hearty, meaty indulgence to complement a good red from the restaurant’s extensive wine list. For white pairings, choose from easy favourites such as Boston Lobster *à la minute*, with its stuffed tail flavoured by fresh herbs and parmesan, and claws that are poached to buttery tenderness. A side of prawn risotto adds to the crustacean count while a light lemon **beurre blanc** gives it a tangy lift.



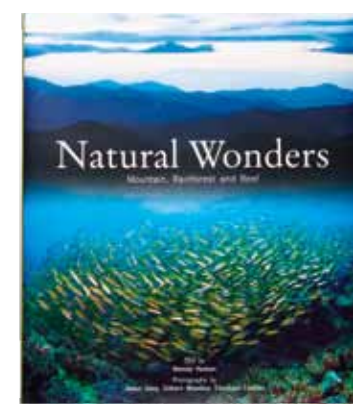


That should leave room for some sinfully gooey desserts, led by the Valrhona Chocolate Fondant, a crowd pleaser that's worth the 15-minute wait. Thick molten chocolate fills the centre of a moist cake, the heat of which is tempered by a creamy vanilla bean ice cream. Have it on its own or as part of the Tasting of Valrhona Chocolate platter, where a *petit* version of the fondant is served with a trio of other bite-sized cocoa delights: Hazelnut Chocolate Truffle, Dark Chocolate Caramel Ganache and a Chocolate Ice Cream Profiterole.

It's a highly satisfying dish for the chocolate lover and lives up to Chef Ona's promise of a comforting meal ender. Combine all that with friendly, attentive service and it's no surprise that, in this hip metropolis where dining out in style is an everyday affair with no shortage of fine international restaurants to pick from, Shook! Shanghai is up there among the city's top meals-with-a-view. ■

# Asian Nuances

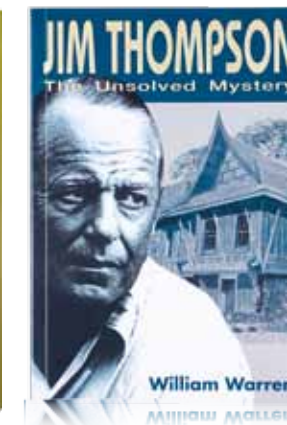
From an insightful look into the family life of a traditional Peranakan upbringing to the mystery of Thai silk king Jim Thompson's disappearance in Cameron Highlands, Malaysia, let Asia open your mind and take you on a literary journey this season.



**What:** Natural Wonders – Mountain, Rainforest and Reef.

**Who:** Wendy Hutton.

**Why:** This book takes you on an extraordinary journey through parts of Asia via YTL Hotels, uncovering the rich flora and fauna that envelop eight luxurious retreats. The amazing images by Jason Isley, Gilbert Woolley and Christian Loader only amplify the experience, making you want to book your next escape post-haste.



**What:** Jim Thompson – The Unsolved Mystery.

**Who:** William Warren.

**Why:** As the 47th anniversary of Jim Thompson's disappearance looms large on Easter Sunday, now might be a good time to digest William Warren's excellent book, which explores the Thai silk king's early days, the start of his exotic business career with the establishment of the Jim Thompson Thai Silk Company and the amassing of a magnificent art collection in Bangkok. Having mysteriously disappeared in 1967 while seemingly on an afternoon stroll in Malaysia's Cameron Highlands, conspiracy theories have long abounded, ranging from Thompson's alleged role as a CIA agent to being led away by jungle spirits.



**What:** Recollections.

**Who:** Tan Tiong Liat.

**Why:** These reminiscences by a son of Penang highlights the Loke family history and its Nyonya matriarch, allowing readers a glimpse into the unique lifestyle and culture of a Sino-Malay people known as the Baba-Nyonyas or Peranakans against the backdrop of historical George Town, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. ■



## AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 VINOS

...and counting. Shook! Shanghai's wine cellar, which takes pride of place near the entrance and greets every guest that steps into the restaurant, boasts an extensive selection of Old and New World wines. The esteemed range includes two highly coveted vertical collections of Bordeaux wines from the estates of Château Cheval Blanc and Château d'Yquem, with vintages that span seven decades, from 1945 to 2008. There are also 19 champagnes in the cellars, of

which nine are vintages, and there are several by Armand de Brignac that are exclusive to the restaurant.

### SHOOK! SHANGHAI

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200002 Shanghai, China  
Tel +86 21 2329 8522  
Opens 11.30am-2.30pm (lunch)  
6pm-10.30pm (dinner) daily;  
Sunday brunch from 11.30am-3pm  
[www.shookrestaurantshanghai.com](http://www.shookrestaurantshanghai.com)



# WINTER IN SNOW!

IT'S NOT KNOWN AS THE SNOWIEST RESORT IN THE WORLD FOR NOTHING. ENJOY ALL THE MAGIC AND WONDER OF THE WINTER WONDERLAND THAT NISEKO, JAPAN, TRANSFORMS INTO THIS TIME OF YEAR. **LUKE HURFORD**, YTL HOTELS' VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING AND A FORMER RESIDENT OF NISEKO, SHARES WITH *YTL LIFE* HIS TOP TIPS ON WHAT TO SEE, DO AND EXPERIENCE WHILE THERE.

## ***SALUTE THE SUN***

It is very much part of Japanese tradition to view the sunrise as a way to welcome the New Year. On this special day, there is a very early gondola at the Hilton Niseko Village to take guests up Mount Annupuri to greet the sun as it rises behind Mount Yotei, often called 'Ezo Fuji' due to its similarity to the famous landmark of Mount Fuji. It's a beautiful way to usher in the year with a view of the sunrise over this spectacular mountain.







### **IN HOT WATER**

Nothing beats relaxing in the natural *onsen* (hot springs) of The Green Leaf and the Hilton Niseko Village after a hard day's skiing on the slopes. Few pleasures can equal soaking away the day in hot, therapeutic waters with snow falling on and all around you. Try The Green Leaf's onsen, which boasts a particularly stunning *rotenburo* (outdoor bath).



### **WHITE DAYS & NIGHTS**

If you don't already know how to, you must absolutely learn to ski and snowboard while in Niseko. Even if you start off as a complete beginner, you'll pick it up in just a couple of days and quickly understand why so many people get hooked. Niseko Village has an incredible ski school with instructors from Japan and all over the world. It also has some of the best local skiers and instructors. I've watched friends who've never skied before start cautiously and, after just a few days of great instruction, throw themselves on the slopes every day and hurtle down the hill. It's a great feeling. And, afterwards, hearing the stories of their exaggerated prowess is also just as fun!





### GONE FISHING

Hokkaido's seafood is world-renowned but there is always a fresher place than the restaurants in town – the ocean! I often get together with friends in winter to go fishing – either *wakasagi* ice fishing over frozen lakes, where you have to drill through the ice, or out on boat, where it can be incredibly cold but the fish are abundant. Once we've caught our haul, we'd head straight to a friend's *izakaya*, where the dinner preparations would begin right away. My best Hokkaido fishing experience, though, was with a *sushi* chef friend. He'd catch a fish and immediately serve it up right there on the rocks, with just a few dashes of soy sauce. You can't possibly get fresher *sashimi* than that!



Treat yourself to world-class *teppanyaki* at the Hilton Niseko Village.



### HOT PLATES

Call me biased but I have to say the *teppanyaki* at the Hilton Niseko Village is one of Japan's best, using only the most amazing local produce and ingredients. Get yourself a seat overlooking the resort's snow-covered golf course while sipping beautiful *saké*. This is one of my ideas of a perfect ending to a day in Niseko.

### BBQ TIME!

No barbecue beats that of Hokkaido's. Here in Niseko, the locals come together and throw the most perfect local foods right over hot charcoal. Gas should never be used as nothing compares to charcoal for bringing out the best flavours!



*Saké is the perfect accompaniment to a teppanyaki meal.*



### VILLAGE LIFE

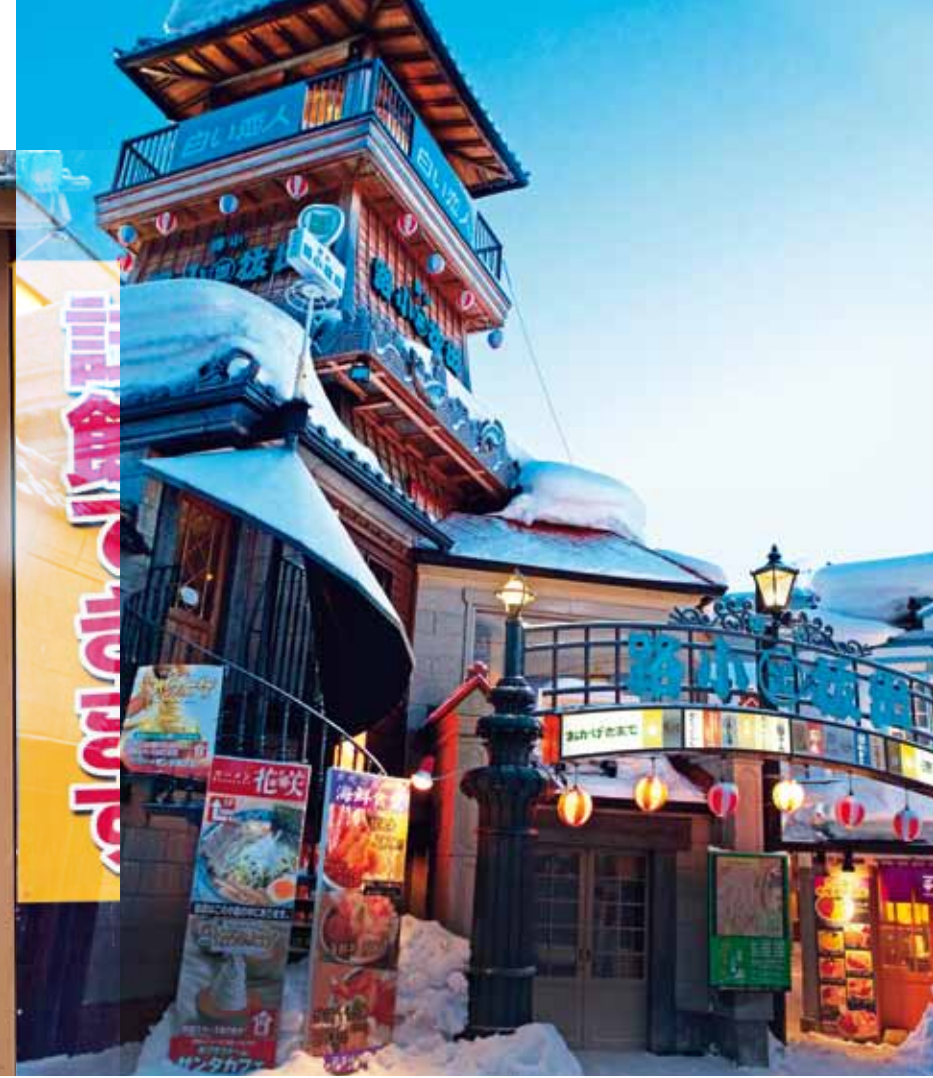
If you can be tempted to venture out of the resort, there is a tiny *izakaya* in the village which I love. It's a purely local hangout and I don't even need to order when I sit down – they just serve whatever fish and seafood is fresh and available. Look for it about 200m past the bridge on the left when driving into Niseko town from the resort – or just ask the concierge for help. It's that perfect little place, run by a husband and wife team, you often read about in dream travel stories and there's one right in Niseko!





## MAGIC MOUNTAIN

One of Niseko's icons, no visit here is quite complete without a climb up or a ski down Mount Yotei. For those planning to climb, it's not an everyday event but I'd certainly recommend it at least once per season. Spring is a particularly good time to plan your summit as you can ski right down into the crater, giving you an extra bit of exercise climbing back out. It should take you four and a half hours up and 10 minutes down. Downhill skiing on Yotei is nothing short of amazing!



## EXPLORE AWAY

There's so much more to Hokkaido than just the ski slopes – it is a complete destination full of remarkable natural wonders and adventures. Go forth and explore!



## SAFETY FIRST

Part of my old job as General Manager of Niseko Village was to work with the local authorities to ensure the ski resort is as safe and enjoyable as possible. Together with resort operations and the Niseko Village Resort ski patrol, we successfully initiated an avalanche programme, where the team clears Mizuno no Sawa, an extreme terrain area under the Niseko Gondola, and then gives skiers a brief lecture on the area and avalanche safety measures before letting them have the ultimate powder run down. It's always a joy bringing friends here and watching them enjoy the world's best snow safely!



Luke Hurford is YTL Hotels' Vice President of Sales and Marketing and a former resident of Niseko Village.





GAYA ISLAND RESORT  
DISTINCTIVELY BORNEO



PANGKOR LAUT RESORT  
ONE ISLAND . ONE RESORT



TANJONG JARA RESORT  
UNMISTAKABLY MALAY



CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT  
TRAILS, TALES AND TRADITIONS



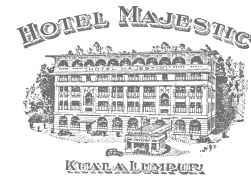
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REGARDED AS THE CRADLE OF MALAYSIAN HISTORY, EXPLORING MALACCA IS LIKE STEPPING BACK IN TIME, WHEN THE PORT-CITY USED TO WELCOME SPICE TRADERS, SULTANS AND WARRIORS FROM BYGONE DAYS. SOAK UP ALL THE MAGIC AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA, ONE OF THE CITY'S FINEST HOTELS WHOSE STRUCTURE DATES BACK TO THE 1920S AND WHOSE INTERIORS ARE A REFLECTION OF THE CITY'S FINE PAST. WWW.MAJESTICMALACCA.COM

ITS NAME ALREADY CONJURES UP IMAGES OF OLD WORLD ELEGANCE AND OPULENCE. LOCATED IN KUALA LUMPUR'S DOWNTOWN GOLDEN TRIANGLE BUSINESS DISTRICT, THIS LUXURY HOTEL IS CONVENIENTLY LOCATED TO UPSCALE SHOPPING, DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT. IT ALSO BOASTS OF ITS OWN AWARD-WINNING SPA WHILE GOURMETS WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND BETTER CANTONESE CUISINE THAN AT LI YEN. ITS FINE DINING CHINESE RESTAURANT.

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THE SURIN  
PHUKET



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WWW.HILTONNISEKOVILLAGE.JP

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WWW.THEGREENLEAFHOTEL.COM

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SET AMIDST A TROPICAL FOREST ON A CRAGGY CLIFF OVERLOOKING THE ANDAMAN SEA, VILLA TASSANA IS A BIJOU GEM. SPREAD OUT OVER 2,800 SQ M AND BOASTING FOUR LARGE BEDROOMS WITH EN SUITE BATH AND DRESSING AREAS, THIS PRIVATE VILLA IS THE PERFECT CHOICE FOR THOSE WHO WANT NOTHING BUT PERFECTION AND PRIVACY IN PHUKET.  
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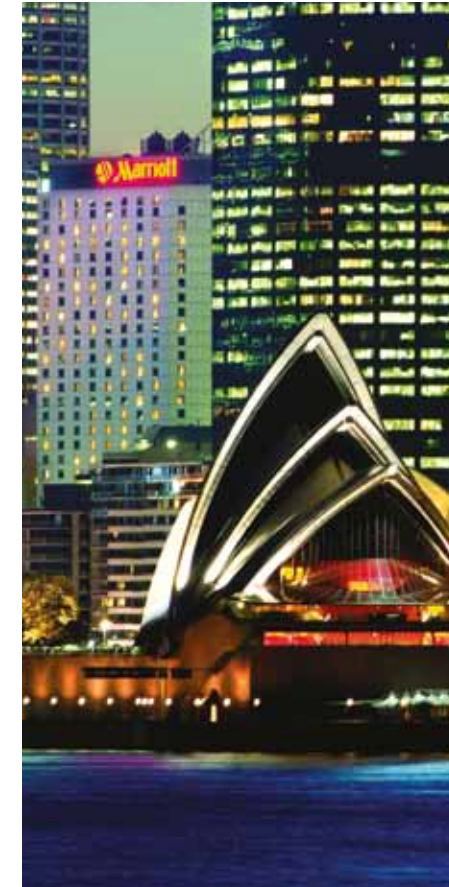
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