

# YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

## Island In The Sun

Sabah's New Gaya Island Resort Beckons

## Snow Fine

Winter Comes to Niseko

## Gourmet County

The Culinary Charms of Bray Village

## Highland Fling

Cool-Climate Style

Straits to Luxury Experience • Secrets of the Moon Princess

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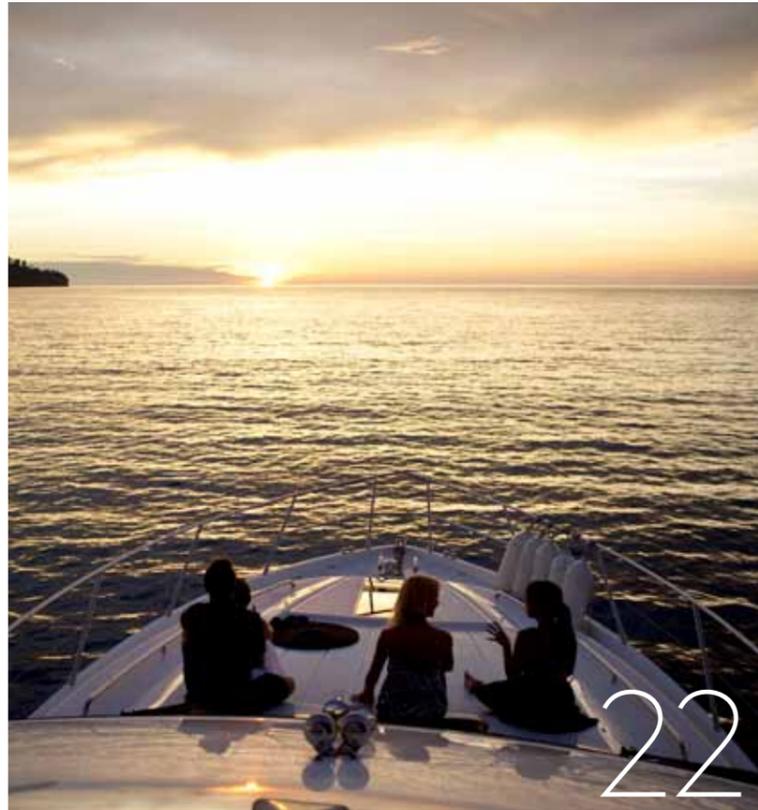
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# Contents



## Life Events

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

## Life Bites

19 Hot happenings at YTL Hotels.

## Life on the Cover

22 The latest addition to YTL Hotels' portfolio of luxury properties is Gaya Island Resort – the Group's first hotel in Borneo and a little bijou gem located on Gaya Island, off Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

## Life Feature

28 The Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta, one of the most exciting fixtures on the international sailing calendar, counts itself among Asia's premier yachting events.

32 YTL Hotels ups the ante with its Straits to Luxury Experience – a journey aboard a Princess yacht that takes guests from the island of Pangkor Laut, all the way north along the Straits of Malacca to Phuket, Thailand.

36 Japan's undisputed winter (and oftentimes summer, as well) playground of Niseko gears up for the 2012/13 winter season.

42 Bali's majestic Gunung Agung looms large over the spiritual and physical lives of the islanders.

48 British personality Imogen Stubbs revels in the delights of Tanjong Jara Resort.

52 Sereni Linggi and Shentel Lee are the colourful founders behind



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62



78

headband label, Sereni & Shentel, a brand that's proudly 'Made in Borneo'.

56 Violinist Dennis Lau's top choices from his bookshelf and playlist.

### Beautiful Life

58 The aviator-chic style of Bell & Ross timepieces.

60 Cinematic-inspired glamour to inspire your *maquillage*.

62 Colours and prints set the dress code for a stylish getaway to the highlands.

76 Gems, bejewelled timepieces and strong silhouettes cut a dash this season.

### Spa Life

72 The beauty rituals of a mystical moon princess are the inspiration behind Spa Village Pangkor Laut's Royal Secrets of Puteri Lindugan Bulan treatment.

### Life Cuisine

78 The small but perfectly-formed village of Bray in England's Berkshire is a magnet for foodies and culinary pilgrims.

84 East meets West as Germany's Johann Lafer teams up with Malaysia's Wai Look Chow for the ultimate fusion of food cultures, styles and tastes.

88 Chef Chia Kuan Pow of The Majestic Malacca certainly knows how to pack a punch in all his Peranakan-inspired dishes.

### Life Guide

92 Stephen Ooi, resident pianist at The Cameron Highlands Resort's Jim Thompson Lounge, shares with us what ranks highly on his highlands list.

### Portfolio of Life

100 Explore the world of YTL Hotels.

### My Life

120 Celebrity chef Ken Hom on the joys of food, travel and life.



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# A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



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

At YTL Hotels, we are entering a most exciting time as we get to welcome, not one, but two new properties to our luxury portfolio of hotels and resorts all around the world. Having soft-opened recently, Gaya Island Resort on Gaya Island, off Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, marks our first resort in Borneo, while Kuala Lumpur will soon roll out the red carpet for the re-emergence of one of its legendary landmarks – the historic Majestic Hotel, whose rooms have once hosted luminaries like David Niven, Graham Greene and other key figures of the era. For now, do enjoy our cover story on Gaya Island Resort, which shares a little of the many interesting things to see, do and enjoy on the island. We hope it will inspire you to make a journey to the Land Below the Wind to experience it for yourself.

Luxury is a key element in every YTL Hotel and I am also pleased to announce our new Straits to Luxury Experience, which ups the ante on a different platform altogether – on the water. Our world-class *YTL Lady II*, a 85ft Princess yacht, is poised to offer top-notch, on-board luxury for parties of eight all the way from Pangkor Laut Island, where our flagship resort is, to the Thai holiday island of Phuket.

It would be remiss of me not to mention upcoming seasonal highlights like the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, which takes place in November at the Cameron Highlands Resort, or the sixth instalment of Starhill Gallery Kuala Lumpur's highly-successful watch and jewellery showcase, *A Journey Through Time*, happening in the same month. We hope the year has been as good to you as it has been for us.

God bless and enjoy the issue.



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5

# Big Bang Bash

The who's who of Kuala Lumpur watch connoisseurs turned up for Hublot's special VIP dinner at **Starhill Gallery** recently, which saw the CEO of Hublot SA, Ricardo Guadalupe, in attendance, together with Dr Kenny Chan, Managing Director of **The Hour Glass**. With many developments happening for the ultra-premium watch company recently, including a new collection paying tribute to the great Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, and the unveiling of its *Antikythera* at this year's BaselWorld watch fair, it's safe to say the brand's on track to make a, for want of a better description, big bang.

- 1. Models posing with Ricardo Guadalupe & Hishamuddin Hassan.
- 2. Dato' & Datin Haaziq Pilly.
- 3. Ricardo Guadalupe, Chan Mo Lin & Dr Kenny Chan.
- 4. Janaki Bhan & Rahul Bhan.
- 5. Bernie Chan.



2



4



3

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# A Maison Of Legend

Legendary Parisian maison **Van Cleef & Arpels** recently hosted a cocktail and gala dinner for a privileged coterie of guests as it celebrated the reopening of its boutique at **Starhill Gallery**, Kuala Lumpur. Hollywood star **Michelle Yeoh** flew in for the occasion and to preside over the ribbon-cutting ceremony, together with Tan Sri Dato' Dr Francis Yeoh of YTL Corporation and the maison's representatives, Brice Baudoin, Asia Pacific President, and Jonathan King, South-East Asian Managing Director. The dress code for the evening was Black Tie & Diamonds which, we are happy to report, many of the evening's guests happily obliged.

1. Tan Sri Dr Francis Yeoh, Jonathan King & Brice Baudoin  
2. Laura Cox & Peter Cox. 3. Brice Baudoin, Datuk Seri Michelle Yeoh, Dato' Sri Dr Ng Yen Yen, Tan Sri Dr Francis Yeoh & Jonathan King. 4. Dr Casey Chow & Ashley Chow. 5. Datuk TC Yap & Datin Barbara Yap. 6. YM Tengku Daud Shaifuddin & Cik Puan Nur Caroline Bintang.



www.m-missoni.com, exclusively at starhill gallery, tel +603 2142 0675





# Midsummer Feasting

Celebrated television chef and personality **Ken Hom** was the undisputed star of **Starhill Gallery's** recent annual gastronomic extravaganza, **Midsummer Nights Feast**. Held at the ever-popular Shook! restaurant, guests sat down to a special menu, including spicy Sichuan orange steamed scallops and crispy crackling *poussin*, paired with New and Old World wines. An exciting fashion show featuring the designs of Jean-Paul Gaultier and P.A.R.O.S.H also livened up the evening, followed by the silky vocals of local chanteuse **Atilia Haron**.

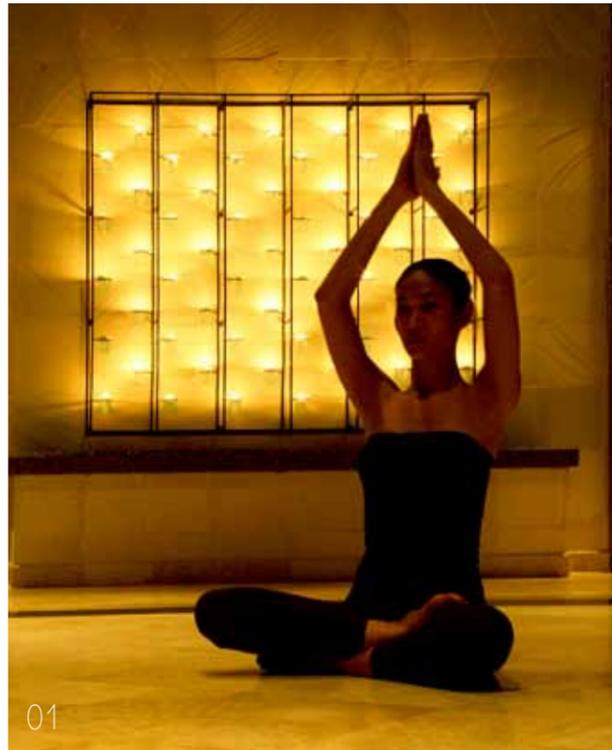
1. Aubrey Mennesson, HRH Tengku Zatashah Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah & Yulia Dolmatova. 2. Aileen Chan & Dato' Richard Curtis. 3. Mehmet Alguel & Loo Kit Choong. 4. Isabelle Liow, Datin Azliza Ahmad Tajuddin, Datuk Danel Abong & Michael Oh. 5. Muhammad Nasaruddin Salim & Wan Fauziana Wan Yaakub. 6. Chef Ken Hom.



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



# 01

## Sun Salutations

Embark on a journey inwards at the **Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali** this quarter as it begins its annual Oracle Retreat. From 27 October to 6 November, a series of workshops on yoga, meditation and holistic aromatherapy will be conducted by renowned facilitators to help guests achieve greater balance in body, mind and soul, as well as a heightened sense of inner peace and awareness. This 10-night retreat is quite possibly one of the best things you could treat your body to this year.

# 02

## Fisherman's catch

Few pleasures beat dining with a view of the sea. And, at **Tanjong Jara Resort**, you can be sure the pleasure will be doubled at its **Nelayan Restaurant**. Named after the Malay word for 'fisherman', it prides itself on its fresh-as-can-be seafood creations, executed to perfection by Chef Florent Passard. Its revamped menu includes many new temptations, including sesame-crusted tuna on *shoyu* jelly and roasted red snapper with carrot sauce. Children aren't left out either, with a special menu that's guaranteed to please even the most finicky eater.

# 03

## Uniquely Borneo

YTL Hotels welcomes its first Borneo property – **Gaya Island Resort**. Located just off the coast of Kota Kinabalu and set within the **Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park**, it is set to be a haven for marine life enthusiasts. For those who prefer to keep their heads above water, the resort is also a great place in which to indulge in fun sessions of stand up paddle surfing, an ancient form of surfing that has recently regained popularity. With safe, shallow waters surrounding the resort, it's an ideal spot to paddle board from dawn till dusk.

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PANGKOR LAUT RESORT  
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04



05



06

# 04

## Watch This Space

Into its sixth consecutive year, Kuala Lumpur's **Starhill Gallery** will host its highly-anticipated luxury watch and jewellery showcase, *A Journey Through Time*, this December. Hailed as Asia's finest luxury watch retail event, last year's edition saw a gathering of the best names in high horology, coupled with exquisite dinners and world-class performances, including a special appearance by legendary crooner Julio Iglesias. For information on this year's event, visit [www.ajourneythroughtime.com.my](http://www.ajourneythroughtime.com.my)

# 05

## Bridal Beauty Rituals

For soon-to-be blushing brides, it's well-worth making a trip to the **Spa Village Malacca** for a pampering ritual worthy of any Peranakan bride. Located within **The Majestic Malacca**, the spa prides itself on its Baba-Nyonya-inspired beauty and healing rituals. For an unforgettable experience, book the *Suam-Suam Panas* or *Shiok-Shiok Sejuk* spa packages, which promise nothing less than a three-hour journey to heaven and back. For reservations, tel: +06 289 8000.

# 06

## China Calling

YTL Hotels' celebrated Spa Village brand ups the pampering ante once more with the recent unveiling of its latest property - a 13,000 sq ft haven in picturesque Hangzhou, right at the heart of the Yangtze River Delta. Bringing its award-winning concept of Asian-inspired treatments and wellbeing offerings to China for the first time, **Spa Village Hangzhou** offers tailor-made programmes and unique spa experiences, including a special Herbal Rolling ritual. For more information, visit [www.spavillage.com](http://www.spavillage.com) 📧



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life on the cover //

I took a small leap of faith, jumping off the jetty into the dark waters of Malohom Bay. I was at the Gaya Island Resort's reception pavilion, in the process of checking out after a short but sweet introduction to YTL Hotel's latest resort, when Scott Mayback, the resort's resident marine biologist, convinced me to try a short snorkelling experience before leaving.

Having never snorkelled properly before (my other pseudo-attempts have been, at best, dipping my snorkel-clad face into the waters while clinging to the side of the boats off the Maldives and the Great Barrier Reef), I was naturally apprehensive but, within minutes, I found myself 'finned up' and in the velvety warm waters. The resort, conveniently located within the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, makes snorkelling possible without having to take a boat out.

"Paddle gently and look out for the sea urchins," Scott said calmly as he shared the underwater world of coral reefs and fish. And so, there, in my first 20-minute snorkelling experience, I saw prickly sea urchins in clusters, small schools of razor and clown fish, corals in all shades of pastel and a large, moody, thick-lipped garoupa settling into the side of a rock.

The coral sea bed was not teeming with colourful fish (as it apparently was some years ago, according to a friend who had been snorkelling around the same marine park during her childhood) but the resident marine biologist was on a mission to "reclaim the bay", as he says, cleaning up and removing the coral eaters (yes, I did also sight the deceptively innocent crown of thorns starfish), with the hope that the area will once again be a happy, conducive habitat for more fish to return.

### Arrival

Barely 38 hours ago, I arrived at the resort with a group of friends by speedboat from the Sutera Harbour Marina. It was the first visit to Sabah for most of us. The clear, bright blue skies smiled at us and added to the exuberance and energy that come from being out on the open seas. The 15-minute ride on the vast expanse of the South China Sea put us all in high spirits as we looked forward to discovering the new Gaya Island Resort.

The resort came to view from a distance, set amidst the lush, dense rainforest. Before long, we were greeted with welcoming smiles from the resort team as we stepped off the speedboat. From the arrival jetty, we were led to the open concept reception pavilion. The high-ceilinged, dark wood pavilion with cool natural stone floors was designed to create the feeling of being in a traditional Borneo longhouse.

I later learned from the resort's General Manager, Jeffrey Mong, that only a third of the 52-acre site was developed for the resort. The construction was planned to ensure the preservation of the

*Enjoy a breathtaking sunset cruise on board the luxurious Lumba-Lumba, a private 64-ft Princess yacht that is part of the YTL fleet.*

# Island Life

YTL Hotel's latest gem, Gaya Island Resort, offers a luxurious taste of Borneo.

Text by **Clara Goh** Photography by **Jacob Termansen**

existing nature, to the extent that the vegetation clearing of the site was done with the guidance of the Sabah Park authorities. I was heartened to see groups of Italian, French and English tourists, clearly choosing their summer vacation to discover our part of the world.

## Feasting And Relaxing

As we waited for the rooms to be ready, we decided to get some lunch. The resort's **Feast Village** is one of three restaurants to choose from (the others being the more formal **Fisherman's Cove** and the casual Pool Bar and Lounge). In signature Feast Village style, the open concept kitchens boast a variety of cuisines – local, western and Asian.

Within minutes of being seated, I was surprisingly greeted with "Nice to see you again, Miss Clara", by my smiling waiter, who, amazingly, recognised me from my visit to Pangkor Laut Resort (Gaya Island Resort's glamorous sister off the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia) three years ago. This gesture would be repeated again at dinner by another wait staff and it really helped make me feel like a special guest.

The menu was straightforward, with enough choices for the different preferences in our group. I was recommended the local Tuaran fried noodles, a hawker dish unique to Sabah (which was prepared vegetarian for me). The aromatic, golden-textured noodles were springy and delicious and, needless to say, featured again and again in my meals for the rest of my stay. The others in the group ordered satay and the seafood basket, with lightly-battered fried fish, prawns and shoestring fries.

*Soak up the Sabahan sun at Gaya Island Resort – YTL Hotel's first property in Borneo.*



*Gaya Island Resort's Feast Village delights diners with a variety of palate-pleasing cuisines.*

“The resort’s tagline of ‘Distinctively Borneo’ may not be visibly obvious, but subtle inclusions of Sabahan heritage and culture are interweaved within almost all the resort’s offerings.”

As we enjoyed lunch, with a view to the bay lined with young palm trees, the gentle waves sparkling to reflect the shining sun, it was clear that the only way to spend the remainder of the day would be by the sea or at the relaxation chambers perfectly positioned behind the pool. And so we did, and the rest of the afternoon went by in a flash and, before long, we had shed our city personas for island chill.

The focal point for the resort is the 40m pool, complete with decadent floating cabanas and a sunken **Pool Bar** serving the resort’s signature cocktail, *Borneo Dream*. This tropical concoction is a creation of resident mixologist Edwin Yukun and is made with Li Hing, Kadazan rice wine, pineapple, lemon juice, strawberry monin and a splash of vodka.

#### The Next Day

I rose at sunrise and started my day with a refreshing dip in the bay before a leisurely breakfast at the Feast Village. As I glanced around the dining space, the faces of some of the other guests had become familiar: the group of Italian thirty-somethings gulping down their caffè before leaving for the **Nature Walk**; the graceful, older English couple clutching the novels they were intent on finishing by the pool; and the young couple we had met on the flight from Singapore, visibly sun-kissed.

After breakfast, we deliberated very briefly on the resort’s activity programme, which included a Nature Walk, **Borneo Dance** and



**Culinary experiences**, and children’s storytelling sessions, and decided to spend our day with no set agenda. We surrendered to our deck chairs facing the bay, while the more energetic among us tried out the **kayaks** and stand up **paddle surfing**. The waters of the bay were knee-deep and made it possible for the children in our group to join in the water activities.

That evening, we enjoyed a unique and rather special dinner experience: the **Bajau Laut Beach Barbeque**, a seafood (and vegetable) feast inspired by the native nomadic sea-faring tribe. Set on the sands along the bay, our perfectly-laid table was encircled with candle lamps, complete with a telescope set up for stargazing. We dined under a black velvet sky studded with stars, lulled by the fresh sea breeze, with the lights of Kota Kinabalu in the far horizon, and made a wish with each shooting star.

#### Exploring The Island

One of the resort’s highlights is the Nature Walks and, although time did not permit me to experience this personally, I did catch up with resident naturalist Justin Juhun. The jovial Justin is

clearly passionate about the land and conservation. He leads the Nature Walks twice daily and smiles excitedly as he talks about the sighting of the rare proboscis monkeys (indigenous only to Borneo) along these trails. Other possible sightings during these small-group guided walks are the Borneo angle head lizard (also known as the dragon head lizard), flying lizards and hornbills.

#### Distinctively Borneo

The resort’s tagline of ‘Distinctively Borneo’ may not be visibly obvious, but subtle inclusions of Sabahan heritage and culture are interweaved within almost all the resort’s offerings. I was struck by a seemingly-simple geometric pattern on the uniforms of most of the team and learned that it is a local motif, called Vinusak, from the native Rungus tribe, which symbolises the beginning of a unique and special relationship.

As we left the resort the same way we arrived, by speedboat, we were infinitely lighter in spirit, with a distinct impression of the courtesy and warmth of the resort team who have made our first taste of Sabah that little bit more special. ■

# Setting Sail

The Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta, one of the most exciting fixtures on the international sailing calendar, ranks as one of Asia's premier yachting events, along with the likes of the Phuket King's Cup Regatta in Thailand.

**HRH Tengku Zatashah Idris** and **Aubry Mennesson** report.

Photography by **The Peak**

Now in its 23rd year, the Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta (RMSIR) attracts some of the region's best talents and you'll be able to witness this thrilling event from 16 to 24 November 2012. The idea of the Regatta came about thanks to HRH Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah of Selangor's passion for sailing. At the time, His Royal Highness was the Crown Prince (Raja Muda) and he had just completed more than two years of sailing around the world, travelling 27,000 nautical miles on his yacht *SY Jugra* (named after the state's first capital), when His Royal Highness and some sailing friends thought how ideal it would be to launch a sailing regatta in Malaysia that would promote the country and bring life to the Royal Selangor Yacht Club. Hence, the Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta was born in 1989.

Organised every year by the Royal Selangor Yacht Club in association with the Royal Ocean Racing Club, the RMSIR is a challenging offshore sailing race open to non-professionals. It consists of three overnight passage races starting from Port Klang to Pangkor Island, followed by three days of harbour racing in Penang

and Langkawi – all in all, around 240 miles over the course of nine days. With regatta dinners almost every night, trishaw races and plenty of opportunities to socialise, onshore activities are just as demanding as the sailing.

What makes this Regatta special is that each of the locations offers its own unique entertainment and sights, from the hustle and bustle of Kuala Lumpur and Port Klang, where the race starts, to Pangkor Island and the magnificent Pangkor Laut Resort. From there, it is on to Penang and the first of the inshore race days, followed by the last passage race to Langkawi and the final day of inshore racing on the island's Bass Harbour.

One of the highlights of this circuit is a visit to the world-renowned resort of Pangkor Laut. This is truly a hidden gem, with magnificent beaches, stunning views over the infinity pools, the stilted accommodation over the water and plenty of dining options for all tastes and budgets. In fact, when Luciano Pavarotti was alive, he rated this as his number one holiday destination.

“His Royal Highness and some sailing friends launched a sailing regatta that would promote the country and bring life to the Royal Selangor Yacht Club.”

*The Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta stops by Pangkor Laut Island en route to Langkawi.*

“One of the highlights of this circuit is a visit to the world-renowned resort of Pangkor Laut. This is truly a hidden gem, with magnificent beaches, stunning views over the infinity pools, the stilted accommodation over the water and plenty of dining options for all tastes and budgets.”

The event attracts a large variety of yachts, from top class IRC1 racers to slow classic cruisers dating back over 100 years, all of which have to cope with unpredictable weather and changing tactics past the tropical islands of Peninsular Malaysia. The RMSIR also enjoys the honour of being the only South-East Asian regatta to receive the very prestigious Royal Ocean Racing Club accreditation. There is no doubt that the RMSIR is a world-class event and is rightly ranked as one of the key regattas of the world.

We had the wonderful opportunity to sail in the RMSIR in 2009 on the majestic *Eveline*, a 100-year-old, 43ft classic Bristol-cutter yacht built in Shanghai and currently owned by Dato' Richard Curtis. *Eveline* was the oldest yacht in the Regatta and the slowest (we usually arrive two to six hours after the rest of the fleet!), but with the scientific and mysterious handicap calculation (according to size, age, weight and overall capacity), we had managed to finish third and second in two passage legs,

quite an amazing performance for a lady born in 1910!

That year, 55 yachts with crews coming from all over the world participated in the race and enjoyed the challenge of combining seamanship, navigation and local knowledge with competing. Even if you're not a 'yachtie', there is no doubt you would experience the thrill and camaraderie of the sailors during this Regatta.

Aubry recalls how the weather was typically tropical, raining incessantly throughout from Penang to Langkawi, which was an overnight leg. That year was one of the wettest that the RMSIR had experienced, although the saving grace was that there was plenty of wind until the final leg's harbour race in Langkawi.

During the night legs, each crew member usually takes turns on two-hour duty in teams of two but, due to the choppy passage, everyone stayed on deck and didn't get much sleep. After only three hours' sleep due to our late arrival in the Langkawi berth, Aubry had to dash off again for the harbour race that morning. Another memorable thing about the



2009 Regatta was the Raja Muda of Selangor HH Tengku Amir Shah participating in the Premier Cruising Class (IRC 2) on Antony Hastings' *Beneteau 53 Baby Tonga*, which posted another win to defend its title and retaining the Jugra Cup for another year. Celebrations continued late into the night.

There have been many other interesting incidents that have occurred in the history of the RMSIR. I remember, in 2002, when lightning struck *Chantique* during the night, rendering its electronics system useless, and Dato' Richard Curtis' *Eveline* and another yacht, *My Toy*, bravely coming to the rescue of the stricken yacht. It was the same year that the Regatta saw its first ever all-female crew on *Dewi Bayu*, which created a buzz – although they had disappointing results, they won top marks for being the most stylishly dressed with the Louis Vuitton Cup 2002 Sailing Collection.

Regatta sailors get to enjoy a slice of luxury in the midst of the Regatta at Pangkor Laut Resort.

The Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta has grown from strength to strength since its founding, and is one of the most highly-anticipated events in the sailing calendar. When you can see international world-class sailors and home-grown talents competing against one another on beautiful yachts in extraordinary landscape and seas, it can only inspire the young to, hopefully, one day take up sailing in Malaysia. In an interview with *The Peak* magazine, His Royal Highness said: "I'm really pleased that the Regatta is still surviving and thriving. It's great that more and more overseas participants are making their way here to compete... It's not easy to come as they actually have to sail their yachts all the way from as far as Australia or New Zealand in order to take part. It speaks volumes of their desire to compete in the Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta." ■



# On High Waters

Into its second season, YTL Hotels' Straits to Luxury Experience is all set to pamper seafaring guests like never before.

Text by **Diana Khoo** Photography by **Law Soo Phye**



More than just tropical island paradises, sleek city hotels and mountainside retreats, YTL Hotels now adds another facet to its luxury hospitality portfolio with its Straits To Luxury Experience, a unique journey that takes travellers on a prestigious and remarkable voyage aboard a world-class yacht. Set along the Straits of Malacca, the Straits to Luxury Experience is a 5-day/4-night nautical adventure offering full-on, all-inclusive on-board luxury for a party of eight.

The designated vessel is none other than the YTL Lady II, a Princess 85 luxury motor yacht built in Plymouth, England and one of the stars of the YTL fleet. Powerful, elegant and a picture of seafaring grace, the *YTL Lady II* is ideal for long-range cruising while its luxuriously-appointed bedrooms, deck and living areas make life on the water infinitely pleasurable. A crew of no less than four is on-hand to ensure guests want for nothing during the voyage.

Following a route that takes passengers from the emerald-green waters of Pangkor Laut, the private island just off the coast of Perak, Malaysia, the Straits to Luxury Experience departs the small but perfectly-formed island in the late evening, setting sail for Phuket, with several charming island stops along the way. "We began the Straits to Luxury Experience at the end of 2011," says

*The YTL Lady II is a state-of-the-art luxurious 85ft Princess yacht with maximum speed of 26-28 knots.*



“The designated vessel is none other than the *YTL Lady II*.”

Laurent Myter, Vice President of YTL Hotels – Resorts Division. “The idea behind it was to combine our resources in Phuket and Malaysia, to build a link between Pangkor Laut, one of our most famous resorts, with The Surin and the Villa Tassana, our Thai properties, both on the island of Phuket.”

With the Straits to Luxury Experience package only available during the months of November to April, the experience is set to be nothing short of sublime as the season practically guarantees smooth, calm waters and cornflower blue skies. “It is certainly an unforgettable experience,” adds Captain Putra Asmara. “Discovering small islands like Ko Rok Nok and Ko Kai are truly a thrill and, along the way, expect to encounter marine life like flying fish and, if you’re lucky, even dolphins.”

“We are certainly hoping more guests will discover the Straits to Luxury Experience,” adds Myter. “It is, of course, a very niche experience but it is a fitting representation of what YTL is known for – the finest in luxury hospitality. It’s just that, this time, we’re taking it out on the water.”

*The Straits to Luxury Experience is priced at USD45,000 for a one-way yacht cruise from Pangkor Laut to Phuket for up to eight passengers.*

**THE VOYAGE**  
A rundown of the Straits to Luxury Experience.

**DAY 1:** Depart Pangkor Laut in the late evening as you settle into your luxuriously-appointed cabin, your home for the journey’s duration.

**DAY 2:** Arrive at Langkawi for breakfast as your Captain sees to immigration clearance. Explore this mystical island’s many attractions, including mangroves, a bat cave, ancient limestone rock formations and local fishing villages. You may also indulge in a spot of eagle-watching before tucking in to a seafood luncheon. By evening, set sail for the Thai island of Ko Rok Nok.

**DAY 3:** Uninhabited and pristine, Ko Rok Nok is ideal for a day in the sun. Splash about in its crystal-clear waters, explore the island or simply sun-worship as the yacht’s chef readies a gourmet picnic to be enjoyed on the beach’s white sands. As the sun sets, enjoy another al fresco meal as the crew prepare a barbecue dinner of grilled meats and seafood. Retire for the night as you set sail to yet another island paradise – Ko Kai.

**DAY 4:** Wake up early to be the first to spot Ko Kai and its strange rock formation at its tip, which has led to it being nicknamed ‘Chicken Island’. Spend the day snorkelling, swimming in the warm tropical waters or simply luxuriate on the YTL Lady II’s marvelous deck before journeying onwards to Ko Phi Phi, the island which shot to fame in the movie, *The Beach*. Enjoy the stunning scenery as you sit down to an elegant meal on board.

**DAY 5:** Continue on for the final leg of the journey, arriving at Phuket’s Ao Po Grand Marina where you will then be transferred to your preferred choice of accommodation or (if you wish to prolong the experience and why wouldn’t you?) do not disembark the YTL Lady II and, instead, set sail once more for the journey back home.



*Clockwise, from top: Every luxury is made available for guests on the Straits to Luxury Experience; a private chef is at the ready to ensure a steady stream of on-board delectables; Captain Putra Asmara, Fida Ahmad, Hafiz Umar and Muaz Jamaludin are part of the YTL Lady II’s dedicated crew.*



# Let It Snow!

Japan's undisputed winter playground of Niseko gears up for the 2012/13 season.

Text by **Kim Inglis**

As the small enclave of Niseko gears up for the annual ski season, staff at the two YTL-owned hotels at the base of Mount Annupuri prepare for the onslaught of new customers as, each year, this haven of powder snow gains both in popularity and visitor numbers.

It seems that the secret is out. Niseko is officially the second snowiest ski resort in the world and, unofficially, the powder hound's favourite. An average nine metres of snowfall from November to April, most of which is the lightest of light powder, ensure that regulars come back annually — and, inevitably, the word spreads.

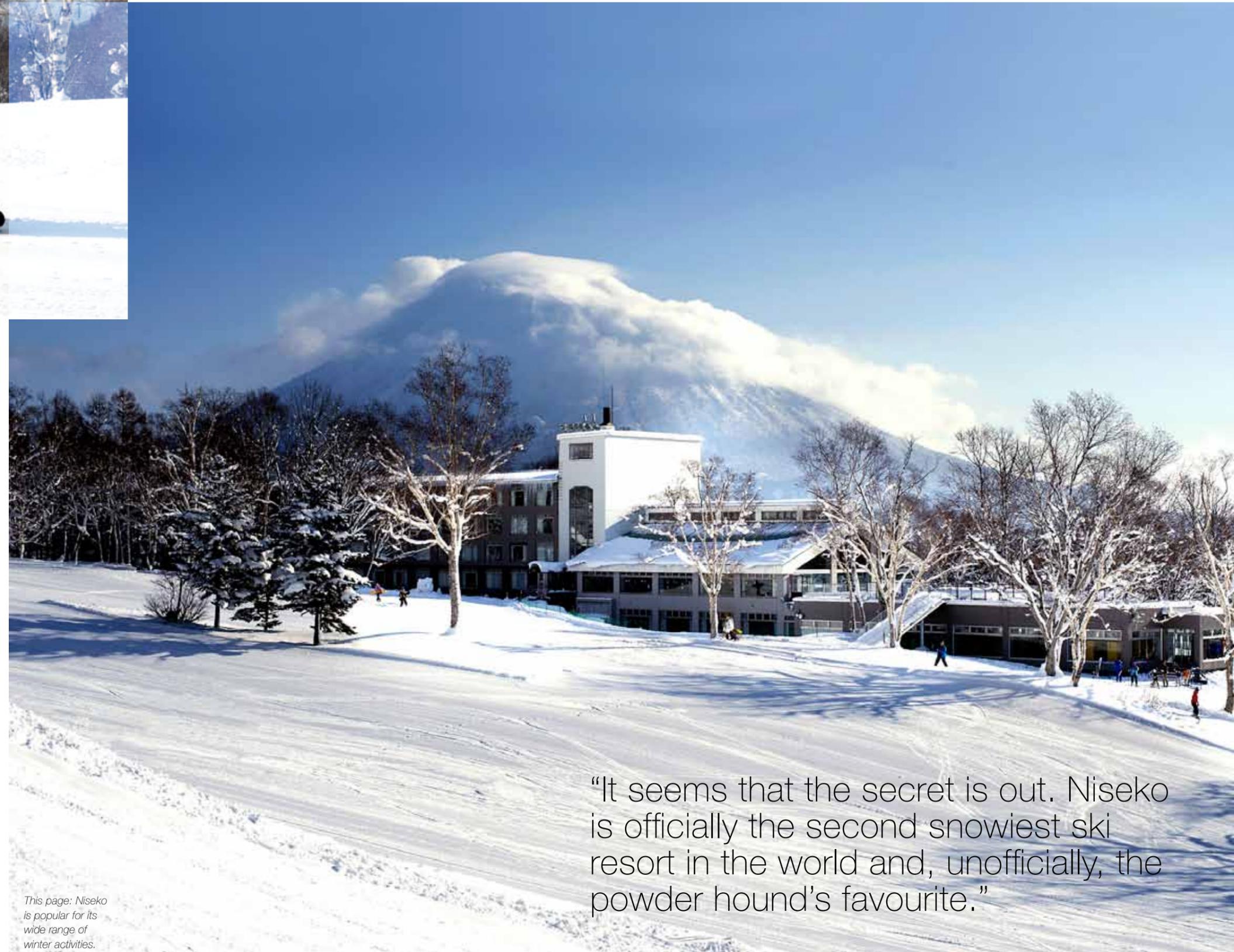
Newbies, once they've experienced the insane snow, are hooked. Its quality and

quantity are seemingly unsurpassed. That, along with salubrious surrounds, gorgeous views, friendly people and a tradition of seasonal cuisine and *onsen* experience, makes for a markedly individual visitor stay.

The YTL-owned 460ha of land, both skiable and around the base of Mount Annupuri, houses two hotels: the smaller, boutique-style Green Leaf and the bigger, brasher Hilton Niseko Village. Sporting 200 and 500 rooms, respectively, both have much to recommend them; appealingly, both are also very different.

The art-inspired Green Leaf nestles amongst trees and ski slopes: Ski in and ski out, it overlooks a run that is floodlit until 8pm for an eerily quiet, yet unique

*This page: Niseko is popular for its wide range of winter activities.*



“It seems that the secret is out. Niseko is officially the second snowiest ski resort in the world and, unofficially, the powder hound's favourite.”

night skiing experience. There's a cosy lounge and bar, decked out with alpine and Japanese touches, and the first-class Goshiki restaurant with a deck that overlooks the perfect Fuji-lookalike Mount Yotei on one side and skiable terrain on the other. Translated as "five different colours" in Japanese, Goshiki features a colourful fusion of Japanese, Asian and Western dishes, utilising fresh fish from both nearby sea and freshwater lakes and rivers, and the region's famous vegetables. All-you-can-eat snow crab legs and grilled rockfish seasoned with *saikyo miso* are

friends with some local farmers and it's a real joy to drop by and see what's growing and coming into season. I invite any lover of good food to choose Niseko as a destination." He goes on to add that the diverse variety of vegetables is a particular joy; right now, he's harvesting purple, yellow, red, *momotaro* and *aiko*

Newbies, once they've experienced the insane snow, are hooked. Its quality and quantity are seemingly unsurpassed.

popular items in a restaurant that sports a striking open kitchen.

A five-minute drive round the base of the mountain brings you to the Hilton, a monolithic building that dominates the landscape around. Externally, it may be a bit of an eyesore but, inside, it's a different story. Recently renovated and upgraded by the trendy Yukio Hashimoto Design Studio from Tokyo, it is superbly located with ski in, gondola-out facilities. A stay here is both practical and tactical, as guests can easily be the first up the mountain to arrive at the base of Mount Anupuri for an off-piste descent before the rest of the world has got off the ski bus elsewhere!

Food is a highlight at the Hilton also. Head chef, Rob Shipman, is deeply committed to using local produce, saying: "I've made

tomatoes, to mention just a few. Using *momotaro* tomatoes to make a unique tomato jelly that he freezes in quantity for the winter months is his latest fad. "The flavour is amazing," he enthuses. "The taste of this jelly is high in what the Japanese call the fifth taste, or *umami*; it's also sweet, sour, salty and bitter, and goes well with marinated shell fish."

If this tickles your fancy, read on. Featuring no less than eight food and beverage outlets, the Hilton's ground floor is dominated by The Flame, a sophisticated bar and lounge with a unique hanging fireplace: a mid-morning warm-up coffee or late night saké are easily imbibed here, as is a quick corn chowder and sandwich lunch, or something a little more substantial after skiing. It's a bustling, busy spot and great for people-watching.

There's no doubt that Japanese cuisine aficionados won't be disappointed with the Hilton: Sisam offers seasonal specialities, such as Grilled Hokkaido Whelk and Mushrooms with Garlic Sauce along with



Top: The onsen at the Hilton Niseko Village offers sodium-rich waters and superb views of Mount Yotei. Left: The cosy lounge at Green Leaf Niseko Village is decked out with Alpine and Japanese touches. Right: The quality and quantity of snow help ensure its reputation as a top winter destination.



Clockwise from left: Nestled amongst trees and ski slopes, the boutique-styled Green Leaf Niseko Village overlooks a run that is floodlit until 8pm; The open kitchen at Green Leaf Goshiki restaurant, which features a fusion of Japanese, Asian and Western dishes; Tomioka Bar at Green Leaf is the perfect place to relax after a hard day at the ski slopes.



is famous for its kelp, or *konbu*, a vital ingredient in the basis of all Japanese cuisine, the stock called *dashi*. It also has extremely fertile soils and one of its famous crops is sweet potato. This is made into excellent *shochu*, a Japanese distilled liquor that is similar to *raki*; Hokkaido's version is prized for its strong taste and distinctive smell, so is definitely worth a try. Others visit the island simply to sample its variety of agricultural produce — Yotei melon and Makkari pork are particular favourites in the Niseko area — while its selection of freshwater and seawater fish is extremely varied.

One thing is for sure: you'll never run out of things to do or sights to visit. Foodie or sports aficionado, powder hound or golfer — Niseko's appeal is wide-ranging. And since Hokkaido is sparsely populated (it is Japan's second largest island, but only houses five million people), it has vast tracts of wilderness waiting to be explored. Perhaps this could be the season to head north? ❧



a sushi counter, but the highlight has to be Pirka, the hotel's teppanyaki restaurant. There is a choice of counter or booth seating within a handsome wood interior and ingredients are of the highest quality. Observe the highly-trained chefs cut, cook and serve in front of you and feel free to ask them questions about the beef, seafood and local vegetables they so expertly work with. Highlights include some innovative combinations, such as reindeer and foie gras.

Elsewhere in the hotel, there are some Western dining options and the ever-popular Ezo pub that hosts karaoke nights, live bands and much après-ski fanfare. Melt Bar and Grill is useful for a timeless

steak or seafood dinner, while Yotei is a little more casual with buffets, salads and extraordinary views of the still active volcano. Head bartender at Melt is one of Niseko's award-winning snowboard competitors: nonchalant about his skills and winnings, he is anything but when questioned on the seemingly endless quantities of snow. "That's why we all live here," he says smugly, "There's nowhere quite like it anywhere else on the planet." He should know: as an international competitor, he's experienced his fair share of ski resorts around the globe.

The two hotels are not only about skiing and eating, however. Niseko's volcanic geology results in an abundance of hot

springs (*onsen*) that range from simple stone baths to vast luxurious pools. Some of the suites at the Hilton have their own private dipping pools, full of mineral-rich spring water — a real boon to soothe muscles over-worked from a day on the slopes. For the communal experience (but segregated into women's and men's sections) is the Hilton's indoor and outdoor onsen that overflows into a large pond stocked with sleek carp. The outdoor pool, called a *rotenburo*, contains sodium-filled waters — useful for joint pain — and superb Mount Yotei views.

For a more intimate experience, head to the Green Leaf's *onsen*, where the baths

are found within natural rock pools. Fed by a 1,000m deep spring that is packed with minerals and emulsifying properties, it is what the Japanese term *bijin no yu*, or "onsen of beauty". Certainly, there is nothing quite like sitting in its super-hot, steaming waters, all the while looking out over a freezing, white landscape interspersed with evergreen trees, the branches of which are laden down with powdery snow.

Although primarily famous for its winter sports facilities, Niseko hosts a wide variety of summer activities, including golf, fishing, horse-riding, kayaking, cycling and white water rafting. In addition, many visit for the superb local delicacies: Hokkaido

# Bali's Mother Mountain

A towering physical presence in Bali, the majestic Gunung Agung looms even larger over the island's spiritual and daily lives as, *Simon Pridmore* discovers, both destroyer and giver.

To stand on the spot where Bali's day begins requires a journey that starts in the middle of the night. On the way, there are rest stops, places to refresh body and soul with food or water, to make offerings and even to share a prayer or two, but most of the hours of darkness are taken up by climbing. This is not mountaineering up sheer walls using ropes and crampons, however. It is a gradual ascent along a narrow trail. For hour after hour, the climb continues, taxing both reserves of energy and mental strength, past the point where the foliage thins out and the shifting terrain underfoot causes the climber to slip back one step for every two steps forward.

As the sky begins to lighten, the pace quickens to ensure the key moment is not missed and, as the final slope is crested, a glance to the east confirms that the effort has not been made in vain. A point of intense light breaks the dark line of the horizon and, with improbable speed, it grows to become a glowing sphere and the first rays of the sun announce another day in paradise.

An enormous, dark triangle appears beneath, superimposed on the forest canopy. This is the huge shadow of Gunung (Mount) Agung, cast by the rising sun. Agung's peak is the highest point on the island and this is the place where Bali's day begins. It is an active volcano, rising over 3,000m above the sea far below and it is the

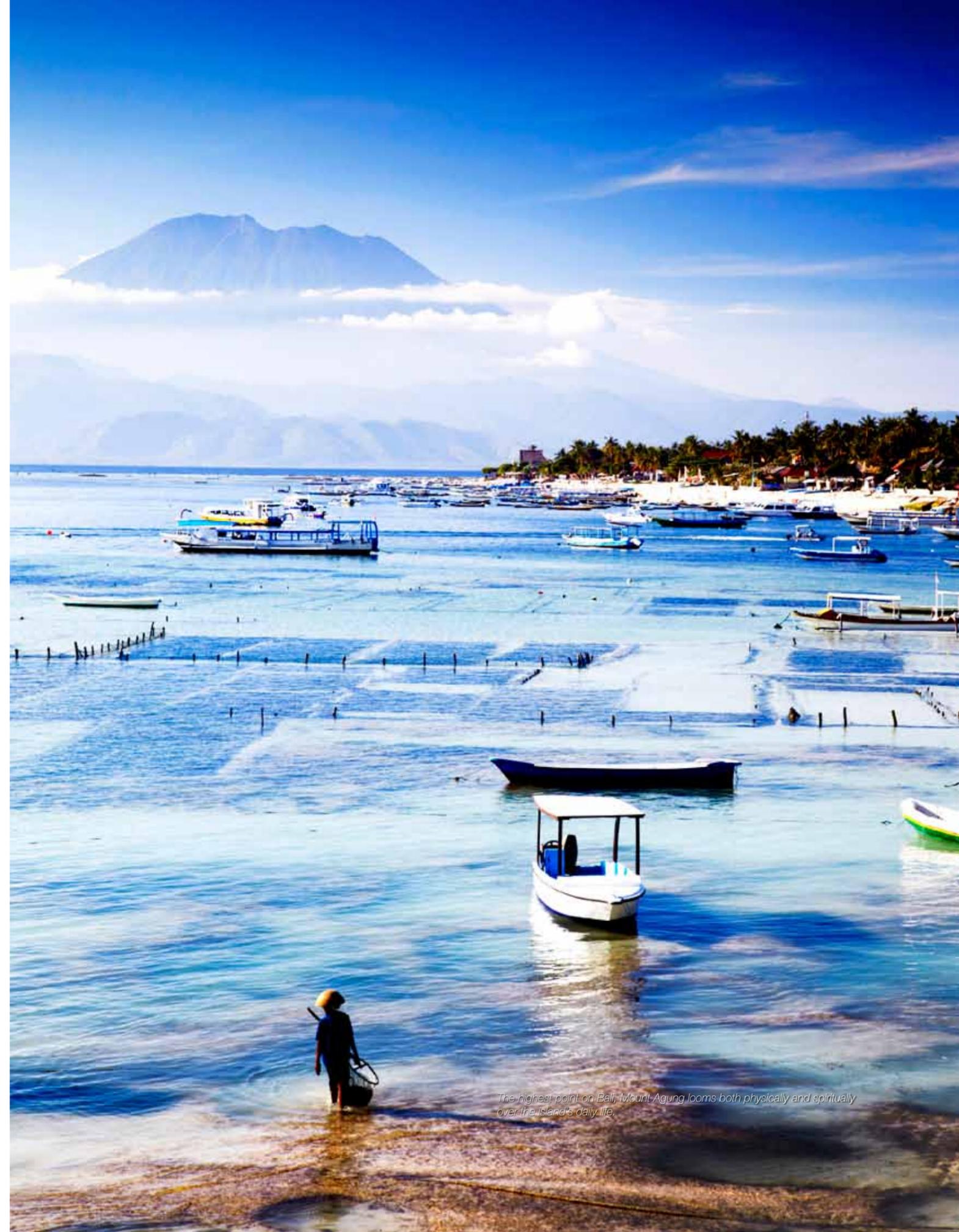
largest of the string of mountains that form Bali's spine from west to east. On a clear day, especially after a storm in the rainy season, its bulk dominates the skyline. Most of the time it is invisible, shielded by haze and mist.

## Seat of the Gods

The mountain's physical presence, albeit imposing, is nevertheless far exceeded by its symbolic importance to the people of Bali. For the Balinese, Agung is a representation of Mount Meru, the central axis of the universe in Hindu mythology. It is the home of Shiva (written as Siwa in Bali) and the central link in a trio of huge peaks transplanted by Shiva from the Himalayas to stabilise what is now the Indonesian archipelago. The other two mountains are Semeru on Java and Rinjani on Lombok, the latter visible from the slopes of Agung across the Lombok Strait.

Agung does not only have religious significance. In Bali, the spiritual world is closely entwined with daily life. Along with Bali's other volcanoes, Agung is a physical fount of strength as well as a source of spiritual energy, as the courses of water that pour down its sides nourish the massed banks of rice terraces at its base, giving sustenance to the island's people.

Many worldly concerns also revolve around the mountain, sometimes literally. The most sacred and pure direction of the Balinese compass is *kaja*, which means 'facing Mount Agung' wherever you are on the island. The most important parts of a Balinese house, the temple and the *bale daja*, the raised pavilion where the family's most precious possessions are



The highest point on Bali, Mount Agung looms both physically and spiritually over the island's daily life.



This page: The rice terraces at the foot of the mountain are nourished by the waters that flow down its sides; Pilgrims making their way to Pura Besakih, Bali's holiest temple. Opposite page: Divers from all over the world flock to Tulamben's waters that are rich with marine life.

positioned so that the occupants will sleep with their heads pointing towards the volcano in order to benefit from the beneficial forces emanating from Agung.

The opposite and most impure direction on the Balinese compass is *kelod*, or 'facing away from Mount Agung.' Facilities such as toilets and pigpens are situated on the *kelod* side of the house.

### Destroyer and Giver of Life

Reflecting the dichotomy of its resident deity, who is both Destroyer and Recycler, Agung has been both a taker and giver of life. In March 1963, the volcano erupted majestically and catastrophically. Over 1,000 people lost their lives, communities were destroyed and the entire island was covered with ash. One of the villages obliterated by the rivers of lava produced by the eruption was Tulamben, hitherto a desperately poor community scratching a living from the sea and the infertile land on the dry northern side of the mountain. Before the flow of molten rock that swamped their homes extinguished itself in the sea, it picked up an American

freighter called the Liberty, that had lain abandoned on the beach for 20 years, and deposited it 50m further to the north and 30m below the water's surface.

At the time, you could never have predicted that Agung's destructive force would eventually create a new world for people who had just seen everything they owned and known engulfed. However, around the same time and on the other side of the world, the sport of scuba diving was becoming increasingly popular. Over the years, the Liberty was gradually taken over by marine life and became home to millions of fish. In due course, divers from all over the world began to flock to Tulamben to dive this unusually accessible shipwreck and the undulating slopes of black volcanic sand around her.

The local people returned and dive centres, hotels, resorts, restaurants and shops started to appear along the Tulamben coast to cater to the needs of the visitors. The young men of the community trained to become diving instructors, and guides and fishermen with small boats, known as *jukung*, adapted their vessels to take passengers.

The women of Tulamben, long used to carrying heavy loads such as temple offerings and water supplies on their heads, found they

“A point of intense light breaks the dark line of the horizon and, with improbable speed, it grows to become a glowing sphere and the first rays of the sun announce another day in paradise.”

had the requisite qualities of strength, grace, poise and balance to help them develop a career as dive porters. Balancing air cylinders and heavy gear bags on their heads, they present an improbable but impressive and memorable sight as they pick their way delicately along the stony shore in the shadow of the mountain that brought them their new lives.

### Mother Temple

The 1963 eruption that destroyed Tulamben occurred at a time of particularly intense and significant religious activity on the southern slopes of Agung, where Pura Besakih, Bali's holiest of Bali's temple complexes, is located.

Pura Besakih was constructed on a site that is thought to have been of religious significance for over 2,000 years and records indicate that it has been a significant place of Hindu worship since the late 13th century. The complex contains 22 separate temples connected by terraces and staircases. As with all Balinese temples, they have no roofs so the Gods and ancestors may enter easily when invited to ceremonies. It is the focal point for many of the island's religious festivals and some 70 or so events are held there every year. These include annual purification ceremonies and a larger sacrificial event called Panca Wali Krama, which must take place in the first year of every decade, what the Balinese refer to a Single Zero year





Women bearing temple offerings in procession to Pura Besakih; Bali's holiest temple is the focal point for many of the island's religious ceremonies.



In early 1963, preparations were well in hand for an even more exceptional event known as Eka Dasa Rudra; an enormous sacrificial festival of purification that Hindu literature prescribed should be held at Pura Besakih once every hundred years, in the first year of each century, a Double Zero year!

1963 was, in fact, not a Double Zero year in the Hindu calendar but, with the massive religious, social and political upheavals that

had beset the islands of Indonesia over the preceding several hundred years, Bali's Hindus had not celebrated Eka Dasa Rudra for centuries. The island's priests felt that they should not wait any longer and decided to convene the festival exceptionally in order to acknowledge the neglect of their predecessors and ask the Gods for redemption.

They had the backing of ancient holy texts, which allowed the holding of Eka Dasa Rudra at times when human or environmental disharmony indicated that the world was in an impure state. The events of the 20th century leading to the revolution that heralded the birth of the modern Indonesian state certainly provided ample evidence of disharmony.

During the build-up to the ceremony, Agung was remarkably active and, just as the festival was about to culminate, the mountain exploded. Although the lava flows passed very close to Pura Besakih, the temple complex survived unscathed and, in the aftermath, the priests concluded that this 'miracle' was a sign that the Gods were not displeased with their efforts. The eruption had not been a punishment, simply a demonstration of their considerable power.

Eka Dasa Rudra was subsequently held again, on schedule this time, in 1979, the Double Zero year of 1900 in the Hindu calendar. Agung has remained quiet ever since. ▣



#### THE PERFECT BASE

Thirty minutes' drive away from Tulamben and to the west of Agung, YTL Hotels' Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali offers guests the chance to snorkel or dive the Liberty wreck or drive into Bali's fertile volcanic uplands. Guided tours are also available to Pura Besakih and to the summit of Agung, a truly unforgettable way to start a day on the Island of the Gods.

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# SON DAYS

Visiting Malaysia for the first time, English actress and playwright Imogen Stubbs discovers the charms of YTL Hotels' Tanjong Jara Resort even as she forms a new bond with her son.



*Clockwise, from left: Enjoy the sea from Tanjong Jara Resort's outdoor four-poster beds; The beautifully-designed resort with its temple-like houses; Start your spa treatments with the Mandi Bunga ceremony.*

Holidays are always a challenge, but persuading a teenage boy to embark on a fun outdoor adventure, with only his mother for company, is, frankly, terrifying. He's as unlikely to greet the prospect with yelps of enthusiasm, while the idea of spending 10 days with a cloud in head-phones isn't exactly scintillating for a mother, either.

There is a new, soul-sucking problem when it comes to travelling with teenagers: they are constantly somewhere else – thanks to technology. Screens have become the new “abroad”, providing instant gratification and adventure. Consequently, it makes no difference whether a child is in the Serengeti or on a London bus – they are likely to be lost in Virtual Reality, and it is a hard act for Reality to follow.

My son Jesse Nunn is 15 and wants to be a pilot. He is very attached to his flight simulator and flies all over the world every day without leaving his room/cockpit. He also loves photography and is lucky enough to have travelled quite extensively in real life. However, this has usually been with siblings to annoy and two parents happily boring each other about culture, and I wanted him to wake up to the moment – fully appreciate a new place, new experiences.

We decided to go to a place we had never been – Malaysia, where we stayed at YTL Hotels' Tanjong Jara Resort, overlooking the South China Sea in the eastern state of Terengganu. The resort is beautifully-designed, with wooden pagodas and temple-like houses, and cerulean blue pools. These are hidden discreetly among coconut trees and gorgeous flowering plants beside a long sandy beach.

The most immediately striking thing about Malaysia is the people. A huge range of backgrounds, religions and cultures seems to have led to a society of very gentle, courteous and beautiful people, who utterly give credence to the phrase, “A smile is the shortest distance between two people”.

As the sun blazed through the coconut trees, illuminating riotously plumaged birds and hibiscus flowers, Jesse chilled on the vast bed in front of the vast TV before I eventually managed to tear him away to the infinity pool. It was a gorgeous temperature, with swallows dipping in and out and the sea only yards away. We discovered vast, outdoor four-poster beds overlooking the sea, with white linen curtains blowing in the breeze, and delightful people appearing with orange-infused iced water.



Captain Mokh leads the eco river cruise up the Marang Rive; There is colourful marine life off Tenggol island.



At night, we slept wonderfully under big, old-fashioned fans listening to jungle noises and the odd thunk of falling coconuts. We would then wake up and drag ourselves a few yards to the sun loungers to go back to sleep again. The YTL resorts are famous for its spa treatments. I have never been remotely interested in massage, but decided to give it a go. The spa buildings are gorgeous and there is an unexpected initiation ceremony, known as *Mandi Bunga*. This involves seven coconut shells of water full of hibiscus flowers being poured over your head, while a gentle voice intones words like "prosperity", "longevity" and "happiness".

I chose a head massage because I thought it would be over quickest. It completely blew my mind. It involved pressure points, and eucalyptus and citronella oil, and a tiny woman with fingers like David Beckham's legs. I felt incredible. All of life suddenly seemed calm and clear.

I decided not only to subject myself to as many treatments as possible, but to get Jesse to have a go too. Persuading him wasn't easy. He was aghast but finally endured a 45-minute back massage with a male masseur. When interrogated by his pushy mother, he grinned and declared it "alright" – this, believe me, is praise indeed. I think I pushed my luck when I decided to become a masseur myself. I persuaded them to give me a lesson in head massage and my only possible victim was Jesse. To cut a long story short, I was appalling – he went the colour of

open-heart surgery and said it felt like someone trying to "scratch through dirt and dig up worms".

We also played tennis, which made us both laugh – we were shockingly bad and spent ages looking for balls in the lush vegetation round the court. There was a slight hysteria about putting one's hand on a snake, especially when we played at night, with decidedly spooky bats flying about and ominous jungle noises.

There were also various trips on offer and we agreed on an eco river cruise up the Marang River, a snorkelling trip around an island and a cookery class with Chef Ann, the resort's resident chef. The boat trip was with pipe-smoking Captain Mokh, who trained at Sandhurst, fought with the Gurkhas against the Communists and spent three years in the jungle with aborigines. It was exciting to travel inland by river – rather like being in *The African Queen*. He kept leaping out barefoot and pointing out vast lizards, mud lobsters or deadly jellyfish. He told stories involving medicinal plants and poisonous ones used for torture.

One of the strangest things that happened to us was a misunderstanding that we were a couple – not mother and son. Consequently, we were treated to absurdly romantic but slightly inappropriate dinners. These took place in isolated tents on beaches or in pagodas, normally lit by candles, with rose petals strewn everywhere and musicians playing love songs. Jesse

"A huge range of backgrounds, religions and cultures seems to have led to a society of very gentle, courteous and beautiful people, who utterly give credence to the phrase, 'A smile is the shortest distance between two people'..."

looked as traumatised as though he had been asked to clean his room or something. There was gorgeous food provided and copious quantities of wine – which I enjoyed, though Jess stuck to spaghetti, egg fried rice and pina coladas.

The most exciting trip we did was to a sort of Robinson Crusoe Island – Tenggol. We travelled there by boat with various people, including a gorgeous French family with small children. It seemed deserted. There were dilapidated corrugated iron huts, and lanterns and an old swing hanging off a tree on the beach. We had a barbecue lunch beside a shack with a rickety old fan creaking away. Then some of us went snorkelling and others went diving.

Cartoons like *Finding Nemo* and *SpongeBob SquarePants* have obviously set a high bar but, thankfully, Reality lived up to Jesse's expectations. There were astonishing fish everywhere you turned and all that was missing were facetious comments from passing squid or gay starfish.

On our last day, we accompanied Chef Ann to the market to buy food for the resort and our cookery class. She is a formidably charismatic presence – like Whoopi Goldberg crossed with Billie Jean King – and worth the trip for her dynamic energy and chocolate pudding alone. The market was full of great photo opportunities and I particularly liked a stall with a sign saying "Sweet Dream", which actually sold old motor parts. There were beautiful women selling everything from the ubiquitous Hello Kitty plastic merchandise, to "Bryte – exquisitely traditional skin whitener", which is no more ludicrous than wanting to go brown by burning in the sun.



Chef Ann will teach you a thing or two about cooking. Tanjong Jara Resort's Nelayan Restaurant.



We went back to the resort and made a couple of delicious meals in a wok by the sea. They centred on chicken and ginger, and some sort of plum sauce and cardamom, I think – but I got distracted by realising how much Jesse enjoyed cooking. I started wondering whether he might be the next Jamie Oliver, which would be thrilling as long as he didn't say "pukka".

We dined with the French family, which involved playing silly kids games and lots of jokes and laughter. Marie pointed out that our children had stopped rushing back to the nearest screens and started seeking activities in the fresh air. Also, I had come to realise that when Jesse speaks – unsolicited – it is worth listening. They actually asked him if he would be interesting in being an *au pair* for them back in Australia where they lived. I genuinely think that he might take them up on the offer. And, I have to admit, he would be a great asset. But, then, I am his mother – so I would say that, wouldn't I? ■



# Rainbow Warriors

Sereni Linggi and Shentel Lee, BFF founders of Sereni & Shentel, the proudly Made-in-Borneo headband label that's taking the world by storm, are as fun, creative and colourful as the eye-catching accoutrements they design.

Text by Diana Khoo Photography by Sereni & Shentel

*Little did Shen-tel Lee (right) and Sereni Linggi imagine that the modified headbands they wore for a Lady Gaga concert in Singapore would lead to a booming business.*

Who would've imagined preparing for a concert would have led to a burgeoning business? Well, for Shentel Lee and Sereni Linggi, life is as charmed as it sounds! "It really all started because of a Lady Gaga concert we were to attend in Singapore. We both live in Kuching and wanted to really dress up for it. The reaction we received from the concert crowd was overwhelming, with so many people asking where we got our headbands from," says Sereni. "Shentel even made it into the newspapers the next day!" "We had ordered these giant bows online," adds Shentel, "and it finally arrived two days before the concert. They were so badly-made and out of scale to the photo (on the Internet) that we thought we'd look like idiots wearing them. So, in a last-minute attempt to rescue our look, we dashed down to the local haberdashery and bought ribbons and stones, and made our own headbands to match with our bling-ed out Gaga tops. We flew in for the concert only to realise that no one else dressed up in Gaga-esque attire. We stood out like sore thumbs but we were a hit with the media there as well as the fans. The headband now takes pride of place in our collections and is proudly christened *Kuching Cat!*"



With their entire headband collection exclusively handmade-to-order in the girls' Borneo workshop, Sereni & Shentel also offer custom services for editorial work, runway shows and private requests. In light of YTL Hotels' opening of its first property in Borneo, the Sereni & Shentel duo take time out from their busy, colourful schedules to speak exclusively to *YTL Life*.

**It's been quite a ride since the Lady Gaga concert. What immediately comes to mind upon the recollection?**  
"Woohoo" would be the best word to describe it! What started out as a hobby between two friends has turned into a great business, based entirely on friendship, laughter and creative exploration. We still pinch ourselves from time to time.

**It can't all be fun and games, though. Or can it?**

Just like the 'wild man of Borneo', a.k.a. the orangutan, we feel we are the wild girls of Borneo. It's such a naturally beautiful island, with lush jungle and blue skies – it's really the perfect playground in which to be innovative and creative. Our label reflects our carefree environment and we aren't trend-followers either. We march to our own beat and we really do have a whole lot of stress-free fun in the process. Our staff in the Sereni & Shentel workshop are also amazing and as passionate about the brand as we are. It's made it a whole lot easier for us to continue doing what we do, which is designing new ranges and creating in Borneo.



**How did you gals feel seeing your designs on hit television shows like *Gossip Girl* and *Desperate Housewives*?**  
It's a whole lot like the first time you kissed a boy! It was exhilarating, with lots of excited squeals and phone calls to friends, telling them what just happened. We still can't believe our Borneo-made headbands have gone all the way to New York City and Hollywood!

**You've also told the Sereni & Shentel story by way of a children's book recently. What sparked that idea?**

Kids have always been fascinated by the look books we produce for our headband label. They get the look books from their mums and love seeing us pull faces and be silly in general. The idea came up one afternoon as we both have a great love for Dr Seuss' books. The illustrations are by Kuala Lumpur-based artist Jessica Wong and we felt her style was a perfect fit for us. We wrote the book in a month and the entire project took us about six months. We thought it'd be fun to tell the story of our business in a way children can relate to: how friendship, hard work and a little bit of headband magic make anything possible!

**It's not always easy working with friends, though. Why do you think your partnership has been so successful?**

We never hold grudges and we are always able to tease each other and have a laugh, even if we don't agree with each other. We are so similar yet so different, but the fundamental reason why we work so well together is that we really do

respect each other's opinions and the synergy of when we both agree on something is almost explosive.

**It's no picnic either having to constantly be creative. What's your secret fountain of inspiration?**

Inspiration is always around – all you have to do is look! We constantly bombard each other with magazines, trawl the Internet for ideas, attend cultural events, or lose ourselves in a good film. Our office is a mess of pin-up boards, stuck with hundreds of images that have caught our eye and our current black hole is pinterest.com. Also, every new collection invariably kicks off with a theme. Then, the image hunt begins through books and the Internet, where we select a colour palette and let the magic begin!

**Both of you also hold serious day jobs. Sereni, you're a Business Development Manager with a property and management company, while Shentel is a graphic designer. How do you both multitask so well?**

We think workaholism is in our DNA and, at times, we think we have ADD.

**Both of you are also regulars at YTL Hotels.**

Yes, YTL Hotels are like a home away from home for us. We've stayed at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, The Majestic Malacca, Cameron Highlands Resort and, of course, Pangkor Laut Resort. I love the



*This page: The 'Kuching Cat' headband in regal purple. Opposite page: The 'Queen' headband in daffodil; The 'Charlotte' in tangerine and shocking pink; Shentel and Sereni find inspiration for their headbands from all around.*

attention to detail, how the staff would leave small treats in your rooms each night – like pineapple tarts and pandanus leaves – and how it's always unique to the property and location. We both agree, though, the best thing about the hotels is always its Spa Villages!

**What's the ideal holiday like for you?**

We love big cities, so a nine-day trip to New York City, jammed packed with gallery visits, shopping, eating at amazing restaurants and seeing as many Broadway musicals as humanly possible, sounds pretty perfect. We don't do quiet and tranquil.

**And back to Lady Gaga. If she ever commissioned Sereni & Shentel for a one-of-a-kind headband, what would it look like?**

We're pretty sure it'd be huge and full of bling. Or, let's just say, you'd be able to see it from the moon! 🌑

*Sereni & Shentel headbands are available at [www.sereniandshentel.com](http://www.sereniandshentel.com).*

"It really all started because of a Lady Gaga concert we were to attend in Singapore. We both live in Kuching and wanted to really dress up for it."

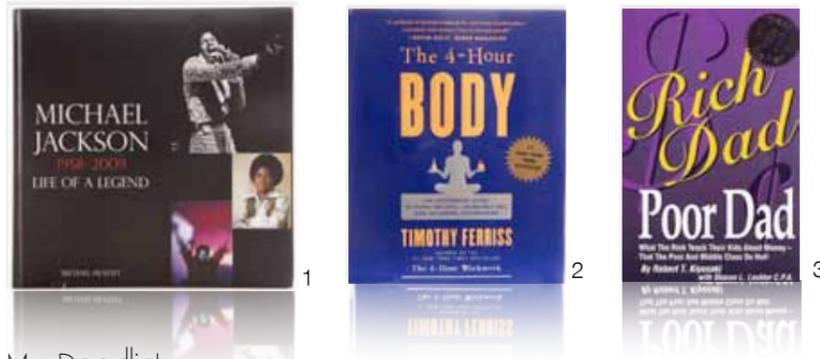
# Read And Listen

Young, talented and making waves on the entertainment scene, celebrated Malaysian violinist Dennis Lau shares his top book and music picks.



Dennis Lau is a critically-acclaimed violinist whose 2009 debut album, *DiversiFY*, and his hit song *Prelude in F Minor* have garnered him a string of awards. He has also recently made a foray into acting, taking on roles in Namewee's *Nasi Lemak 2.0*, *Hantu Gangster* and *The Borneo Incident*. Having performed for numerous luminaries, including *Monegasque royalty* and designer *Stella McCartney*, he most recently took to the stage to play for *Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge* during their recent visit to Malaysia.

life of luxury //



## My Readlist

1. *Michael Jackson – Life of a Legend*, Michael Heatley
2. *The 4-Hour Body*, Timothy Ferriss
3. *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, Robert Kiyosaki
4. *The Presentation Secrets of Steve Jobs*, Carmine Gallo
5. *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*, Lawrence Lessig

It wasn't easy but I narrowed my top five reads to the above because what I always look for in a book is content that would connect me with whatever I happen to be pursuing. I found the above books, from the Michael Jackson biography to *The 4-Hour Body*, to be of value; they somehow contain valuable information and content that can help enhance me and help me improve further in my perspective and overall approach in life, be it in my business, passion or career as an artiste and musician.



## My Playlist

1. *Man in the Mirror*, Michael Jackson
2. *Mahkota*, Dennis Lau, featuring Syafinaz Selamat
3. *Gotcha Style*, Dennis Lau, featuring Moots
4. *Irina*, Ryan Leslie
5. *No Love No More*, JYP

I chose *Mahkota* as, in Bahasa Malaysia, it means 'crown' and I selected it as it reminded me of my first album, *DiversiFY*. It also serves as a reminder to stay grounded, no matter how big your 'crown' is. I also selected *Gotcha Style* as it blends music and fashion, and for the fact that I collaborated with Dato' Bernard Chandran on this. Michael Jackson's *Man in the Mirror* is my favourite song of his. The melody is beautiful, the lyrics ingenious. If you listen carefully, you can catch hidden blues vocal improvisations above the simple pop chords of this song as well. I also chose *Irina* as this song is like no other, with a syncopated R&B rhythm. Lastly, on *No Love No More*, not only is JYP the godfather of soul in Seoul, but he is also the Asian soul of inspiration for many artistes in the region. ■

THE  
GREEN *gl* LEAF  
Niseko Village



## PERFECT POWDER SKI HAVEN

Niseko Village rests at the base of Mount Niseko An'nupuri, Japan; a land of powder white slopes, natural onsen and dramatic landscapes. The Green Leaf Niseko Village is a vibrant ski-in ski-out hotel, contemporarily redesigned to embrace the creative touch of renowned local artists.

A YTL LUXURY HOTEL

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



“In its diving collection, the *BR02* is water-resistant to 1,000m and, with its luminescent indices, is easily legible in murky depths.”

*Disposal Type* featured anti-magnetic casing, precision and reliability for the French Security Services, while one of its most famous designs, the *BR01* aviation watch, was birthed from a simple idea of turning a cockpit instrument panel clock into a wristwatch. In its diving collection, the *BR02* is water-resistant to 1,000m and, with its luminescent indices, is easily legible in murky depths.

In all this, those four fundamentals have been right at the fore and centre. Time can be told immediately from the dial, while each instrument was designed to provide specific and practical time functions. Reliability and precision would come in the form of the craftsmanship and construction, an imperative that would be augmented by the brand's own manufacture in La Chaux-de-Fonds of Switzerland.

Here, the brand's master watchmakers develop, assemble and make final adjustments to the watches. Meanwhile, at the same facility, the Swiss mechanical movements – the heart of Bell & Ross timepieces – undergo adjustments and controls over a

fortnight with simulations of various conditions and positions. A tolerance of between 0 to +10 seconds per day for an automatic movement, plus or minus 3° for the isochronisms of the hands and an average of 40 hours power reserve are some of the standards which these movements are tested for under this gruelling two-week period.

Over time, Bell & Ross has continued on its upward trajectory, driven by its simple message of letting function shape the form of its timepieces. The brand's collaboration with professionals who jointly develop the timepieces also means that the brand is, today, the official supplier of watches for the Space Lab Mission, submariners, RAID (French National Police Force), anti-mine military squads, Air Force pilots and elite police. In the process, it has also managed to make the record books with its *Hydromax* – made to withstand the atmospheric pressure of 11,000m underwater.

This year, at BaselWorld, Bell & Ross unveiled its *Vintage WW1 Heure Sautante*. This masterpiece, which was fashioned in collaboration with the ingenious Vincent Calabrese, is unique for its jumping hours and a simple yet innovative dial reading system. On the dial, the hour shows on the aperture with only the minutes sweeping in the circle. A power reserve display offers easy reading of the remaining energy on this timepiece. Offered in two variations – 18K pink gold or satin-brushed platinum – the timepiece takes another step into the simplification of reading time, a journey that began with two friends who wanted to build simple, precise and effective timepieces that would endure in the most extreme circumstance of water, air or land. ■

# Double Team

How Bell & Ross achieved its legend by concentrating on a simple message.

Exactly two decades ago, designer Bruno Belamich and businessman Carlos Rosillo launched Bell & Ross, a watch brand that centred on a simple statement: 'function shapes form'. These two friends would go on to ensure that their timepieces would reflect this mantra. To do this, the original look of their timepieces was built around a key instrument used by professionals: the dashboard. Four pillars were built upon this foundation to ensure the brand never deviated from its foundation. Readability, functionality, precision and reliability were prioritised in the construction of its timepieces and these fundamentals quickly drew an appreciative following.

What Bell & Ross had wanted, in its conception, was to be a timepiece for professionals working under extreme conditions, and its founders reasoned that the people best positioned to know what attributes of a timepiece were most necessary were the professionals themselves. Many a timepiece was created with specific professionals in mind: the Bell & Ross *Bomb*





# Ages of Elegance

From cinematic-inspired glamour to a new beauty and body collection inspired by the spirit of an iconic trench coat, this season is all about pampering and celebrating yourself.

## Film Noir

Inspired by Hollywood sirens of the 1940s, **Laura Mercier's** Fall 2012 colour story is soft, sultry and undeniably moody, evoking all the imagery associated with cool beauties like Ingrid Bergman, Katharine Hepburn and Rita Hayworth. The look is modern yet dramatic, while the pervading hues include smoky teals, rich chocolates and creamy nudes.



## All The Sea's Softness

Fans of **La Mer's** legendary crème will be delighted to learn there's a softer, more delicate version available now as well. The new *Moisturizing Soft Cream* delivers the same radiance and renewal as the original crème, but with a supple new texture developed using a new, but no less luxurious lighter, formula.



## Autumnal Elegance

After all the pomp and gaiety of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and the Summer Olympics, you can still carry the aura and excitement of Brit chic with you by pampering yourself with **Burberry's** new Body collection. As the next big step in the legendary British label's 155-year-old history, it's undoubtedly the right finishing touch should you wish to evoke all the jaunty tradition associated with this iconic brand.



## Little Darling

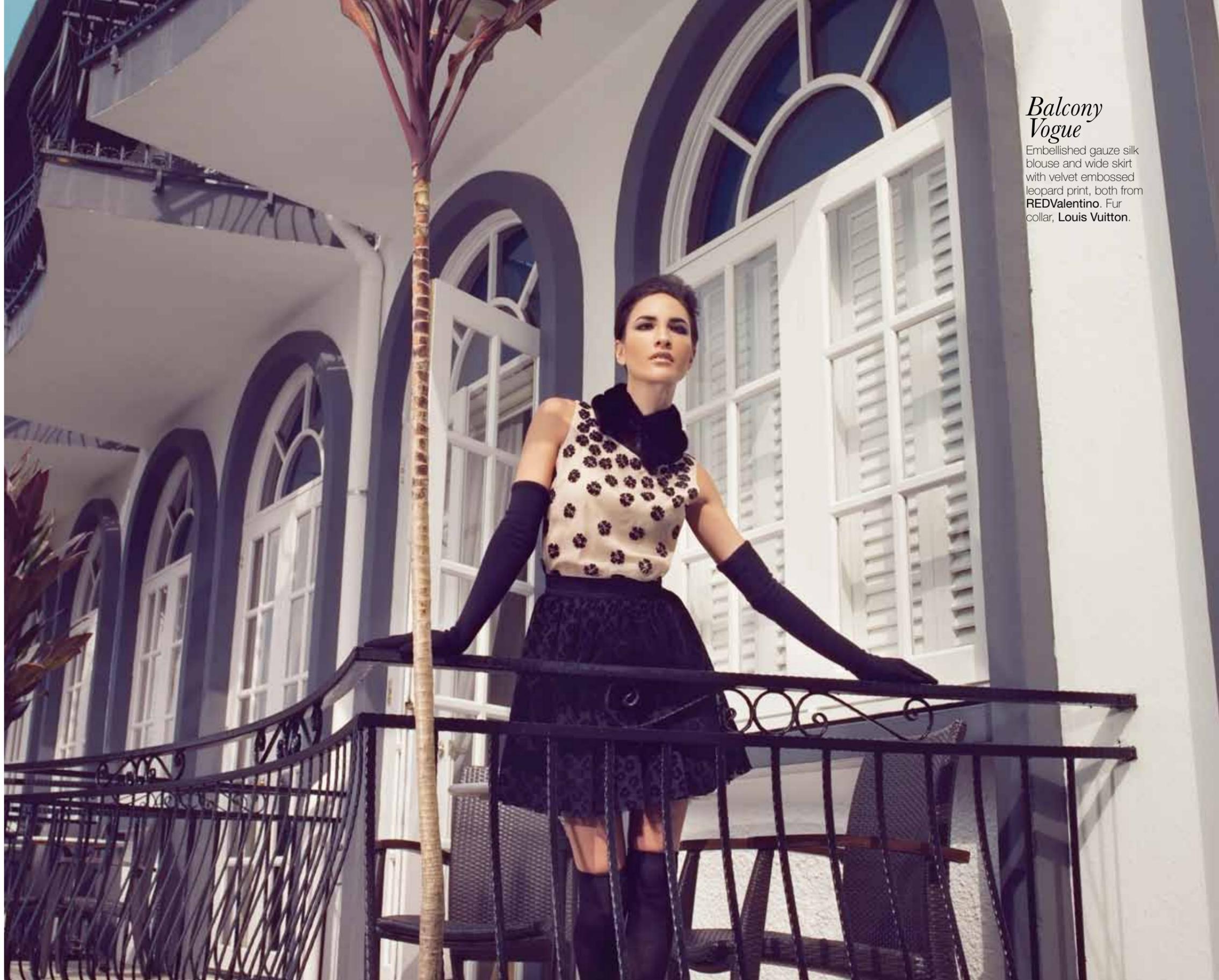
Inspired by her daughter, legendary perfumer **Annick Goutal** has created several scents for her beautiful child, Camille, including this lovely fresh and fruity scent, which she promptly christened *Petite Cherie* – or 'Little Darling'. exuding notes of pear, peach, musk rose and vanilla, it evokes all the delightful insouciance of a beautiful, cheeky child.

beautiful life //

# On High Ground

*Reflect on the past as  
you soak in the old-  
world charm of Cameron  
Highlands, dressed,  
naturally, in your best  
colours and prints.*

Photographed by Chintoo at Cameron Highlands Resort, Malaysia  
Styling Andrea Wong Hair & Makeup Joey Yap  
Model Katherine/Wu Models



## *Balcony Vogue*

Embellished gauze silk  
blouse and wide skirt  
with velvet embossed  
leopard print, both from  
REDValentino. Fur  
collar, Louis Vuitton.

*Hand In  
Glove*

Long red dress  
with leaf details,  
Shiatzy Chen. Tan  
leather coat with  
red lining, Fendi.



*Print Pleasure*

Printed shift dress, McQ  
Alexander McQueen.  
Plume necklace with  
metal chain, Khoon Hooi.



*Garden Chic*

Blood orange peplum jacket, pony hair skirt and necklace with pom poms, all from Khoon Hooi.

*The Right Spot*

Leopard print jacket and flared skirt, both from REDValentino. Maroon patent leather heeled loafers with hardware buckle, Louis Vuitton.





### *Outdoor Cut*

Grey wool cape and fur booties, both from **Louis Vuitton**. Maroon patent leather top handle bag with gold studs, **Valentino**. Maroon hat, **DSquared2** @ Antoinette, Starhill Gallery

beautiful life //

### *On The Steps*

Yellow dress with sequined black flowers and pointed-toe pumps with studded tips, both from **Louis Vuitton**.



*Fusion  
Print*

Wool two-tone blouse and brocade box-pleated skirt, both from **Kenzo**. Brown patent leather tooled clutch, **Sergio Rossi**.



# The Princess And The Moon

An enduring myth from the northern Malaysian state of Kedah, the story of Puteri Lindungan Bulan, the princess who was sheltered by the moon wherever she went, is the inspiration behind one of the Spa Village at Pangkor Laut Resort's most popular experiences.

Text by **Diana Khoo** Photography by **Law Soo Phye**

One of the most unique spas in the world, the Spa Village at Pangkor Laut Resort is a haven of wellness and relaxation. Surrounded by lush gardens and the clear waters around the bijou island, the spa is a unique retreat, offering the healing cultures of the region all in one perfectly-formed location. However, given its unique location, situated off the west coast of Malaysia and set along the Straits of Malacca, it is to be expected that the Malay-inspired treatments here are nonpareil. Traditional Malay medicine and health disciplines form part of the core of the

*Prepare for the Royal Secrets of the Puteri Lindungan Bulan spa ritual with a series of bathing ceremonies.*





Clockwise from right: Ingredients used in the beauty ritual; the spa journey is preceded by a session of traditional Chinese foot-pounding; cocoon yourself in the luxury of Spa Village Pangkor Laut's private treatment rooms.



Left: Traditional Malay deep tissue massage is one of the elements of the Puteri Lindungan Bulan treatment; a selection of healing and therapeutic oils.



#### THE ENDURING LEGEND OF PUTERI LINDUNGAN BULAN

Based on a legend from the northern Malaysian state of Kedah, Puteri Lindungan Bulan was said to be one of the daughters of Sultan Sulaiman Shah and whose blood flowed white, not red. A mystical beauty, the Puteri (princess) was believed to have been born out of a giant jasmine flower. She also enjoyed the protection of the moon wherever she went. The origins of this tale are, of course, now shrouded in myth, but tales have been told of how her legendary beauty attracted the attention of the evil ruler of Acheh, who waged war on the sultanate in order to capture the moon princess. Although the origins of the tale are now lost in time, there is, however, historical proof of a devastating attack by an Achenese armada on Kota (Fort) Siputeh, sometime in the 1600s – during the reign of Sultan Sulaiman Shah.

Spa Village Pangkor Laut's treatments, incorporating the wisdom of generations and based on the healing properties of local herbs and plants. And one of the best ways to fully experience the therapeutic qualities of the Malay healing arts would be over a three-hour spa journey aptly named the **Royal Secrets of Puteri Lindungan Bulan**.

It is almost a spiritual journey of sorts as one prepares for this experience, based on a historical legend and named after a mystical princess from an ancient Kedahan kingdom in Malaysia's north, who was said to possess white blood and enjoyed the shelter of the moon wherever she went. It begins, of course, with the Spa Village's unique bath house experience, as your therapists prepare you for the ritual to follow with a series of bathing ceremonies unique to the region, including a session of foot-pounding, a Malay riverine bath, a Japanese-style bath and soak in a hot tub, and, to end it all, a vigorous Shanghaiese back scrub.

Once you are glowing and gleaming, rest for a moment or perhaps sip a little tea in the sea-facing spa library before the actual experience begins. My therapist Iluh soon leads me to a private treatment room, where the Puteri Lindungan Bulan experience begins with session of **Urutan Gamelan**, a traditional Malay deep tissue massage designed to stimulate energy points while loosening and relaxing muscles. Her long, sweeping strokes are firm and, coupled with deft fingerwork on pressure points, proved highly therapeutic. Once the body is sufficiently kneaded into a state of relaxation, an invigorating blend of pandanus-scented *serapi* and olive oil is then massaged onto the scalp in a hair treatment known as **Ikal Mayang**. A beauty therapy said to originate in the royal Malay courts, Ikal Mayang is a wonderful and immensely soothing way to restore lustre to tired tresses. A cool blend of natural ingredients like turmeric, galangal and rice powder is then applied all over the body, only to be sloughed off once dried, leaving skin soft and thoroughly exfoliated.

The pampering worthy of any princess then continues with a languorous immersion in a milk bath, in a royal bathing ritual known as **Bersiram**. Rose petals, lime, pandanus leaves and jasmine buds add to the aroma-therapeutic experience, while your therapist brings you hot herbal tonic to sip as you soak. This drink, made from scented herbal roots and flowers and known as **Ubat Periuk**, is prepared in an earthen pot and said to be a traditional anti-aging remedy. After about 15 minutes or so, Iluh beckons me to step into a batik-clad steam machine for **Ukup Wangi**, where my body would reap further benefits by a detoxifying steam session, scented with roses, jasmine and pandanus.

While the Royal Secrets of Puteri Lindungan Bulan might be based on the once-forgotten beauty rituals of princesses from ancient Malay kingdoms, little by little, the Spa Village at Pangkor Laut Resort is rebuilding an entire wealth of local remedies and therapies, and sharing

the benefits with all those lucky enough to find their way to the spa's healing huts. I'd also read about how the spa prides itself on combining its physical treatment with elements of spiritual health and wellbeing, and how all treatments are based on the pillars of Rejuvenation and Longevity, Relaxation and Stress Reduction, Detoxification and Romance. It's wonderful to know then that, in this unique, therapeutic journey named after a mystical moon princess and set on a tropical island spa, everything came together so beautifully. The stuff of legend, you might say.

*The Royal Secrets of Puteri Lindungan Bulan is preceded by the Spa Village Pangkor Laut's bath house ritual. Please allow four hours for the treatment. To book, kindly contact: +60 5 699 1100. ■*



# Strong Beauty

Let your reflection be one of poise, power and perfection, particularly when accented with all the new desirables this season.

**Hurrah For Raf!**  
Raf Simons' debut collection for **Dior** Couture 2012 has gotten the jet-set in a tizzy, with his elegant mesh of Monsieur Dior's design codes interjected with his own signature dynamics. From a ball gown silhouette, inspired by pieces from the house's archives, Simons has reworked it for the modern woman, slicing and shortening it to be worn as a dress or, perhaps, with cigarette pants, but always, always with a respectful nod to the history and legend that is the house of Christian Dior.



**Hot For Hublot**  
Green has been 'in' for some time now but **Hublot** takes it to an altogether different level with its emerald-hued *Boa Bang* timepieces, available in gold or silver expressions. With its 41mm dial and strong lugs crafted from black composite resin, it's a powerful accessory, designed to toughen up even the most delicate wrists!



**Sculpted In Dreams**  
The house of **Boucheron** has long been delighting women with its high jewellery creations ever since it was founded in 1858. After all, as its founder Frederic Boucheron once said: "Creating emotion is our reason for being." And, true to its *raison d'être*, its new *L'Artisan du Rêve* collection delves right into the essence of the maison, with a medley of bijoux, ranging from necklaces to shoulder brooches and hairpins, that will not disappoint. This collection was recently presented during the 26th Biennale des Antiquaires at Paris' Grand Palais.



**Strong Is The New Skinny**  
With strong profiles and powerful silhouettes that bring to mind the creative imagery of ensembles put together by the likes of Marie-Amélie Sauvé and Tiina Laakkonen, it's no surprise then that **Khoon Hooi's** Autumn/Winter 2012 looks are mind-blowing. Inspired by the idea of 'heroic beauty', the designer is generous with his signature unstructured avant-garde edginess, while softening the final result with delicate beadwork and soft detailing.

# Gastro Gem

Few places in the world can boast such a concentration of culinary excellence per square kilometre. **Diana Khoo** embarks on a culinary pilgrimage to the village of Bray in south-east England's picturesque county of Berkshire.

Photography by **Yong Keen Keong**

With its white-hot roster of superstar chefs, from legendary enfant terrible Marco Pierre White to fresh-faced Jason Atherton, as well as sacrosanct dining traditions like taking tea at The Ritz and not forgetting the exciting kerfuffle of food markets like Borough and Smithfield, it's hardly surprising that many people are now looking to England as one of the world's most exciting food destinations. The jewel in its culinary crown, though, is not a teeming metropolitan city, but a little countryside village. Before anyone starts sneering, do know that this 'village' is home to half of the UK's four three Michelin-starred restaurants; namely, Heston Blumenthal's **The Fat Duck** and Alain Roux's **The Waterside Inn**, making it reason enough to base yourself here for a few days, sampling the local cuisine.

*Clockwise, from top right: Elegant cuisine at The Waterside Inn; YTL Hotels' Bray House is the perfect place to stay during your gastro-tour of Bray and Berkshire; The Crown Pub owned by Heston Blumenthal demands a look-in.*



The top two restaurants to visit on any self-respecting gourmet's list would undoubtedly be both the above. For those with a taste for the innovative and cutting-edge, it would be wise to start making your reservations for The Fat Duck now for a taste of Mr Blumenthal's fantastical feasts, as the recommended reservation time can be up to four or five weeks in advance, no less. Guests are also advised to block off at least three and a half hours to experience the full glories of Heston's lengthy 14-course degustations. Priced at £180++ per head, expect to sample a wide variety of his celebrated dishes, which may range from the weird to the wonderful. Start with nitro poached aperitifs before moving on to, perhaps, red cabbage gazpacho served with Pommery grain mustard ice cream, snail porridge with Iberico Bellota ham and ending with Whisk(e)y wine gums.

For those whose palates prefer refined classics served with contemporary flair, The Waterside Inn is a gustatory delight and remains one of haute gastronomy's leading lights. Founded by the celebrated brotherly duo of Michel and Albert Roux of Le Gavroche fame, it is now run by Michel's son Alain. With its superb riverine location, the Inn also offers an elegant eight-seater boat or, to be more precise, an electric launch, so guests may enjoy their aperitif (or digestif) hour right on the Thames itself. The food is, needless to say, exceedingly elegant,

with the menu positively bursting with the freshest ingredients from both sides of the Channel. Depending on the season, you may feast on succulent milk-fed lamb from the Pyrenees or wonderful Wiltshire asparagus. There might also be flaked Devon crab or Cornish lobster poached in bouillon. The Waterside Inn's desserts are also the stuff of legend, so make sure to save some room for sweet treats like warm rhubarb soufflé with raspberries or the moist savarin cake garnished with lemon cream and drizzled with light Campari syrup. For those who simply can't decide, there's Alain et Michel's selection of six desserts or the Grande Assiette de Douceurs au Chocolat, a selection of purely chocolatey treats.

The other two dining establishments in Bray to drop in on are **The Crown**, a lovely pub that dates back to the 16th century, and **The Hinds Head** – both of which, it must be mentioned, are also owned by Heston Blumenthal, thus making it a must-visit on a gourmet's itineraries. The Crown at Bray, though, is exceedingly different from The Fat Duck. With its low-beamed ceilings and welcoming open fireplaces, it's a wonderful place to head to after a long day exploring the Berkshire countryside. The selection of local ales is excellent, with some from Faversham in Kent as well as from all the way north in Edinburgh. The Crown initially started life as two separate cottages before it become a pub, even supplying beer to cottages in the area. Rumour also had it that King Charles II sometimes called round for a drink en route to visiting his mistress, the infamous Nell Gwynn, who lived at Holyport. The food at The Crown is cheerful, hearty pub grub – although, given its proprietorship, standards are high and the detail given to ingredients is top-notch. Indulge in Cornish deep sea mussels cooked in cider with Granny Smith apples or perhaps smear a



### A LITTLE FURTHER AFIELD

While Bray is the undisputed mecca of eating well in Berkshire, there are, as well, a few other not-to-be-missed gustatory gems.

**Cliveden** – Aristocratic, overwhelmingly grand and architecturally-spectacular, this majestic country manor-turned-hotel was built in 1666 by the second Duke of Buckingham and used to be the seat of the Astor family, who lived here until the 1960s. It was during this era, too, that Cliveden got tainted with the brush of scandal as it was the setting for the infamous Profumo affair that led to the collapse of the Tory government shortly thereafter. Dining here is a grand affair but, to fully take advantage of the sweeping views Cliveden affords, it would be equally lovely to come here to experience the art of the English afternoon tea service in all its glory. A hint: ask for a table by the library window for the best views.

**The Windsor Farm Shop** – Bray's proximity to Windsor Castle means it's a right doddle getting there in no time to catch the Changing of the Guard or, perhaps, to peer in at the exquisite detail of Queen Mary's Sir Edwin Lutyens-designed Doll House. But, for a posh taste of this genteel county, drive along Datchet Road to visit the Windsor Farm Shop's pleasant coffee shop where coffee, cakes and delicious pastries are served. During the summer, there's also ice cream from the Royal Dairy. If you prefer to dine al fresco, pop by the shop for a fresh loaf, jam and perhaps a wedge of the local cheese (try the Stinking Bishop), and find a quiet lay-by for a picnic. Don't forget to pick up a bottle or two of the delicious Sandringham Apple Juice as well, the very same label served during Buckingham Palace's garden parties and receptions.

**The Angel on the Bridge** – The pretty-as-a-picture village of Henley-on-Thames is also a popular place to visit. Every summer, the village swells to bursting as rowing enthusiasts (participants as well as spectators) descend upon it for the annual Henley Royal Regatta. One of the best places to perch yourself, though, would be at the village's famous The Angel on the Bridge pub. Offering wonderful river views and a great place for people-watching or swan-spotting, it also serves up delicious meals, like crayfish salad, pork chops with cider pan gravy or the ubiquitous scampi and chips.

rough but tasty potted duck onto hunks of hot chewy bread. A simple supper could consist of a soft boiled hen's egg accompanied by a cheese toastie or, if you're dining à deux, there's also the chili con carne with corn bread muffins that's designed to feed two. If you still haven't had enough of exploring Berkshire, take advantage of The Crown's wonderful hampers, which are designed as a gourmet picnic for four and contain delectable like a generous wedge of Dickenson & Morris' Melton Mowbray pork pie, Coronation Chicken thigh salad, chunks of cheese, mezze, bread, crackers and, to finish, fresh English strawberries with butter shortbread and clotted cream.

For those who didn't manage to score a table at The Fat Duck, console yourself at The Hinds Head, whose eclectic menu of long-forgotten British recipes (produced in collaboration with food historians), Tudor-era dishes and modern-day cuisine is certain to thrill all taste buds. More gastro-pub by nature, the food here is splendid and might remind diners slightly of Mr Blumenthal's London dining room, Dinner by Heston Blumenthal at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park. Begin the meal on a sparkling note with a flute of rhubarb champagne fizz (made with Deutz champagne, no less) before dining on interesting (and delicious) dishes like hash of snails, ham hock and foie gras terrine, Aberdeenshire rib-eye with bone marrow sauce, and oxtail and kidney pudding. Those who enjoy history or trivia might be interested to know that The Hinds Head was built in the 15th-century, the same time the House of Tudor began its ascension. Although no one can be sure of why it was built (some say it was a royal hunting



lodge, others suggest it was an abbot's guest house), few can doubt its popularity with the Royal Family. It is reported that Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, had held his stag night here prior to marrying Queen Elizabeth II in 1947, while Her Majesty's sister, Princess Margaret, also celebrated her engagement to Anthony Armstrong-Jones (later Lord Snowdon) at The Hinds Head. ■

*Clockwise, from top: The Angel on the Bridge is a perfect place to stop for a meal or coffee break if you're visiting the pretty village of Henley-on-Thames; The Fat Duck remains one of Bray's biggest draws; innovative, eclectic cuisine at the Hinds Head.*



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# When West Meets East

Cooking show host, author, lecturer and chef, Johann Lafer embarks on a new project producing a collaborative cookbook with former protégé Wai Look Chow, YTL Hotels' Corporate Executive Chef. The Shook! restaurant guest chef discusses the influence of his background on his culinary inspirations and the immersive pleasures the world of gastronomy affords him.

Text by **Petrina Jo Fernandez**

Vacationing in the picturesque Pangkor Laut Resort, Chef Johann Lafer stumbled upon a quiet gem in the YTL Hotels' property's Fisherman's Cove restaurant, where Chef Wai Look Chow was conjuring fine seafood dishes for hungry holidaymakers. The exact recipe that won the Austrian-German's heart is uncertain but he recognised, in the immaculate execution, a rare expertise and creativity that could be further cultivated for culinary greatness. Fate soon took its course and Chef Wai accepted an invitation to train at the Michelin-starred Le Val d'Or restaurant in Germany, within Lafer's 14-room Stromburg hotel, housed in a medieval castle.

A decade has since passed but the bond between the two has deepened from professional respect and trust to one of genuine affection, cemented by frequent visits and a shared boundless love for gastronomy. So harmonious is their culinary rapport that a collaborative cookbook is in the works: *Two Chefs, One Cuisine*, due for release in Germany early next year, condenses the progression of the relationship between the chefs from mentor and apprentice to equals, each inspiring the other with their culinary prowess and native cuisines in their travels around Germany and Malaysia.

Catching up with the stout chef at Starhill Gallery's Shook! restaurant, the scene is one of controlled chaos as Chef Lafer routinely disappears into the kitchen where Chef Wai is overseeing meticulous preparations of a five-course menu with strands



of Asian, Austrian and German influences for a gala dinner later that night. A celebration of the cookbook, the dinner boasts an impressive guest list that includes, apart from known epicureans, the ambassadors of Germany and Austria.

"We worked very hard to put together a menu that would showcase the best of this fusion, marrying local ingredients with Western cooking techniques," says Chef Lafer, who strongly advocates the incorporation of local produce whether at home or abroad. "There is a story behind every product you buy and it begins with where it was grown. I shy away from buying or consuming imported produce as



Chef Wai and Chef Johann Lafer harvesting rhubarb at an organic farm in the Rhine-Main region in Germany.

Market day in Malaysia – choosing mangoes and stink beans.



Pleasure is a necessary theme associated with food. Not one who subscribes to comfort eating, he says, "Food always tastes better when you're happy and I've always correlated eating with positive emotions. When I do eat, the food has to be good, whether it's take-away French fries or a fine sit-down meal at a restaurant." Though his favourite dish is Wiener Schnitzel with fried potatoes, Chef Lafer pauses briefly when coaxed to recall the best meal he'd ever had. "There are so many elements that need to meet for you to truly enjoy a dining experience, from the atmosphere or ambience to the service, the food and one's mood. One of my fondest dining memories was a meal in Bangkok almost 25 years ago – we were at a riverside Thai restaurant and they served this exquisite pork cooked in banana leaves. The flavour was incredible unique and original and, combined with the good weather and company, it was a meal I never forgot."

The mention of pork leads to talk of ingredients and recipes, subjects the chef is only too happy to discuss, citing abundant

"We worked very hard to put together a menu that would showcase the best of this fusion, marrying local ingredients with Western cooking techniques."

spices and herbs as must-haves in any dish. "I had the privilege to experience many local ingredients in my Malaysian visits and some that fascinated me were pandan leaves, kaffir lime leaves and hibiscus flowers. We had a simple dish the other day, an assemblage of cold rice and fresh herbs, and its crisp cleanliness of flavour was stunning." At home, he uses Asian herbs and spices liberally over local meats. "I was one of the first chefs in Germany to pioneer European and Asian fusion. Ingredients such as lemongrass incite different facets and flavours of meat, especially German pork."

Chef Lafer, who includes piloting helicopters among his numerous interests, believes he may have handed down his culinary talent to his teenage daughter. "She once served me a perfect dessert from my first cookbook and I was overwhelmed," he says. His advice to her – or any budding chef – was to arm herself with the best products and equipment, and approach the art with unbridled passion. "You should always look for the best in quality, whether in your tools or within yourself. Growing up on a farm, where most of what we cooked was home-grown, I quickly learnt that you need to respect yourself and your food. It comes across in your creations." ■



much as possible – it may stem from my growing up on a farm and living in Germany, where there is a strong emphasis on using regional produce." The stress on supporting local farmers and agriculture tinges of an unspoken yearning to showcase the region's capabilities. "Contrary to belief, cooking local is neither limiting nor restrictive – I believe it's the way of the future," says the Michelin-starred chef. "It just makes economic and environmental sense and, cooking-wise, you are guaranteed the best and freshest."

The Austrian-born chef absorbed the foundation of his passion cooking alongside his mother as a lad in Steiermark, carrying her passion to impart joy with food beyond the circle of his family. After training in Graz, he moved to Germany, where he travelled from Berlin to Hamburg, working with Josef Viehauser at Le Canard, before a stint picking up the finer points of patisserie with Gaston Lenotre in Paris. Chef Lafer worked as an executive chef for 11 years before venturing out on his own and, back in Germany, where he lives with wife Silvia Buchholz-Lafer and their children, he lectures in Food Sciences at the University of Fulda, hosts a popular televised cooking show, has several cookbooks to his name and runs Table d'Or, a prestigious cooking school that accepts just 800 students a year – a small percentage of the 14,000 applications annually received.



Photography by Corrina Foong

# Packing A Punch

Chia Kuan Pow, or Chef Pow, as he is affectionately known, certainly packs a wallop with his delicious, spice-laden creations served up daily at The Majestic Malacca's Mansion restaurant.

Text by Diana Khoo Photography by Yong Keen Keong

Peranakan or Nyonya cuisine has always been the emblematic of the Straits Settlements – the former group of British territories in the Malay Peninsula, consisting of Penang, Malacca and Singapore – that were established in 1826 by the British East India Company, before coming under direct British control. An intriguing *mélange* of Malay and Chinese customs and sensibilities, the original Nyonyas were the result of inter-marriage between the Chinese Princess Hang Li Po's ladies-in-waiting to the local Malaccans of the Sultanate in the 1500s. Since then, the term 'Peranakan' has also gone to define the Straits Chinese, who have long since settled in these three places, creating an interesting diffusion, along with customs, fashions and cuisine that are so inextricably their own.

One good place to indulge in authentic Peranakan cuisine would be at The Majestic Malacca, a property steeped in history and

located in the historical and cultural heart of the city, facing the history-soaked Malacca River which, hundreds of years ago, was a bustling waterway for the spice trade. Heading the kitchen of The Mansion, the hotel's signature restaurant, is Chef Chia Kuan Pow, or simply Chef Pow, as he is more often referred to.

A local boy, Chef Pow has helmed The Majestic Malacca's kitchens for over a year now. "I was destined to work with food," says the 44-year-old. "My family has always worked in the food industry and I have been cooking since I was a small boy, having been taught by my mother. I even learnt how to make challenging dishes like *yong tow foo* (fish-moussed bean cakes) from the age of 12," he beams.

Having gained valuable experience under the watchful eyes of a Hong Kong *sifu* (master), Chef Pow has also worked in England

before deciding to return to Malaysia and, specifically, Malacca, his hometown, to practice his craft. "I've been cooking for some 22 years now," he says shyly, "and I really love preparing Peranakan dishes. Some people have said it's not the easiest cuisine to cook, due to the numerous spices and ingredients. But it was easy for me as I've always loved cooking. One thing I've learnt over the years is that, as long as your ingredients are fresh and of the best quality, somehow, the dish will turn out tasting right."

**What are your five favourite ingredients?**

Garlic, ginger, chilli, shallots and *tauchu*, a type of fermented bean paste. I love using spices in my cooking!

**When did you realise you wanted to be a chef?**

Food is an integral part of my family and there's never a day when

The Majestic Malacca's signature restaurant The Mansion is helmed by Chef Pow. Below: The Bar at The Majestic Malacca.



"The most important step in Peranakan cooking is also getting the *rempah* (spice paste) right, which forms the basis for most dishes."



Chef Pow has been cooking for 22 years and still loves it.



life cuisine //

we don't speak about it, discuss it or talk about what we're going to have for dinner. Food and cooking will always be part of my life.

**Many people say Peranakan cuisine is difficult to learn and prepare. What would your advice be?**

To really master the art of Peranakan cooking, it is important to first learn about the ingredients. Know the herbs and spices you are going to work with and it gets easy from there. The most important step in Peranakan cooking is also getting the *rempah* (spice paste) right, which forms the basis for most dishes. Once you do, it becomes easy. Having said that, I try to make all my own *rempah* from scratch as I like them fresh and pure. This way, your dishes will have maximum flavour and oomph.

**What are the most popular dishes at The Mansion?**

These would be the ayam *pongteh* and the prawns and pineapple in *lemak* curry. I notice it's popular not just with the locals, but also with our Caucasian guests as well. Having said that, another thing most guests always look out for would be my chicken rice.

**What do you do once the kitchen closes for the day?**

I usually go out to look for something quick and easy to eat. Chefs, as a rule, like simple food. My favourite thing after a hard day's cooking would be plain noodles with soy sauce and some wonton dumplings on the side.

**You're a local boy. Where would you recommend for authentic and delicious street food?**

Go to Jalan Ong Kim Wee to try its famous pork satay *celup*; the *laksa* at the Yung Lai Siang coffeeshop, just across the road from the hotel, is also very good; there's good steamboat to be had in Melaka Raya and, for Peranakan dishes, try Anak Nyonya; and, if you have a car and don't mind travelling a little further, go to Kota Laksamana, where there's a very good claypot *assam pedas*. ■

**Pong Taufu Soup**

**Ingredients A**

- 350gm fish meat
- 4 pieces bean curd
- 3tbsp corn flour
- ½ tsp salt
- ½tsp white pepper

**Ingredients B**

- 2 litres fish stock
- 2½ tbsp cooking oil
- 150gm shallot
- 100gm garlic
- 1 tbsp *tauchu* (fermented bean paste)
- 300gm turnip
- 300gm carrot

**Method**

1. Blend Ingredients A and knead until a dough is formed. Shape dough into 2.5cm balls. Heat oil and fry until golden brown. Drain and set aside.
2. Leave 2½ tbsp cooking oil in the wok. Fry garlic, onion and *tauchu* until aromatic. Add fish stock and bring to boil.
3. Reduce broth by a quarter and add turnip and carrot. Simmer until soft. Add fish balls, salt and white pepper and simmer for another five minutes.
4. Garnish with spring onion. Ready to serve.

**Assam Pedas**

**Ingredients**

- 20 pieces dried chillies, soaked in hot water and drained
- 3 stalks of lemon grass, sliced
- 2cm fresh turmeric, chopped
- 1 big red onion, chopped
- 5 cloves garlic
- 20g *belacan*
- 2tsp sugar
- 50g tamarind pulp
- 30g *daun kesom*
- 3 cups water
- 2 pieces ginger flower, cut into quarters
- 1 tomato, quartered, as garnish
- Okra*, as garnish
- Salt to taste
- Fish fillets

**Method**

Blend the spices – lemongrass, onion, garlic, turmeric and chilli – until smooth. Heat oil in wok over low fire and sauté spices until the oil separates. Mix in tamarind pulp, ginger flower and *daun kesom*. Bring to boil for at least 15 minutes and season to taste with salt and sugar. Add fish fillet and simmer until the fish is cooked.

**Nyonya Kuih Pie Tee**

**Step 1**

- 1 metal Pie Tee mould
- 100g plain flour
- 1tbsp rice flour
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 180ml water
- Oil for deep frying

**Step 2**

- 350g *sengkuang* (turnip), julienned
- 1 carrot
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2 shallot, chopped
- 20g dried shrimp
- 6 prawns, shelled, cooked and chopped
- Salt to taste
- White pepper to taste
- A dash of oyster sauce
- Spring onion, finely chopped, as garnish

**Method**

Pour all ingredients from Step 1 into a bowl and beat with electronic mixer. Heat oil in wok with the mould in the oil. Dip the mould into the batter so it's evenly coated and then deep fry the batter. To remove the case from the mould while frying, jiggle the mould up and down. Once the case turns light brown, remove from the wok and set aside. To cook the filling, add some oil into a wok. Stir fry the chopped garlic, dry shrimps and shallots until light brown. Add in prawns, turnip and carrot, season with salt, white pepper and oyster sauce. Cook for five minutes. To serve, fill the cases with the filling, garnish with spring onion and serve with chilli sauce.



Golf is one of the many outdoor pursuits on offer in Cameron Highlands.



# Highland Fling

Verdant Cameron Highlands has always been the hill station of choice for those looking for nearby respite from the tropical Malaysian heat. For those lucky enough to be heading for the hills, **Stephen Ooi**, resident pianist at the Cameron Highland Resort's Highlands Bar, tells you where to go and what to do.

Photography by **Yong Keen Keong & Sharon Lam**



## *Cream Of The Crop*

You can't come to Cameron Highlands and not treat yourself to a proper afternoon treat of fresh-baked scones and a big pot of tea. There are plenty of places around in which to indulge but always, always look out for the establishments that serve homemade strawberry jam and fresh cream. If not, eschew them. My favourites are scones made with raisins and nuts although I do say my wife's homemade cheese scones are the best.

## *Time For A Cuppa*

A visit to the BOH tea plantations is a must for any visitor to Cameron Highlands. Founded in 1929 by a British planter, James Archibald Russell, BOH today is one of Malaysia's favourite tea labels and its visitor centre and tea garden in Sungai Palas (left) is beautiful! I love coming here early in the morning, when it's quiet, and sit on the deck to enjoy the beautiful views of the tea estates, accompanied by a good book and, of course, a pot of tea.



Stephen Ooi is the Cameron Highlands Resort's resident pianist. He performs Mondays to Saturdays, from 7pm-11pm, at the Highlands Bar.



### *Sing-Along Songs*

If you do happen to be at the Cameron Highlands Resort, one of the things you must do is come and have a sing-along session with me. I perform nightly, except Sundays, from 7pm till 11pm at the Highlands Bar and I love having company. The musical score depends largely on the group in attendance but, I can tell you, the most requested songs are usually *Fly Me to the Moon* and *What a Wonderful World*.



### *All Steamed Up*

Enjoying hot pot meals is a great pleasure here, especially when it's nice and cold. And, with steamboat, the rule is simple: whatever you put in is what good you'll get out of it. Ambience is also key to enjoying this communal, convivial treat. I think Gonbei (above) at the Cameron Highlands Resort offers the loveliest setting ever, with several ways of enjoying hot pot; from Malaysian-style steamboat to Japanese *shabu-shabu* and *sukiyaki*.

### *Casual Chow*

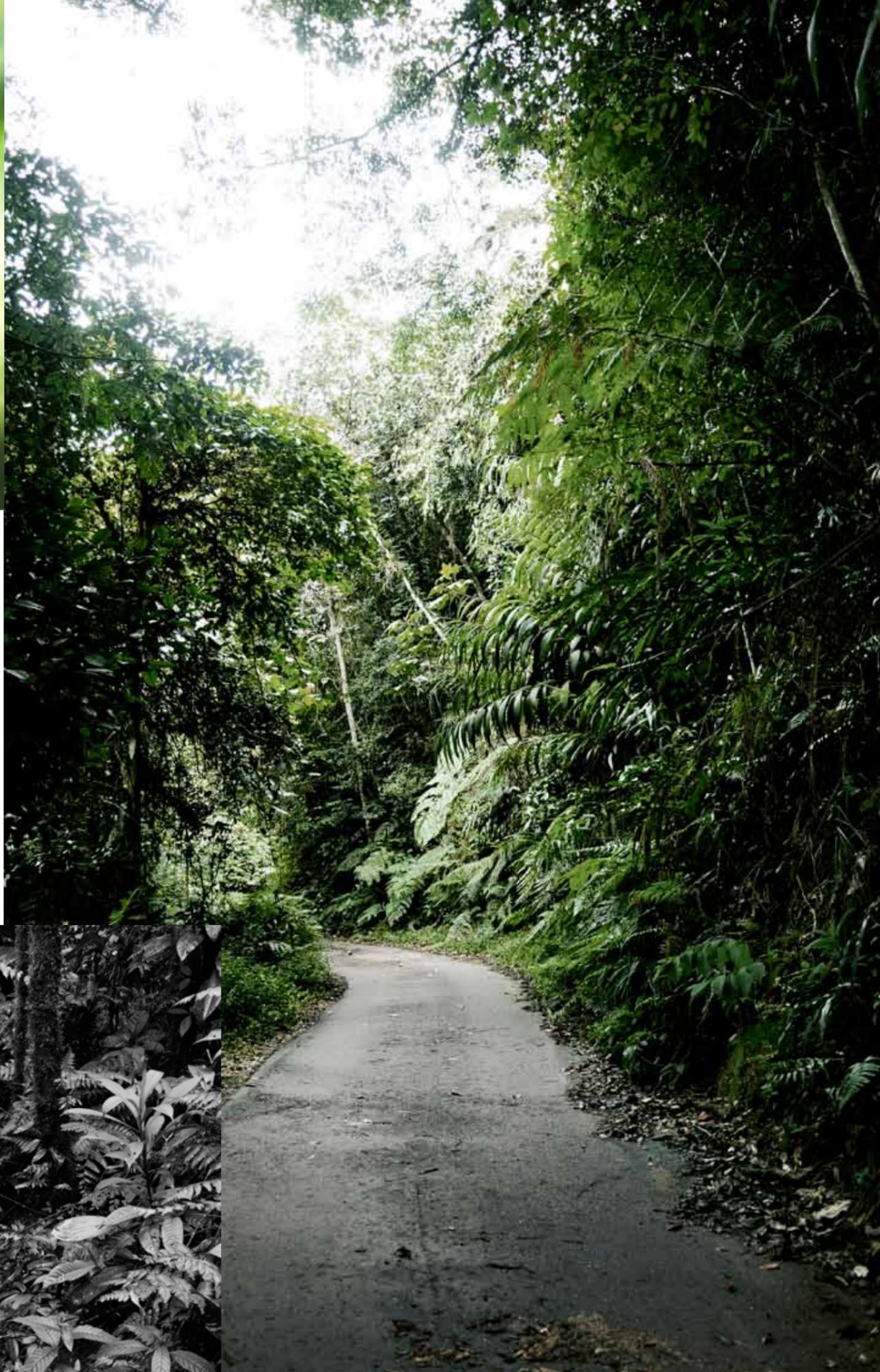
For simple, tasty fare, I like to go to Tringkap Restaurant, about 12km from the resort en route to Simpang Pulai. The food served here is interesting and quite different from the norm. Its house specialty is deep-fried filleted tilapia fish, which is spicy and crunchy, served drizzled with crispy curry leaves and accompanied by *kerabu*. Whenever I have friends visiting, it's a good place to have a meal before or after visiting the night market.





### *Berry Nice*

One of the favourite highland activities has to be **strawberry-picking**, especially among children! Whenever I go home to Penang for a visit and ask the youngsters in the family if they'd like to come and visit me in Camerons, they'd always say yes because they want to come and pick strawberries! A good place to go to for this is the **Big Red Strawberry** in Brinchang as it's covered and perfect for picking whatever the weather. It's also very self-contained and has its own snack bar where a post-picking ice cream is the ultimate treat.



### *Trekking Time*

Cameron Highlands is a perfect place for the adventurous as it's loaded with lots of exciting nature trails. The resort's resident naturalist, **S Madi** (above) is the undisputed expert. My favourite is actually the **Robinson Falls** trail, which takes you to the renowned Robinson Falls, crossing through a conventional small farm and along a stream before eventually coming out at Habu. It's a real jungle trail, in every sense of the word, and is also historical as it's one of the highlands' original trails. It's not very challenging but highly educational. All you really need is a pair of proper shoes!





### Causing A Stink

Stink beans or *petai* (left) grows abundantly in the surrounding jungle here. It's wild and grows in long branches from a very tall tree, which only the Orang Asli (aboriginal people) are adept at collecting. Look out for them by the wayside.



Right: Children at the Orang Asli settlement in Cameron Highlands.

### Going Greens

Before leaving the highlands, don't forget to stop by one of the roadside stalls to load up on as much highland-fresh veggies as your car boot allows. I especially love the lettuce and *kyuri* (Japanese cucumbers) grown here. I always say, here in the highlands, everything is said with either flowers or vegetables. You can even buy straight from certain farms. Just ask your concierge to point you in the right direction.

### Village Life

If your schedule permits, I also think visiting an Orang Asli settlement is incredibly interesting and insightful. They are the friendliest, most unworldly people you will ever meet, and I love seeing how they live with nature and are just so happy. It is encouraging to be reminded that, sometimes, the old ways are the best ways and one really doesn't need much in order to be happy. It's rare to meet people like these anymore, so I always like to pay them a visit whenever I can, as I always learn something new from them. ▀

# Explore The World of YTL Hotels...



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Set within the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, off the coast of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Borneo's latest luxury retreat sits gracefully on Gaya Island, the largest of the five islands in the marine park. Golden beaches and lush tropical rainforest beckon sun-worshippers and those wishing to commune with nature, while the island's waters teem with marine life, including bamboo sharks and enormous barrel sponges. Reconnect to a PURE world, the resort's activities programme that vivifies the senses.

One hundred and twenty luxurious hill villas and one two-bedroom suite invite you to embrace island living, while the resort's two distinctive restaurants, Feast Village and Fisherman's Cove, as well as a Spa Village allow for stylish indulging.

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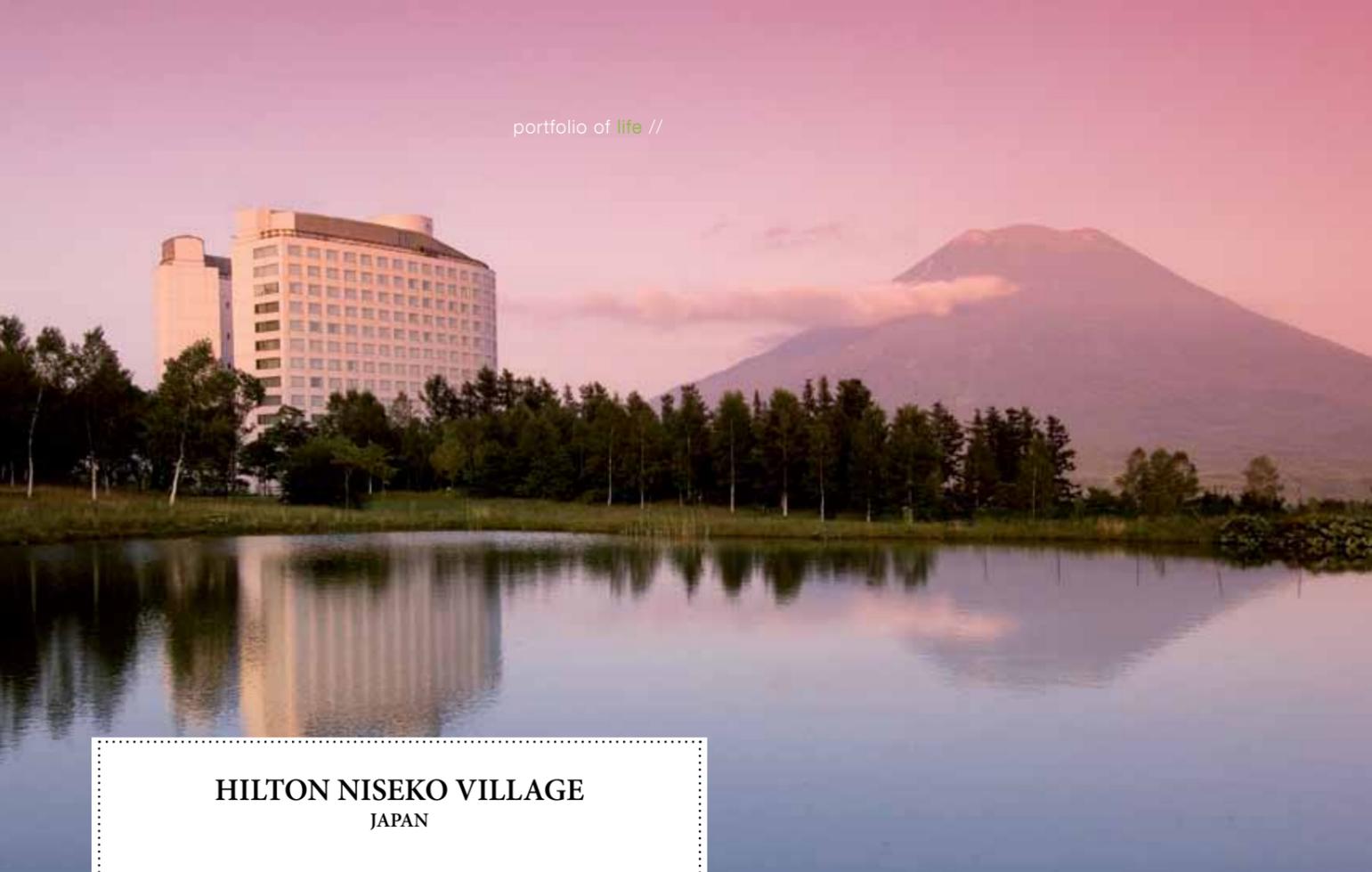


## THE GREEN LEAF NISEKO VILLAGE HOKKAIDO, JAPAN

Located in the heart of Niseko Village in Hokkaido, the newly unveiled The Green Leaf Niseko Village is the premium contemporary resort in Niseko, appealing to guests who want to enjoy a seamless experience of stay, snow and ski. The 200-room, ski-in, ski-out resort is perfectly-placed for all activities and offers a variety of dining options, including the Lookout Café and the hotel's rooftop bar, Altitude. Alternatively, relax in the forested *onsen*, a therapeutic natural volcanic hot spring guaranteed to soak away tension and time.

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### CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT MALAYSIA

Set amidst tea plantations and rolling hills, this tranquil hideaway promises visitors all the splendour, romance and nostalgia of Cameron Highlands' grand colonial heritage.

Cameron Highlands is Malaysia's largest hill resort and is largely unchanged since its colonial heyday, this 'little corner of England in Asia' is still dotted with Tudor-style cottages, a place where scones and afternoon tea will not seem out of place.

The resort, with its tall French doors, timber-beamed ceilings, plantation shutters and a fireplace, add old-world charm to the surroundings. It also houses a Spa Village as well as an 18-hole golf course and 56 luxuriously-appointed rooms and suites, which weave in wondrous colours and textures of Jim Thompson's famous silks.

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## PANGKOR LAUT RESORT MALAYSIA

Pangkor Laut is a privately-owned island located three miles off the west coast of Malaysia along the Straits of Malacca. This piece of paradise has been two million years in the making, and it is here you'll find one of the world's premier award-winning resorts nestling in the shade of forest giants as old as the land.

There are no other resorts – just secluded bays curled around pristine beaches, evening skies woven with colour and a deep sense of serenity reserved exclusively for guests. A combination of luxury, natural beauty and age-old wilderness woven together to produce an environment where peace and magically-memorable moments are the currency.

Of the island's 300 acres, only a fraction has been developed to house the resort and its eight estates. Wooden buildings blend seamlessly with the forest, as if nature had been the architect dictating how walls curve around foliage, and roofs open up to allow trees to continue on their journey to the sky.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000  
[www.pangkorlautresort.com](http://www.pangkorlautresort.com)



## THE ESTATES AT PANGKOR LAUT RESORT MALAYSIA

In a small, secluded cove near Pangkor Laut Resort rests the eight wonders that comprise The Estates. Each of these individually-crafted enclaves is reminiscent of the traditional South-East Asian way of living of days gone by, when an 'estate' was made up of a number of special purpose buildings placed amidst gardens of astounding beauty.

Comprising two, three or four bedrooms, each Estate offers a private infinity-edge pool, as well as pavilions in various adaptations of Malay architectural traditions.

There is also a private vehicle and driver assigned to each Estate should guests decide to leave the seclusion of their villa to dine at one of the resort's restaurants or to go for a treatment at the Spa Village.

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portfolio of life //

## THE MAJESTIC MALACCA MALAYSIA

The historic city of Malacca is steeped in a rich tapestry of multicultural influences reflected in its heritage architecture, diverse lifestyles and eclectic cuisine.

Located on the banks of the river which, in yesteryear, teemed with Chinese junks and spice-laden vessels from all over the world, The Majestic Malacca provides a glimpse into the splendid saga of an extraordinary empire.

The Majestic Malacca is an integral part of Malacca's colourful history. The original serene mansion, dating back to the 1920s, remains at the heart of the hotel, whilst a new building has been created, mirroring the original architecture, to house 54 spacious rooms and suites.

From the original porcelain flooring, teakwood fittings, intricate artwork and antiques, to the finely crafted Nyonya cuisine, every aspect echoes the history of the region, and offers a beguiling journey through this enchanting heritage.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000  
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## TANJONG JARA RESORT MALAYSIA

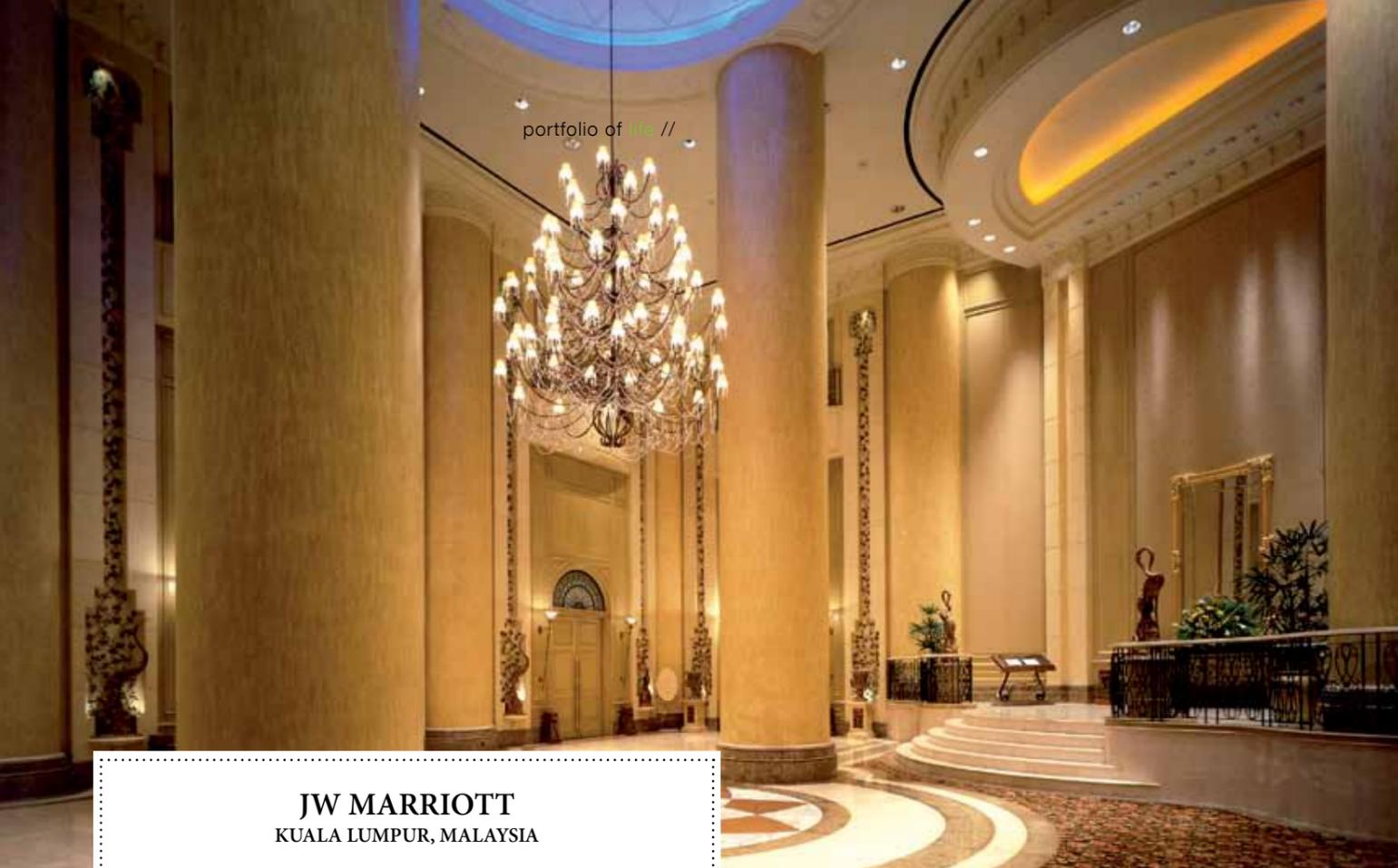
Located on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia, Tanjong Jara Resort is a sanctuary of luxury and well-being steeped in age-old Malay traditions. Designed to reflect the elegance and grandeur of 17th century Malay palaces, Tanjong Jara is a 99-room resort embodiment of the gentle Malay art of service and hospitality.

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Tanjong Jara is an opportunity to withdraw from the pressures of this ever-changing world by offering a chance to immerse oneself in a sanctuary of serenity and beauty.

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### JW MARRIOTT KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Guest rooms at JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur offer the ultimate in comfort and convenience, designed with the discerning business traveller in mind. An ample work area, with adjustable desk lighting and ergonomic chair, provides a comfortable environment for executives. Desk-mounted electrical outlets, two-line speaker telephones with call-waiting facility, fax modem and voice mail make for easy communication around the world.

Accommodation comprises 561 guest rooms with 294 Deluxe Kings, 172 Deluxe Twins, 25 Executive Deluxe Rooms, 19 Studio Suites, 32 Junior Suites, 2 Executive Studio Suites, 2 Executive Junior Suites, 8 one-bedroom Suites, 3 two-bedroom Suites, 2 VIP Suites, a Chairman's Suite and a luxurious Presidential Suite.

Marriott Marquis Platinum and Gold card members and guests occupying suites enjoy access to the JW Lounge, with its complimentary breakfast, light refreshments and evening cocktails.

Tel: +60 3 2715 9000  
www.ytlhotels.com



### THE RITZ-CARLTON KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Discover the exclusive Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur and experience a place where ancient rivers converge and a modern city beckons guests to explore the sights, sounds and flavours of Malaysia. Located downtown in the Golden Triangle business district, this distinctive five-star luxury hotel in Kuala Lumpur is conveniently accessible to upscale shopping, dining and entertainment. At The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, guests can indulge in soothing spa treatments, delectable cuisine or simply relax in the exceptional comfort of their rooms and take in the best the city has to offer.

The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is the city's first award-winning full-butler hotel, featuring 365 guest rooms and suites. The fresh style of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is influenced by a variety of themes reflecting Malaysia's diverse artistry of ethnic cultures. The dark-toned woods with angular designs reflect masculinity, while details like brass inlays add a touch of elegance. Rich earthy tones in the carpet and wall coverings are used to create a cosy, warm home-away-from-home ambience, while hidden modern technologies add a modern yet subtle flair.

Tel: +60 3 2142 8000  
www.ytlhotels.com





### VILLA TASSANA PHUKET, THAILAND

Set amidst a tropical forest on a craggy cliff overlooking the beautiful emerald green of the Andaman Sea is a gem in the YTL Hotels' portfolio of luxury holiday destinations. Located just 15 minutes away from Phuket International Airport on the island's quiet, undeveloped north-western coastline, Villa Tassana offers guests a vacation of modern sophistication married with Thai hospitality.

Spread over a generous 2,800 sq m, the villa features three large bedrooms with ensuite bath and dressing areas, a 15m swimming pool, separate living and dining pavilions, a kitchen and a maid's room. For those looking to get away from it all, Villa Tassana is staffed by one dedicated attendant and a chef specialising in delicious home-style Thai dishes.

Guests can also enjoy the first-class spa and sports facilities located at the nearby Trisara Hotel. There are three excellent golf courses nearby, including the exclusive Blue Canyon course, and a range of luxury motor yachts you can use to explore Phuket's many bays, islands and dive locations.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000  
www.ytlhotels.com



### THE SURIN PHUKET, THAILAND

The Surin Phuket offers guests a choice of 108 thatched cottages that sit cosily under a canopy of coconut groves, where landscaped slopes gently descend to meet a private stretch of sandy shore.

The appeal of the spacious 89 one-bedroom and 19 two-bedroom cottages is further enhanced with private verandahs, secluded sun decks and handcrafted teak floors.

A veritable gateway to a tropical island paradise, and renowned for its warm island hospitality and rustic serenity, The Surin Phuket also provides spa services, dining venues, meeting facilities and recreational activities.



Tel: +60 3 2783 1000  
www.ytlhotels.com



### SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI, INDONESIA

Dawn rises and an indigo curtain of stars is drawn back from the sky, exposing a dramatic landscape of soaring peaks that sweep down across grassy lowlands to the black volcanic sand that kisses the blue of the Bali sea. You are in Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali and the day has just begun.

Inspired by the award-winning Spa Village Pangkor Laut, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali embraces the same healing ethos of celebrating local culture, honouring the ancient remedies of the region and infusing each visit with the essence of the surrounding scenery.

Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is a place of peacefulness and calm, combining the therapeutic value of its beautiful location with an ancient and rich cultural heritage. Reflecting the spirituality of ages, the environment here is soft and serene; its people go about their days in a caring manner that brings calm to the harried and peace to the stressed; here, at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, it is possible to recapture one's sense of self.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000  
www.spavillage.com



### EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS

The Eastern & Oriental Express is more than a train service: the quarter-of-a-mile in length train is a haven of comfort, style and luxury, and the perfect vantage point from which to tour the region. The Restaurant Cars, Saloon Car and Bar Car are located at the centre of the train, while the Observation Car, with its open deck area, is located at the rear.

The interior walls of the compartments are panelled with cherry wood and elm burr, and decorative marquetry friezes and intricate design inlays. The delicate embroidery work was done in Malaysia, and the bespoke carpets hand-tufted in Thailand.

Chefs onboard the E&O Express are internationally-renowned for their tantalising variety of Eastern and European dishes, using the finest seasonal ingredients. While guests dine at night, the steward transforms the compartment from a living room to a luxurious bedroom.

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





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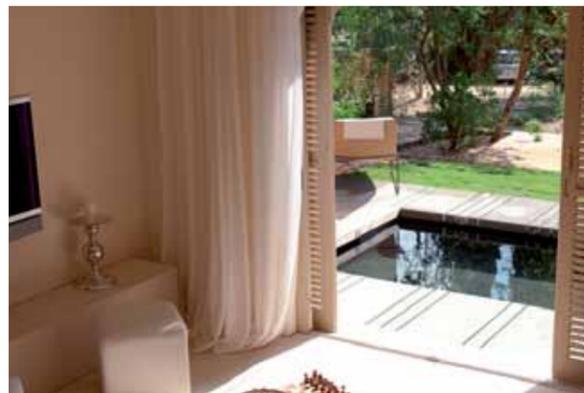
**MUSE HÔTEL DE LUXE**  
FRANCE

Bardot would no doubt approve of Saint-Tropez newcomer, Muse Hôtel De Luxe, just minutes from the Place de Lices by car, situated on the stunning Ramatuelle *route de plages* and set amongst an ecological landscape of terraced gardens.

Fifteen ultra chic suites (10 featuring private plunge pools) are dedicated to famous muses such as 'Edith', after Edith Piaf, 'Catherine', after Catherine Deneuve, and 'Lauren', after Lauren Bacall. Each suite sports a unique interior but all blend seamlessly with cool stone floors and marmorino wall finishes. Thoughtful touches include a 42" Loewe plasma screen with over 100 channels, a PlayStation, iPad and iPhone.

Designed with pure lines, a cool elegant reception area and outdoor water cascades, the hotel is a reflection of architectural simplicity, immediately stamping its original and stylish signature on the Saint-Tropezienne landscape.

Tel: +334 94 430 440  
www.muse-hotels.com



**BRAY HOUSE**  
ENGLAND

An elegant private home dating back to the late 17th century, Bray House has been restored and transformed into an elegant, high design boutique home stay. Featuring an eclectic mix of interiors spanning the Art Deco period of the early 1900s, Bray House is a unique experience of the gentrified English lifestyle, complete with bespoke service and intimate atmosphere.

Designer furniture, vintage accessories and vivid splashes of colour create an atmosphere that marries the modern and the classic. Each of the bedrooms has its own theme: a lullaby of white in one, and a symphony of Tuscany red in another. Bray House also features a private courtyard and a natural spring found in the garden.

The idyllic village of Bray, near Windsor, is quintessentially English, with its period houses, traditional pubs with beamed ceilings and fireplaces, and a beautifully-restored church dating back to 1293.

Tel: +60 3 2715 9000  
www.ytlhotels.com



### 1. Spa Village Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

This unique retreat offers the world's most sophisticated therapies integrated with traditional healing practices of the region. Paying tribute to Malaysia's fascinating cultural diversity and rich healing heritage, this most stylish of spas seamlessly blends ancient and modern practices, using natural local ingredients to deliver blissful relaxation and rejuvenation.

### 2. Spa Village Pangkor Laut Malaysia

The Spa Village at Pangkor Laut Resort is a unique, ultra-exclusive retreat that extols the healing tradition of Malaysia's diverse history of people and cultures and wealth abundance of exotic natural resources. The abundance of Malay, Chinese, Indian and Thai practices make this the ideal tranquil setting for complete rejuvenation of body and soul.

### 3. Spa Village Malacca Malaysia

The Spa Village Malacca is the world's only spa to base its therapies on the healing heritage of the Baba-Nyonya or Peranakan culture – a unique combination of Chinese and Malay influences. The spa is spread across the first two floors of the new wing and provides a serene environment in which one can rest, recuperate and rejuvenate in the care of some of the world's best therapists.

### 4. Spa Village Cameron Highlands Malaysia

Cameron Highlands Resort features the third wellness centre of the award-winning Spa Village brand with a wide range of sophisticated treatments and healing therapies inspired by the restorative properties of tea. Each guest luxuriates in a signature tea bath before every treatment. Cameron Highlands Spa Village offers tranquil indoor and outdoor treatment rooms, tea bath rooms and a fully-equipped gymnasium.

### 5. Spa Village Tanjong Jara Malaysia

At Spa Village Tanjong Jara, time-tested health and beauty traditions are revived in the most comforting surrounds. Guests can benefit from a comprehensive programme of therapies, created using unique ingredients from indigenous herbs and plants, along with the skills of resident Malay healers.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000  
[www.spavillage.com](http://www.spavillage.com)





portfolio of life //

**FEAST VILLAGE**  
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Feast to your heart's content in our Feast Village, a dramatic and stylish dining haven with a village charm. Here, you will find 11 uniquely-designed restaurants serving a mix of world-class cuisine and providing a display of culinary skill embodied in a chic and contemporary atmosphere.

Restaurants and bars at Feast Village include Fisherman's Cove, Luk Yu Tea House, Pak Loh Chiu Chow, Tarbush, Spice of India, Starhill Tea Salon, Shook!, Jake's Charbroil Steak, KoRyo Won, Enak, and Village Bar.

The design of Feast Village is inspired by nature. Walls are asymmetrical and serve not to separate, but rather to provide peaceful enclaves where people may relax.

Rice paper from Japan combines with slate and *ikat* from Indonesia, granite from China, silk from Thailand and timber from Myanmar to create the essence of Asia from a design perspective, making Feast Village truly one-of-a-kind.

Tel: +60 3 2782 3855  
www.starhillgallery.com



**SHOOK! SHANGHAI AT THE SWATCH ART PEACE HOTEL**  
CHINA

Perched on a space of symmetry and proportion, Shook! Shanghai features the skills of four epicurean chefs with four distinct cuisines. A show kitchen – dubbed the 'Ferrari' of kitchens – is where its signature dishes are created around the senses. The menu flirts with seasonal trends with whispers of Chinese, Japanese, South-East Asian and modern Western cuisines, yet flexible enough to transport you anywhere your heart and palate desire. Another highlight at Shook! Shanghai is the showcase of the world's finest wines and champagnes, including rare vintages from 1945 through to 2000. Shook! Shanghai also houses The Time Bar and The Swatch Art Peace Hotel Terrace on the roof top, overlooking a stunning backdrop of the Pudong skyline.

+86 (21) 6321 0021  
www.shookrestaurantshanghai.com





# Hom Cooking

World-renowned chef and, without doubt, one of Chinese cuisine's finest ambassadors, Ken Hom OBE, star of the BBC's hugely-successful television series *Ken Hom's Chinese Cookery* and multiple-cookbook author, speaks to *YTL Life* on the joys of enjoying good food and life in general.

**I love creating new twists** to show how food has evolved and changed along the way. I've also just recently finished filming a major series which will make its debut soon. It's about my travels and food journeys around China and there'll be a book to accompany it as well.

**China is an amazing country** and its food culture totally reflects it. I travelled to the interior, to Yunnan, where it blew my mind. The livestock market looked as if it was out of medieval times and I saw women making noodles the very way Italians make it. It was amazing!

**I once did a documentary** series titled *Noodle Road* with KBS and I loved the way my time in China showed me how the noodle, in its 2,500-year history, was loved, adopted and adapted all over the world. As noodles are such a strong part of my own culture, I really enjoyed learning and discovering all I could about it.

**The last time I visited Malaysia** was 20 years ago, to visit a friend. I don't recognise Kuala Lumpur at all now! It's changed so much, as has the rest of the country. But, oh, the food here – I simply love chicken rice and *laksa*... especially the *laksa*!

**One thing I can't stand**, however, is durian. I just can't take its smell. I like funky things in general but durian is just too eccentric; and that's really saying something, because I do like fermented bean curd and even stinky tofu.

**I can't live without** my wok and cleaver. With these two things, I can do anything. And for cooking, nothing is as indispensable as garlic. With that one ingredient, any dish can be transformed into something edible and delicious.

**I'm American-born** but now I live mainly in Paris, south-west France and, of course, Bangkok, where my restaurant, *Maison Chin*, is. I'm also in discussion right now about a new series on Thailand. It has such an interesting food culture and I really do think Thai is the ultimate fusion cuisine – a totally unique taste experience.

**My main hope is** that, one day, all of us can just enjoy good food and live in peace. If that's not a recipe for happiness, I wouldn't know what is. ■



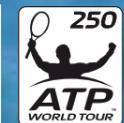
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# OMEGA

www.omegawatches.com



## *Ladymatic*

The Ladymatic takes its name from OMEGA's first women's automatic chronometer launched in 1955. The uncompromising quality and inner beauty delivered by our Co-Axial calibre 8521 and Si14 silicon balance spring perfectly mirror an extraordinary design. We guarantee the Ladymatic for four years – just the beginning of a lifetime relationship.

  
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