

YTL *life*

TREASURED PLACES, TREASURED MOMENTS



VIBRANT ENERGY

Introducing the all-new
Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown

OPERA IN PARADISE

Music comes alive in
Pangkor Laut Resort

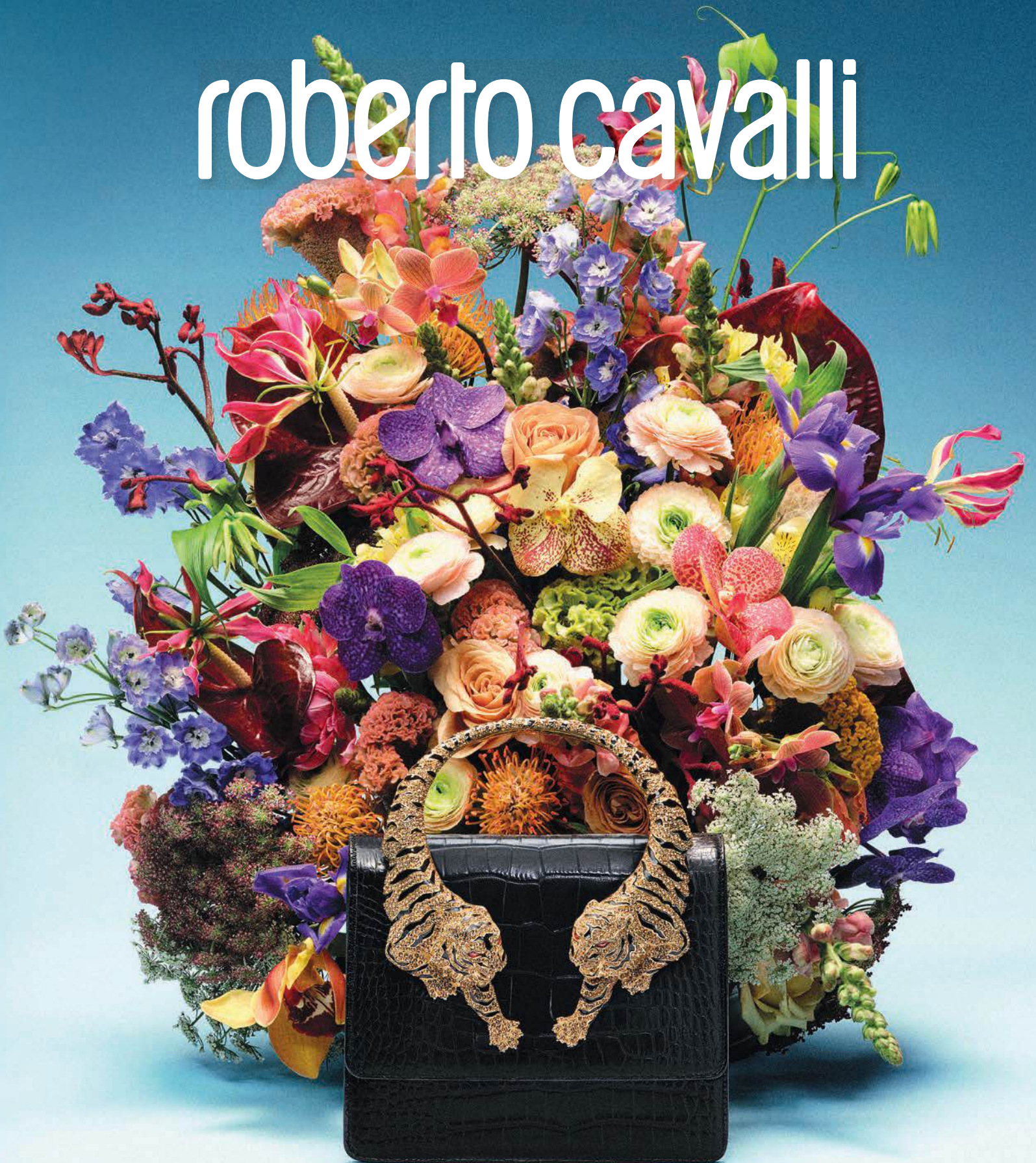
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A woman with long dark hair is sleeping peacefully in a British Airways Club Suite. She is lying down, covered by a light blue quilted blanket, with her head resting on a white pillow. The background shows the interior of the aircraft cabin with wood paneling and a control panel.

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“For me, performance and design are equally important.
I need my headphones to look as good as they sound.”

David Beckham



Bowers & Wilkins

Available at Sonos Concept Store
by TC Acoustic at The Starhill

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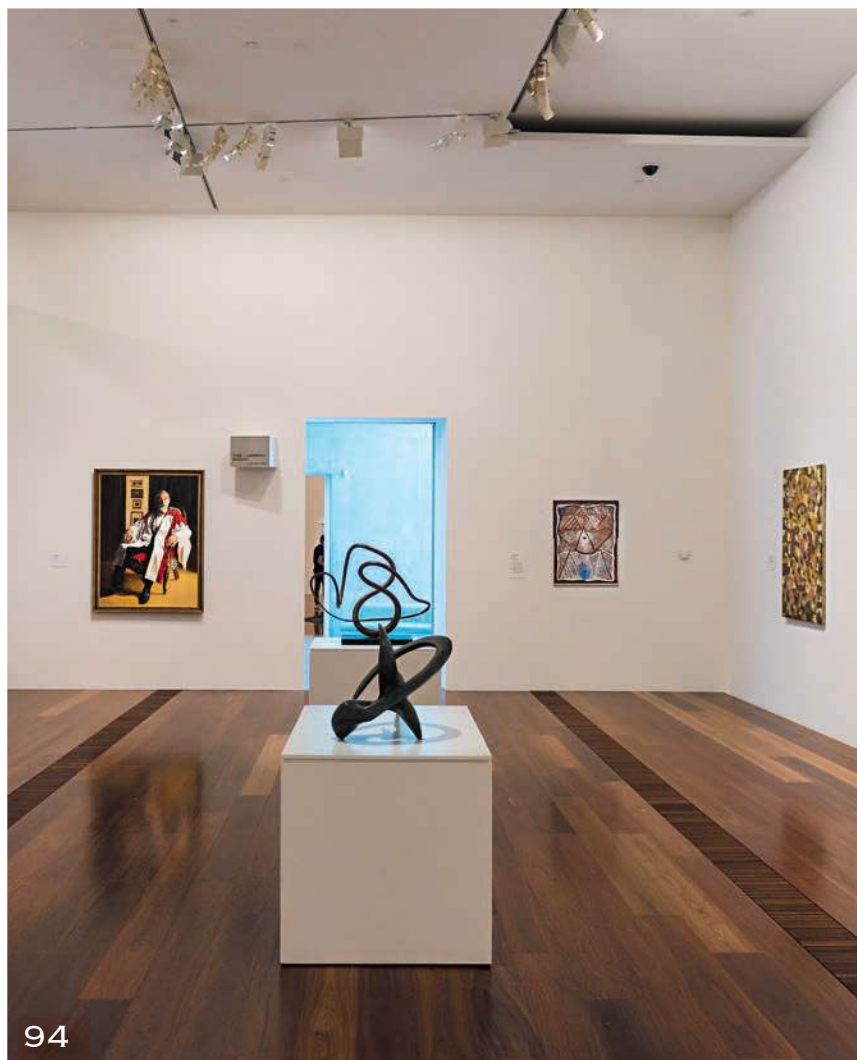
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This Spring issue of YTL Life also coincides with the blossoming of YTL Hotels' latest property – Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown. We are delighted to unveil Moxy in the heart of Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown, with the Moxy brand standing for style and playfulness – adding its flair to this kinetic neighbourhood that has attained a cool factor for its growing offerings in arts, culture, F&B and nightlife, as well as the always popular night street market.

Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown sits at 1, Jalan Hang Lekiu – named after one of the five legendary warriors of Malaysian history. This beautiful building used to house the historic Oriental Bank, which later became YTL Corporation's headquarters. With the Moxy brand all about not taking itself too seriously, it was only right that the refurbishment followed suit. The result? A sexy, modern take on the hotel experience. It's a place you look forward to checking in and then stepping out for a good time.

With Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown, you can do just that – to truly explore the vibrant neighbourhood and meet the people that all play an important part in this wonderful city, by visiting cool communal spaces where a hotel becomes a treasured place and births treasured moments.

Of course, Kuala Lumpur's fascinating tapestry also means that there are plenty of other adventures across the YTL Hotels portfolio. Sunday Roast in The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur opens with a carvery of roast lamb and beef, as well as fresh seafood, as you unwind to music from the jazz band. Meanwhile, Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur unlocks the secrets of *sangak* bread, a millennia-old Persian staple, while The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur serves up unique and time-honoured cuisine, such as chicken rice balls, curry chicken, beef soup and Hainanese chicken chop, all of which speaks of the Indian and Chinese diaspora assimilating into colonial Malaya.

Out at the idyllic Gaya Island Resort that sits off the north easterly coast of Borneo, as well as the private island of Pangkor Laut Resort, our conservation efforts has resulted in the joyous release of rehabilitated sea turtles. The two Green Sea turtles and one Hawksbill turtle who have found sanctuary at our respective marine centres are now reacquainted with their natural habitat and, according to our tracking data, are happily exploring the world as travellers are wont to do.

With that, we hope you enjoy this issue of YTL Life, which brings you to places near and far, and hopefully gives you and your loved ones plenty of travel inspiration for the rest of the year and for many years ahead.



FASHION CAN LEAD TO CHANGE

BALMAIN PARTNERED THE MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR THE BLIND IN A CHARITY AUCTION SHOWCASING
THE BRAND'S COLLECTION.

Words by SREERAAM SIVASWAMY



In August last year, Balmain partnered the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) for a charity auction hosted at The Starhill in Kuala Lumpur. The fundraising event, *L'automne à Bordeaux*, was also where Balmain unveiled its Fall/Winter 2024 collection. The event, held in the Atrium of The Starhill, featured an auction of two exclusive Balmain B-Buzz Dynasty bags, where 10 per cent of the proceeds of the night's sales would be used to support the MAB's commitment to the visually impaired.

MAB is a non-profit organisation founded in 1951 and serves more than 60,000 registered individuals with visual impairments. The organisation offers residential skills, such as essential vocational and life skills training, and helping individuals lead fulfilling and independent lives. Balmain's commitment to the success of the event highlights the brand's dedication to creating a positive impact beyond the runway and promoting inclusivity in Malaysia.

The event featured Balmain's Women's Fall/Winter 2024 collection, designed by Olivier Rousteing, the brand's creative director. The collection draws inspiration from the designer's affection for his hometown in Bordeaux, which is known

for its French elegance and classical beauty. This season's designs blend architectural lines with Balmain's historic "New French Style", with its luxurious couture details such as intricate embroidery and signature 3D embellishments featuring grapes – a reference to Bordeaux's famous wine heritage. Balmain also played with Vichy prints and patterns on escargot shells, evoking picnic scenes from Rousteing's childhood memories at Bordeaux. Notable pieces include reimagined classic French fashion staples, such as trench coats, skirts, dresses and jackets, along with luxury shopping bags inspired by traditional French market styles.

Through fashion and philanthropy, *L'automne à Bordeaux* was a night that showcased how the fashion runway can also do its part in a noble cause, such as supporting non-government organisations like MAB. Through this auction, Balmain not only honours its Parisian couture legacy, but was also able to raise awareness and funds, ensuring support for MAB's mission to uplift the visually impaired individuals in Malaysia.

For more information, visit <https://thestarhill.com.my>

EVENTS



A GANG OF GENTLEMEN

TRUEFITT & HILL'S COLLABORATION WITH *THE GENTLEMEN*, THE HIT NETFLIX SERIES DIRECTED BY GUY RITCHIE, WAS CELEBRATED WITH A SUAVE EVENT AT THE SMOKE HOUSE IN THE MAJESTIC HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR.

Words by EUGENE PHUA

The Smoke House in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is one of the most suave spots in the city to relax, enjoy a fine beverage and catch up with your fellow mates. It is located in the heritage building of the hotel, which lends it even more charm and personality. Whether you're engaging in a bit of banter at billiards or getting a fresh shave from Truefitt & Hill, The Smoke House is the very definition of what it means to be a gentlemen's club.

It was in this spirit that Truefitt & Hill recently hosted a celebratory gathering to launch its collaboration with Netflix's *The Gentlemen* at the Smoke House. In this popular series, directed by Guy Ritchie and based on the movie of the same name, a family of aristocrats becomes entangled with the seedy underworld of England. There's classic elegance, streetwise style, and plenty of high-octane thrills and spills in every episode – as one would expect from a Guy Ritchie project. (A second season will be coming soon too.)

To bring this world of British baddies and English excellence to life, Netflix has collaborated with several luxury brands by releasing exclusive and limited-edition products. One of these brands is the quintessential English men's grooming brand, Truefitt & Hill. From world-class barber and shaving services to grooming products that turn blokes into barons, Truefitt & Hill provides everything men need to look and feel their very best.

The limited edition Gentlemen product range from Truefitt & Hill is united by the sleek scent of sandalwood. The collection's highlight is the Cologne, with its blend of lavender, lemon, bergamot, sandalwood, musk and amber (currently unavailable). The other products are the Aftershave Balm (100ml, RM265), Shaving Cream Bowl (190g, RM175) and Pre-Shave Oil (60ml, RM160). The products are available in limited quantities at all Truefitt & Hill locations in Malaysia.

The launch event at The Smoke House saw friends of Truefitt & Hill, members of the media as well as Smoke House regulars gather to learn more about the products and, of course, enjoy each other's fine company. Lubricating proceedings were splendid bottles of Penfolds wines, including Bin 2 Shiraz Mataro, Max's Shiraz (2021) and Koonunga Hill Autumn Riesling (2022). Guests who may not have known anything about the Netflix series walked away not only fans but also becoming Gentlemen themselves, thanks to the swagger imbued by Truefitt & Hill.

For more information, visit www.majestickl.com/smokehouse.html





PINK FOR PURPOSE

THE MAJESTIC HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR LED THE CHARGE IN BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH WITH A PINK AFTERNOON TEA AFFAIR, BRINGING TOGETHER GUESTS AND LOCAL BUSINESSES IN SUPPORT OF CANCER RESEARCH MALAYSIA.

Words by ALICIA CHOO Photos by BRANDON LAI





Affectionately known as the Pink Month, October is more than just another chapter in the year. It's a symbol of global unity, marked by a sea of pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Each October, millions around the world stand in solidarity to raise awareness for a cause that impacts the lives of more than 2.3 million women each year. At the forefront in corporate philanthropy, YTL Hotels has consistently taken proactive steps to confront critical issues and strengthen community ties through purposeful outreach initiatives. The group has once again demonstrated its commitment to social responsibility by encouraging Malaysians to come together in the fight against cancer, while fostering a culture of compassion and awareness.

In support of last year's Pink October, The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur hosted A Pink Afternoon Tea Soirée 2024, teaming up with ethically driven organisations to raise funds for Cancer Research Malaysia – an independent and non-profit cancer research entity focused on sporadic cancers prevalent among the Asian population. This charitable occasion was organised in partnership with Pink Jambu, a local batik design house launched by Tengku Marina Ibrahim, currently located within the hotel's Majestic Spa, alongside Orchid Culture's floral arrangements of Phalaenopsis orchids displayed in the Orchid Conservatory, as well as Mangosteen, a social enterprise offering body and home essentials.

Booths were set up at various corners around the tea lounge, where guests could freely explore and learn more about cancer awareness and preventative measures with Cancer Research Malaysia chief executive officer Andy Khoo Boo Teik, as well as browse through handcrafted Malaysian textiles, enjoy the gentle scent of the orchids and participate in a hands-on linen spray workshop.

With two sessions available at 12pm and 3pm, guests of both sessions donned their best pink attire and mingled with jubilant smiles and lively chatter against a flourishing garden backdrop. The tone was enlivened by melodious jazz numbers from singer and pianist Isabella Soliano of the Solianos family band, along with an assortment of pink-themed savoury and sweet bites, including smoked salmon and lemon butter sandwiches, baked chicken pie, spinach quiche, strawberry preserve scones, ivory cherry gateau, and mascarpone strawberry choux.

By bringing together guests, local artisans and health advocates, the campaign served as a unified effort toward hope and health, empowering individuals to make informed choices about their well-being.

For more information on Cancer Research Malaysia, visit www.cancerresearch.my.

For table bookings and inquiries, visit www.majestickl.com/booking-colonial-cafe.html



HOPE COMES WITH EFFORT

YTL HOTELS CELEBRATED MERDEKA DAY LAST YEAR WITH AN INSPIRING SEA TURTLE RESCUE AND RELEASE STORY AT GAYA ISLAND RESORT AND PANGKOR ISLAND RESORT.

Words by SREERAAM SIVASWAMY



EVENTS

In a heartwarming celebration of Merdeka Day in 2024, YTL Hotels announced the release of three rehabilitated sea turtles – two Green Sea turtles, Covid and Barbara, and a Hawksbill sea turtle, Valentine – back into their natural habitat at Gaya Island Resort and Pangkor Laut Resort. This special event was witnessed by representatives from the Sabah Wildlife Department, Marine Foundation, WWF veterinarians, Marine Mammal Research and Conservation organisation (MARECET), along with other notable guests, underlining the significance of Malaysia's wildlife conservation efforts.

The story of the Green Sea turtle, Covid, began in March 2020 when he was found near Pulau Gaya, struggling with malnourishment and a severely damaged carapace. The Marine Centre team at Gaya Island Resort dedicated four years to nurturing Covid back to health by employing advanced treatments such as multiple surgeries, medication, buoyancy therapy and even acupuncture. After months in a specially designed sea cage to re-acclimate, Covid was released back to the ocean on Merdeka Day, with a satellite tracker attached to continue ongoing monitoring and research on turtle conservation.

To everyone's surprise, Covid swam back to Gaya Island Resort shortly after being released. He was seemingly drawn back to the sanctuary of love and affection he had received from his caregivers. Staff and guests on the resort welcomed him with open arms, where he remained there for a few weeks before being released once again into the sea on 1 October 2024 in robust health. Since his re-release, tracking data has shown that Covid is thriving and actively exploring the waters around Gaya Island, particularly near Police Beach. His journey provides invaluable data on sea turtle behaviour, migration patterns and habitat preferences, which help enhance marine conservation efforts in the region.

Barbara, another Green Sea turtle, was rescued from the waters off Mabul Island in early 2023. She had fallen sick and needed to receive intensive rehabilitation at the Marine Centre before joining Covid in her return back to the wild.

Meanwhile, on Pangkor Island, Valentine, a Hawksbill sea turtle, was discovered in distress by the island's locals on 16 February 2024. He was severely malnourished and was brought to the Conservation Centre at Pangkor Laut Resort for medication and specialised feeding to restore him back to health. After a few months, Valentine regained his weight and vitality, allowing him to be freed back into the ocean.

Covid and Barbara have become symbols of hope from their tough journey of resilience. The Gaya Island Marine Centre continues to monitor Covid's journey and shares updates on YTL Hotels' social platforms to inspire public awareness and support on the need for wildlife preservation. Through initiatives like this, YTL Hotel and its partners remain committed to not only rehabilitating individual lives, but also protecting Malaysia's marine ecosystem as part of Malaysia's natural heritage.

For more information, visit www.gayaislandresort.com and www.pangkorlautresort.com, as well as www.marecet.org, www.wwf.org.my and wildlife.sabah.gov.my



LIFE ON THE COVER



EXPLORING THE RICH TAPESTRY OF MALAYSIA

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SURROUNDING THE ALL-NEW
MOXY KUALA LUMPUR CHINATOWN BLENDS
MODERNITY AND TRADITION, MAKING IT THE
PERFECT ACCOMMODATION FOR THOSE
SEEKING A DYNAMIC STAY.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT
Street Photography by LAW SOO PHYE



The Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown is a hotel where you can have fun with old and new friends.



Relax and unwind in the Zone
Out area of the lobby with a
good book, board games or a
wide variety of leisurely activities.

The newly opened Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown marches to the beat of its own drum. It is a place that encapsulates the city's most colourful district outdoors and encourages guests to 'Play On' within its vibrant interiors. This starts from the moment you check-in at the Zone In area, with its modish atmosphere and kinetic buzz.

Here at the Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown, forget about humdrum hotel lobbies. Instead, hidden treasures, vintage goods and knick-knacks from the days of yore brighten up every corner. There's plenty of room to play and meet other like-minded free spirits and this is, in fact, encouraged. Take time to kick back at the Zone Out area, where a vibrant display of vinyl records will serve as a conversation starter. To break the ice, challenge another guest to a classic game or two, and bring out your competitive spirit at the Gaming Corner.

The dynamic energy of the hotel extends to the Grab & Go Counter, where, instead of a regular place to pick up sandwiches, it is a place to reminisce about the good old days as you nibble on snacks, which you probably saw dangling from the *roti man's* motorcycle. And instead of a regular buffet, the breakfast area is a fun, quirky space that will take diners on a journey back in time.

Housed within the former Oriental Bank building on Jalan Hang Lekiu (running parallel to Jalan Tun Perak), the Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown hotel provides a lens into the iconic area, which once played a starring role as a bustling transportation hub, core banking centre and a lively

commercial corridor. Beyond its doors, Chinatown and its surrounding neighbourhood await to be explored.

Being in the heart of the city's historic centre, Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown is near prominent landmarks such as Dataran Merdeka (or Merdeka Square). This was where Malaya's story ended, and Malaysia's story began as the country declared its independence on 31 August 1957. Besides its historical importance, it is a popular place for photo-taking due to its stunning colonial-era buildings, especially the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, which displays a beautiful combination of Mughal and Moorish architectural styles.

Within this building is the National Textile Museum, which offers insights into Malaysian history, culture and art. Inside, four exhibition galleries literally showcase the rich cultural fabric of the country. Here, learn about the textiles produced from the respective states, or take a closer look at *songket*, *pua kumbu*, *telepuk* and more.

A short walk away is the Telekom Museum, which showcases distinct Neoclassical architecture with eight towering columns and a Palladian architectural style in its archways. The museum offers fascinating informative displays, artefacts such as teleprinters, and interactive exhibits that depict the birth and evolution of telecommunications in Malaysia.

Next, a trip to Chinatown wouldn't be complete without a visit to Petaling Street Market, where you can haggle with vendors to get the cheapest prices for local crafts, souvenirs and clothing. All the usual hawker favourites can also be sampled, such as curry laksa, Hokkien mee and satay, and make sure to sip on the refreshing Air Mata Kucing drink.



Highly skilled mixologists will craft an amazing beverage for you at the Bar Moxy, located right by the hotel's swimming pool.



Above: at the Bar Moxy, delicious beverages and friendly smiles await all hotel guests.

Right: the Executive Loft room.

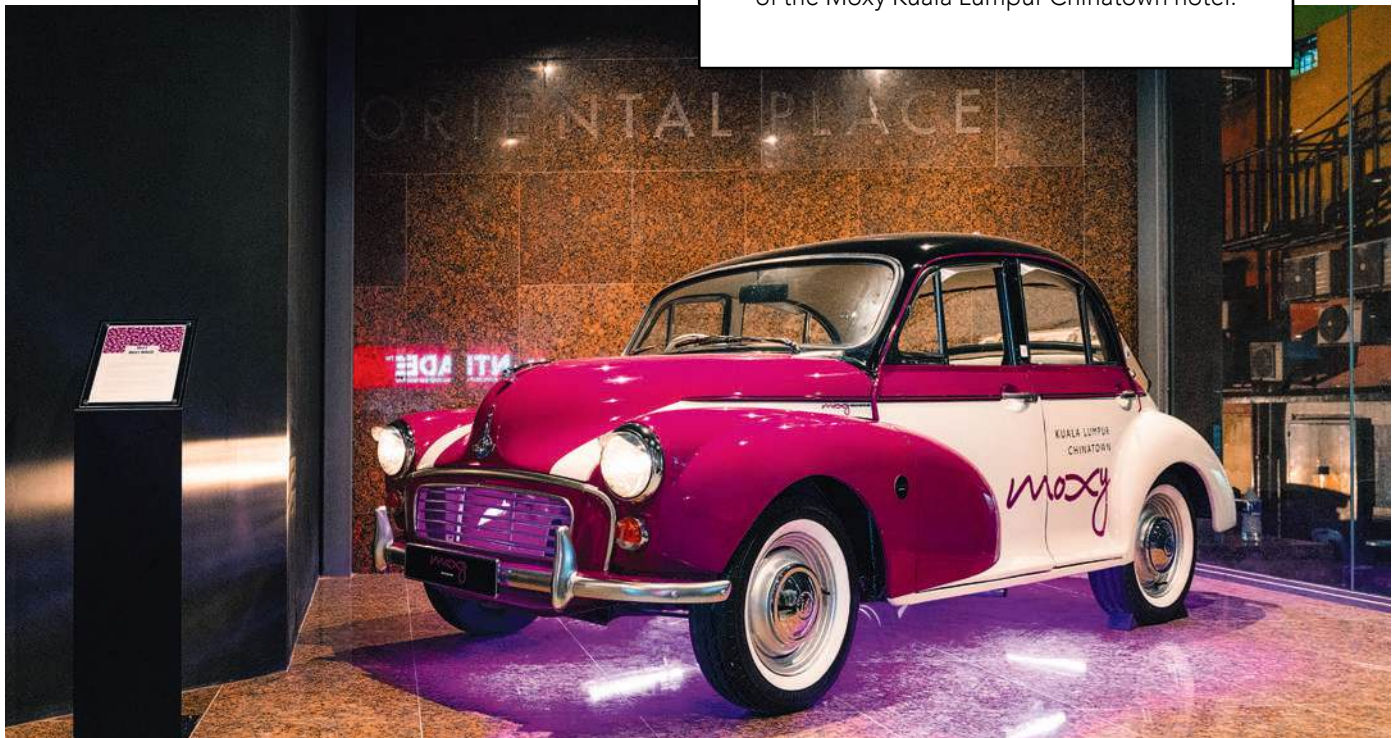


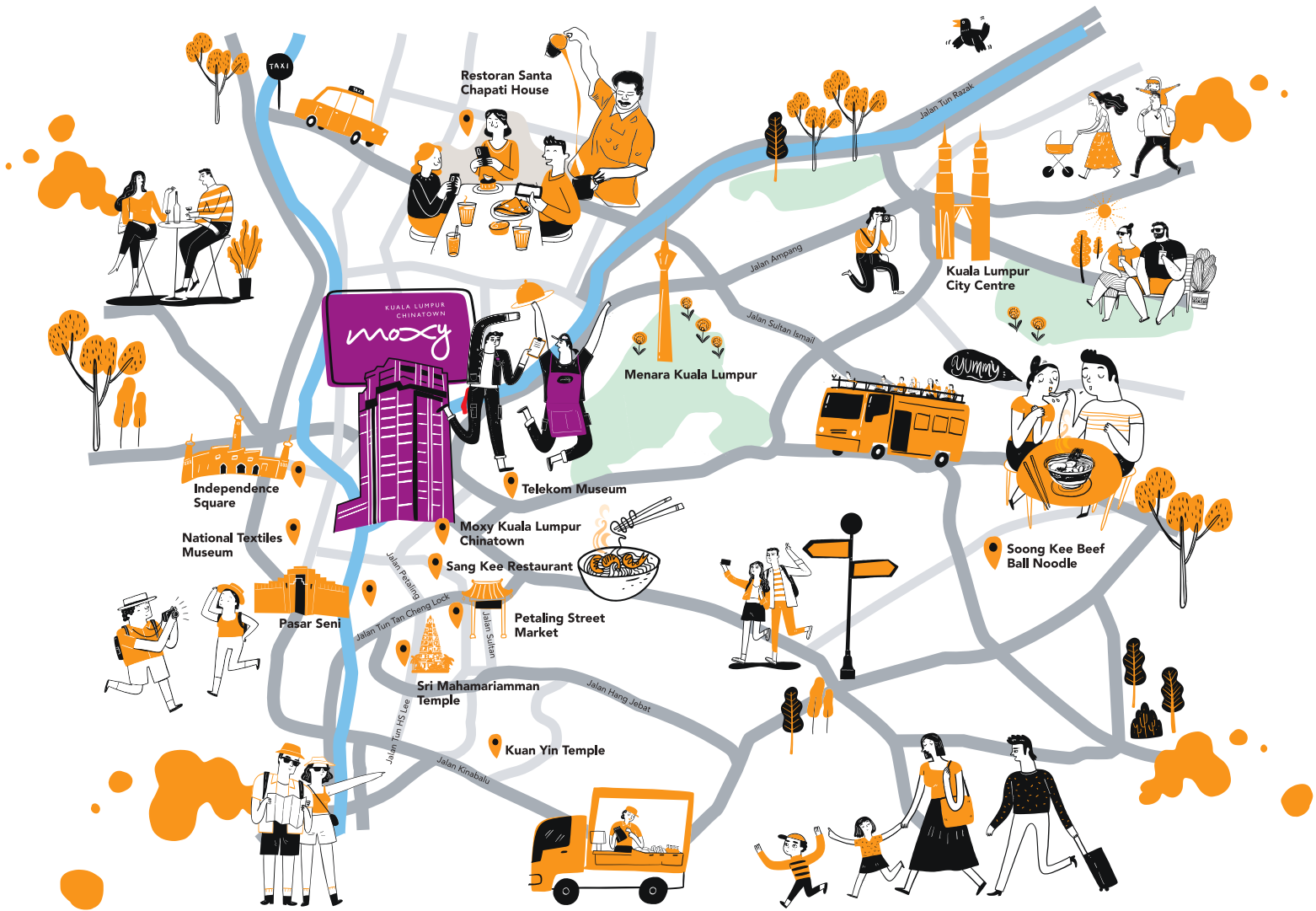


THE MOXY MINOR

Upon entering the lobby of the Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown hotel, the first thing that guests will see is a magnificent, show-stopping post-war Moxy Minor 1000 (pictured below). Perfectly capturing the playful groove and bold vibes of the Moxy, the classic car is coated with splashes of electric neon pink, a black roof and clean white racing stripes. Dato' Mark Yeoh, the Executive Director of YTL Corporation's Hotels and Resorts Division, had the idea of displaying the vintage car belonging to his mother, Puan Sri Tan Kai Yong.

As a car enthusiast, Wayne Lee, Vice President of Operations Resorts at YTL Hotels, together with MY Classic Cars founder Rukshan Munasinghe, raced against time for more than one month to painstakingly restore the car, including sourcing 30 per cent of the parts from overseas. Guests can now look forward to commemorating their fun stays at the hotel with a photo of the striking centrepiece, which perfectly encapsulates the essence of the Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown hotel.





Above: where to eat, shop and visit while you're in the city, all from the Moxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown.

Adjacent to this is Pasar Seni, or the Central Market, where one can experience rich heritage and local culture through shops selling arts and crafts. The space also often hosts cultural performances, including traditional music and dances. Meanwhile, the surrounding areas are adorned with colourful street art and murals that reflect the local culture and themes.

Chinatown is surrounded by several important religious sites representing the city's diverse cultural and religious landscape. An example is the Sri Mahamariamman Temple, one of the oldest Hindu temples in the city, known for stunning Dravidian-style architecture and sculptures painted in a plethora of colours. Visitors can also appreciate the serene environments and intricate designs of Masjid Jamek or the Kuan Yin Temple nearby.

Besides the landmarks, shopping and attractions, the area is also a bustling food district that is a paradise for every type of cuisine imaginable. These include streets lined with



Above: songket textiles dating back to the 1800s are on display at the National Textile Museum.



Clockwise from top: Merdeka Square is also a popular location for bridal photoshoots; the Telekom Museum building (along Jalan Raja Chulan) was once the office for manual telephone exchanges; show the younger ones what life was like before smartphones and the Internet in the museum.

vibrant eateries, from old-school restaurants offering truly authentic eats to chic, glass-fronted cafes.

One of these, tucked in the nondescript back alley of Lorong Yap Ah Loy, is the no-frills Sang Kee Restaurant, which has made its name amongst old timers and workers in the area for decades, thanks to its traditional Chinese fare. Seventy-year-old Chef Wong San has run the eatery since 1971, with his son poised to take over once he retires. "I've been the head chef since then. I learned the recipes and improved on them on my own. I really want to retire,

but I'm worried about what will happen to the business," he said. Here, the star of the menu is the Sang Har Yee Mee, or River Prawn Yee Mee, with gigantic fresh prawns boasting tender, mildly sweet meat from India swimming in egg gravy, prepared with meticulous care by the veteran.

Nearby is Soong Kee Beef Ball Noodle, which is not to be confused with the former due to their similar names. The 79-year-old business, known for its signature beef meatballs and briskets paired with minced meat wheat noodles, first began in a push cart but now has multiple locations – even



Clockwise from top: Petaling Street is one of Kuala Lumpur's must-visit hotspots; Pasar Seni was first built in 1888 as a wet market; the Sri Mahamariamman Temple was founded in 1873.



Clockwise from top right: Siew Wai Seong starts preparing the soup for the Beef Ball Noodle dish at 8am before they open their doors at 11am; the broth served at Soong Kee Beef Ball Noodle is surprisingly light with all the natural sweetness and flavours of the beef; chef Wong San of Sang Kee Restaurant; the Sang Har Yee Mee (or River Prawn Yee Mee) from Sang Kee Restaurant; the traditional unleavened Indian flatbread is perfectly soft and fluffy.

one in Singapore. The restaurant has stayed in the Siew family all these years, with its current owner, Wai Seong, being the third person to take over the restaurant first started by his uncle. "Soong Kee has always been a favourite of the Yeoh family, and Tan Sri Dato' Francis Yeoh, Executive Chairman of YTL Corporation, used to come every Saturday before we opened our other outlets," he said.

For those preferring bold flavours and spices, head over to Restoran Santa Chapati House, started in 1996 by Kulwant Singh. The simple *kopitiam* emanates aromas of freshly made *chapati*, a type of Indian flatbread, that draws passers-by in. Freshly made soft *chapati* are whipped up on the spot and

cooked on a *tawa*, or a pan, before your very eyes and served with flavourful chickpea masala.

With the vibrant markets, food scene, architecture and historical charm of the neighbourhood, your stay at the Moxxy Kuala Lumpur Chinatown will give you a front-row seat to the dynamism of the modern metropolis as well as a glimpse into the nostalgia of the city's past.

For more information, visit www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/kulok-moxy-kuala-lumpur-chinatown/overview/

RETRO REVIVAL

MOXY KUALA LUMPUR CHINATOWN AND ITS CULTURALLY RICH SURROUNDINGS ARE THE ULTIMATE PLAYGROUND FOR THE FASHION-FORWARD AND TREND-SAVVY, AS SEEN HERE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES THAT FEATURE THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF LOCAL SMALL-BATCH JEANS MAKER RAW DENIM HOUSE.



On Fernanda: ANTA shoes.

Photography: CHINTOO
Producer: ANDEE CHEE
Concept & Styling Coordinator: ONG SUE LYN
Hairstylist: ANGELINE LOW
Make-up: CHU FAN
Models: NATALIE, FERNANDA, IMRAN LEE
AND ADAM AZMAN
Clothes: RAW DENIM HOUSE, XUE_S
Accessories: FEMMIS





LIFE STYLE





On floor: ANTA shoes.



BUTANG

LIFE STYLE

特新



店

BUTTON









A SOLIANO SYMPHONY

IN HONOUR OF THE LATE ALFONSO SOLIANO'S 100TH BIRTHDAY, WE SPOKE TO THE SOLIANOS AND REVISITED DELECTABLE HAINANESE DELIGHTS AT THE COLONIAL CAFÉ AT THE MAJESTIC HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT Photos by LAW SOO PHYE

The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur offers a lens into the colonial past of the city and, within its exquisitely restored original building from 1932 in The Majestic Wing, is the Colonial Café, a culinary sanctuary that truly transports diners into the Anglo-Malayan era.

Stepping into its sumptuous surroundings invokes an era of nostalgia. Here, diners can admire black and white

photographs of the olden days of the city, while sitting on a plush armchair upholstered in rich, deep red fabric and sipping on Dilmah Tea from Narumi bone china teacups. Blue and white English transferware with intricate designs of countryside landscapes and traditional double-arm brass wall sconces adorn the walls. In the middle of the restaurant is a magnificent gold-leafed domed ceiling, an original feature of the hotel, below which sits a Yamaha baby grand piano on a plush circular red carpet.



From left to right: Conrado, Don, Valentino, Isabella, Irene, and Diosdado Soliano.



HEIRS TO THE JAZZ THRONE

As dusk falls, Malaysia's legendary singing family, The Solianos, take centre stage here with classical numbers and jazz tunes. The talented kinsfolk have even earned an entry into the Malaysian Book of Records as 'The Longest Performing Group As a Family'.

Any millennial Malaysian with an introductory knowledge of the country's musical talent will know the name Alfonso Soliano, regarded as the Father of Malaysian Jazz. Born on 25 February 1925, the late maestro would've celebrated his 100th birthday this year. His talents included being a composer, arranger and innovator, who even penned scores for P. Ramlee.

The tale of the Solianos began with the British colonial era, when 64 musicians were brought into Malaysia from the Philippines to form the Selangor State Band, including Alfonso's father, Rufino Soliano. Already a professional piano player at the age of seven, Alfonso would go on to pioneer the Orkes Radio Television Malaysia in 1957. His passion for music was such that his children were exposed to the industry from a young age, as he would bring artistes to the house to jam together and would buy recordings from the likes of Sérgio Mendes and Nancy Wilson for them to listen to.

Now in their fourth generation, The Solianos have been performing at the Colonial Café since December 2012, with the eldest member of the group being 74 and the youngest



Above: Hainanese Chicken Chop.

Top: The Colonial Café is situated in The Majestic Wing of the hotel.





Above from left: Old-Style Hainanese Chicken Rice Ball; Traditional Hainanese Boiled Beef Soup.
Facing page: Glutinous Turmeric Rice with Chicken Curry.

aged 45. The group consists of Valentino (double bass), Isabella (piano/vocals), Condrado (trumpet), Irene (vocalist), Don Alfonso (double bass), Tristiano (piano/vocals) and Diosdado (drums), all children and grandchildren of Alfonso.

Part of The Solianos' repertoire includes a wide repertoire of songs from the 1950s. "New old songs is how we do it," Diosdado says. "Our 'newest' song, which Auntie Isabella sings, would be Adele's *Make You Feel My Love* from 2008 – but we also jazz it up to make it our own style."

Isabella adds: "Our musical influence definitely goes back to my father Alfonso, who is the core of why we all became musicians. All of us in the band are full-time musicians. All eight of my sister Cynthia's children are into music, so us Solianos are into our fifth generation of musicians already. This is the plan I believe my father envisioned when he was putting the band together.

"One of the great things about performing at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is that we have returning guests who actually saw us during some of our first shows here," Isabella says. They also proudly count former Earth, Wind & Fire's Ralph Johnson, Eric Cantona and numerous members of Malaysian royalty amongst their listeners.

HEAVENLY HAINANESE

Besides mesmerising performances from The Solianos, the Hainanese menu at the Colonial Café is a culinary experience worthy of a visit to The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur. Hainanese fare is truly a reflection of Malaysia's history as a colony, tracing back to the time that the Hainanese migrants

would work as cooks in the homes of British expatriates. Their attempt to recreate traditional British meals using local ingredients and Asian cooking styles resulted in the meeting of two gastronomic worlds. Puan Sri Tan Kai Yong, wife of the late YTL Corp Bhd founder and chairman Tan Sri Yeoh Tiong Lay, who is of Hainanese descent, has also given a personal touch to the Hainanese recipes by incorporating her own recipes to keep them consistently authentic.

A dish that typically comes to mind at the mention of food from the Hainanese folk is Chicken Chop, served with garden peas and hand-cut fries, and smothered with a tangy spiced onion gravy for perfectly succulent bites. Additional gastronomic delights to savour include the Old-Style Hainanese Chicken Rice Ball consisting of poached chicken, aromatic hand-pressed chicken rice balls, homemade chilli and fragrant ginger.

Others include the Traditional Hainanese Boiled Beef Soup with a mixture of sirloin, brisket and back ribs swimming in Asian spiced beef broth and radish, served with sōmen noodles. Another worthy mention is the indulgent Glutinous Turmeric Rice with Chicken Curry made from nine ingredients including galangal and candlenuts.

With The Solianos and its decadent menu, every experience at the Colonial Café truly promises to be memorable, giving an unparalleled glimpse into the lifestyle of the elite from bygone days. Guests can watch The Solianos perform at the Colonial Café as a two-piece band on rotation every night.

For more information, visit www.majestickl.com

SUNDAY'S FINEST FEAST

THE RITZ-CARLTON, KUALA LUMPUR'S SUNDAY ROAST
AT THE LIBRARY MARRIES BRITISH ELEGANCE WITH
MALAYSIAN FLAIR, OFFERING A LAVISH, CONTEMPORARY
TAKE ON A CLASSIC TRADITION.

Words by CHONG JINN XIUNG





The Library at
The Ritz-Carlton,
Kuala Lumpur.

Ascending to the first floor of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, you're greeted by the sultry notes of jazz, gently drawing you into The Library – a refined sanctuary of plush armchairs and meticulously curated books.

Here, amidst a backdrop of literary charm and sophisticated decor, the hotel has masterfully brought a piece of British tradition to Malaysian shores. A weekly affair, The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's Sunday Roast is more than a meal. It's a tribute to colonial heritage, reimagined through contemporary lens.

AN ELEVATED INTERPRETATION OF BRITISH GASTRONOMY

The Sunday Roast at The Library transports diners to the heart of Britain's most cherished culinary ritual. What may first appear as an intimate reading room transforms into a distinguished dining destination, merging the art of fine dining with a familiar yet refined fare. The scene is set with a Bloody Mary, a sophisticated prelude to the decadent meal ahead. A three-piece jazz ensemble accompanies the experience, weaving a rich ambience that is both luxurious and inviting.

At the centre of the room, a grand presentation invites guests to explore a delightful array of appetisers, soups, salads as well as a tantalising spread of desserts. Yet, the showstoppers are the twin trolleys laden with premium cuts of beef and lamb, each roasted to perfection. Carved to order by attentive wait staff, diners may opt for generous portions, complemented with an array of traditional accompaniments – crisp roast potatoes, puddings, seasonal vegetables, as well as indulgent sauces such as Dijon and black pepper.

A SYMPHONY OF FLAVOURS

As a testament to its culinary artistry, The Library offers a delectable spread of seafood in the adjoining lobby. Fresh oysters, pristine sashimi and a selection of shellfish – clams, mussels, prawns and crab – await, all presented on ice for optimal freshness. This selection harmonises beautifully with the roast offerings, creating a feast that spans land and sea.

For those with a penchant for the sweet, the dessert table is nothing short of a patisserie dreamscape. From velvety crème brûlée with a satisfying caramelised crust to an impressive display of cakes, éclairs, tarts and brightly coloured macarons, the selection is as vast as it is exquisite. Fresh fruit is available for the health-conscious, though the temptation of meticulously crafted pastries might prove irresistible.

AN UNMISSABLE AFFAIR

Priced at RM198++ per person (or RM398++ with free-flow prosecco, wine and beer), The Sunday Roast at The Library is a sophisticated gathering that balances opulence with authenticity, offering a taste of Britain through Malaysian lens. This exceptional dining experience reflects the hallmark of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's legendary service, as well-suited for special occasions as it is for a memorable weekend indulgence.

For more information, please visit www.ritzcarlton.com/kualalumpur



Succulent roast beef,
accompanied by
seasonal vegetables and
crisp roasted potatoes.



Tender sliced lamb
rack with grilled
asparagus and
cherry tomatoes.



Fresh oysters on
the half shell,
served with
lemon wedges.



Golden cake pops
with a delicate
caramel glaze.



The swimming pool affords guests stunning views of the KL skyline.

PRESERVING HERITAGE AND LEGACY

J. WILLARD MARRIOTT'S COMMITMENT TO QUALITY,
INTEGRITY AND INNOVATION LIVES ON THROUGH
THE CITY'S SHINING BEACON OF HOSPITALITY,
THE JW MARRIOTT HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT

The JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur is par excellence in the Malaysian luxury hospitality industry, making it the epitome of sophisticated travel. Its illustrious name has become associated with elegant accommodations, exquisite culinary establishments, intuitive service and mindful experiences to enrich the mind, body and soul.

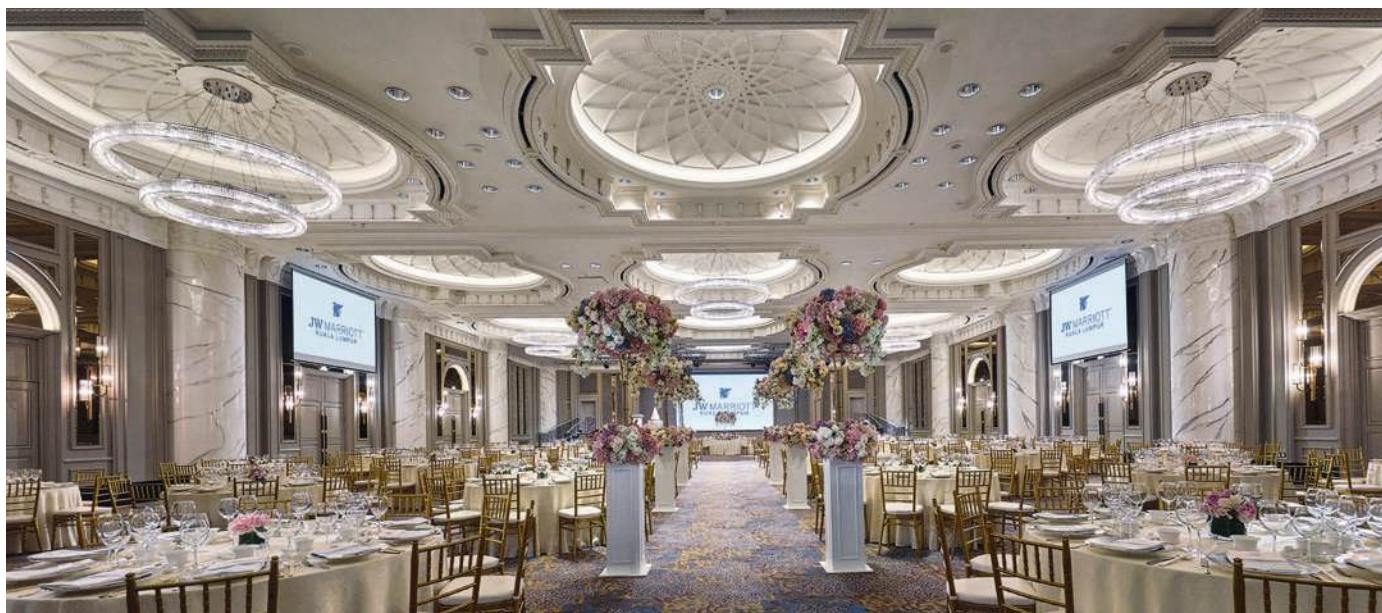
Four decades after the creation of the brand, JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur continues to carry the torch of its legacy, sweeping accolades such as the 'Best Business Hotel in Kuala Lumpur' by the Business Traveller Awards last year.

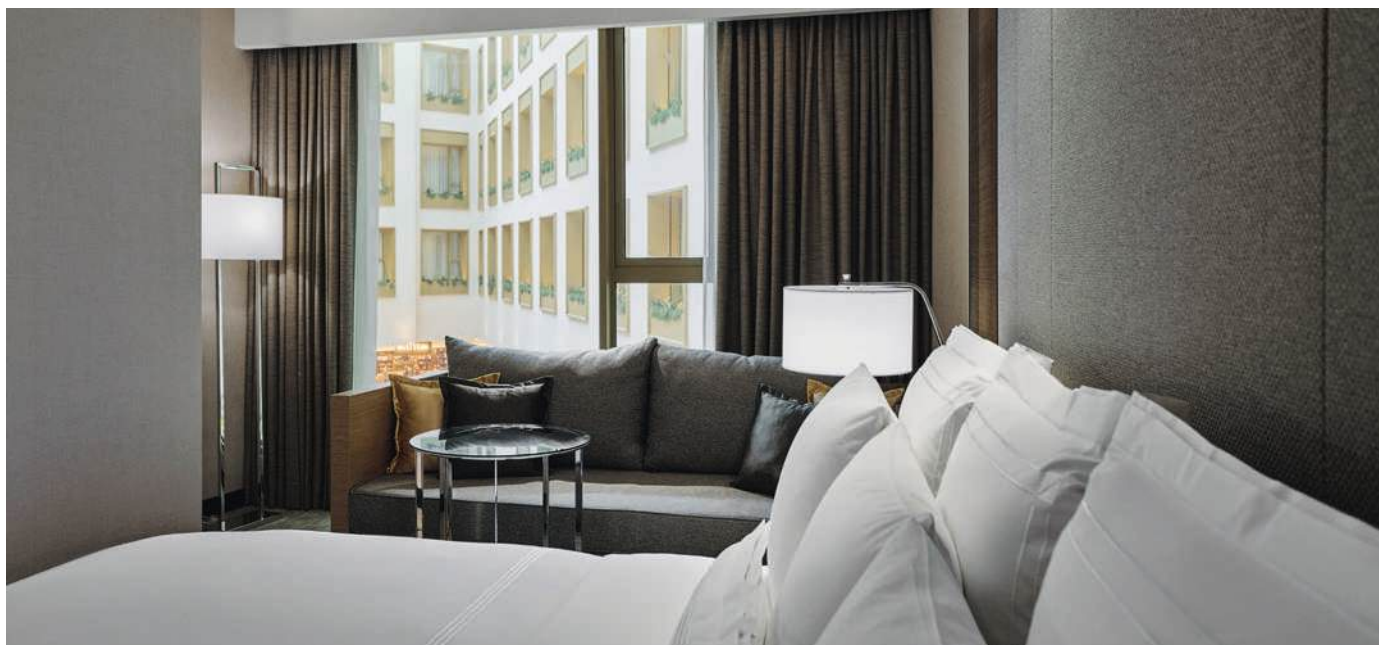
Dubbed 'The Happening Hotel', its direct connection to the luxury shopping mall The Starhill and prime location in Bukit Bintang, the city's central shopping, business and entertainment district, makes it incredibly convenient for travellers to get around. The five-star property's location, along with the majestic and pillarless Mayang Sari Grand Ballroom, has also made it a venue of choice for meetings, conferences and social events.

Its extensive range of amenities includes an outdoor pool, the Donna Spa and a fitness centre, while its gourmet experiences, such as authentic dim sum at Luk Yu Tea House



The hotel lobby of the
JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur.





This page: the Deluxe Twin Room of JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur (above); a selection of hotel rooms face The Starhill (below).

Facing page, from top: the Presidential Suite; the hotel reception is always ready to help guests with any request; the pillarless Mayang Sari Ballroom.

and international flavours at Shook!, are well worth a visit on their own.

A recognisable icon for the JW Marriott brand is the majestic, mythical creature, the 'Griffin', which can be seen throughout the property. Part lion and part eagle, the Griffin remains a powerful hallmark for the brand, which is displayed in its logo and a bronze statue that stands proudly on a marble base. The eagle represents vision and perspective, while the lion represents power, strength and pride.

To trace the roots of JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur, one must wind back the clock to the year 1984, when the brand's very first hotel opened in Washington, D.C. Bill Marriott, Jr., then CEO of Marriott International, named it in honour of his father, the company founder, who saw the completed project the year before his passing.

J. Willard Marriott was a thoughtful, humble man, who lived a rich and meaningful life, and made the most of his 84 years. By prioritising his own well-being, he was able to be present with those who were most important to him – namely his friends, family and associates. His approach to life continues to inspire the direction of the brand today, from their wellness philosophy to their attention to detail at every touchpoint and interaction. The JW Marriott brand carries on the visionary's legacy today by providing an unparalleled hospitality experience in the same way that J. Willard took care of his associates.

Associates at JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur are thoroughly trained and oriented to embody the following core principles: putting people first, pursuing excellence, embracing change, acting with integrity and serving our world. By integrating these values into their daily work, they



are empowered to consistently deliver exceptional service and elevate their performance above industry standards. These principles guide not only how they interact with guests, but also how they collaborate with colleagues, approach challenges and contribute to the overall success of the hotel.

This dedication to excellence ensures that JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur offers an unparalleled experience for all who visit time and time again.

For more information, visit marriott.com/en-us/hotels/kuldt-jw-marriott-hotel-kuala-lumpur/overview/

LIFE FEATURE



THE ART OF PERSIAN BREAD

HOTEL STRIPES KUALA LUMPUR IS SET TO INTRODUCE A BELOVED PERSIAN CULINARY STAPLE, SANGAK FLATBREAD, PAIRED WITH SUCCULENT KEBABS AT BRASSERIE 25.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT Photos by LAW SOO PHYE



Although pizza, as we know it today, is associated with Naples, Italy, the concept of flatbread and placing toppings on them has existed in many cultures and has much older roots. During the 11th century, ancient Persian soldiers would reportedly carry small quantities of pebbles and pile them up to build a *sangak* oven, which was used to bake the eponymous bread for the entire army. The bread served as a great source of nutrition, and thus the practice then spread to the general population.

Today, the whole-wheat sourdough flatbread better known as *sangak* is widely considered Iran's national bread, made from a handful of humble pantry staples such as flour, water and salt. Fittingly, for the holy month of Ramadan this year, Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur will be introducing *sangak* to its menu at its restaurant, Brasserie 25. For this very purpose, a large *sangak* oven made of red bricks has been specially commissioned and constructed for the restaurant at the alfresco area by an Iranian expert. This fits in perfectly with the rustic charm of similar red brick arcades, mid-century copper sputnik chandeliers and dark wood floors that are reminiscent of the Si-o-se-pol bridge in Isfahan, Iran.



Above: *sangak* bread is commonly known as 'Pebble Bread' in the Western world.

Top: red bricks are a prominent feature of Brasserie 25.

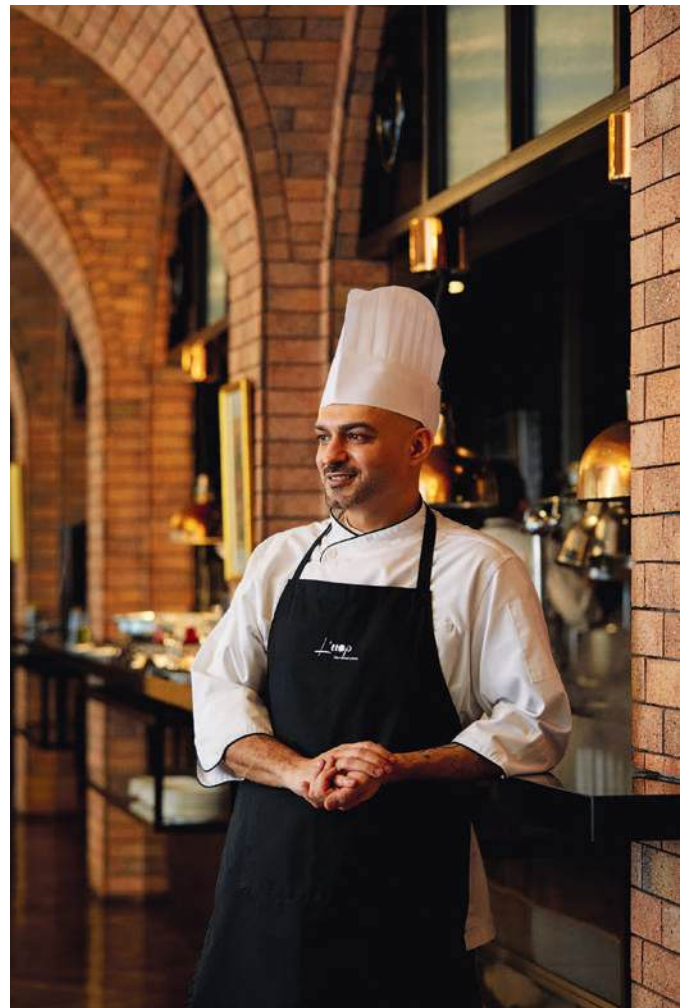


Making *sangak* is an arduous process that requires prodigious skill. On the grounds of the hotel, a man can be seen bustling away in front of an oven with a roaring fire of up to 190°C. First, he plunges his oiled hands into a steel bowl of wet dough and makes a small ball. Then, he sets the portion on a floured paddle, working skilfully and quickly to flatten it with his fingers, making it as thin as possible before giving it a quick sprinkle of black and white sesame seeds. In an impressive move, the thinly stretched mass is briskly arranged on the hot pebbles in the oven before it starts to lose its shape. The bread cooks within seconds, with the bottom peppered with a rounded, unique pattern from the pebbles while the top gets lightly browned. Finally, a wooden stick with a metal hook is used to extract the metre-long triangle, and it's left to cool before being served to hungry diners with its characteristically uneven surfaces and crispy edges.

IRAN'S CULINARY TALENT

Serving *sangak* at Brasserie 25 was the brainchild of Chef Hossein 'Hoss' Karimi, consultant for YTL Hotels and the founder of L'nop (Like No Other Place) Private Chef & Catering KL. The 35-year-old first moved to Malaysia almost two decades ago from Tehran and he's called Kuala Lumpur home ever since. Impressively, he used to be an IT lecturer and fashion coordinator for fashion publications before making the move to cooking despite being self-taught.

"I met the late Sultan of Pahang, Tuanku Sultan Ahmad Shah, and his wife, Tuanku Sultanah Kalsom Abdullah, and we exchanged contacts. When I was invited to her events, I would cook something for Tuanku Sultanah, and she loved my cooking so much that she asked me to cook for her and her royal family at their KL residence," Karimi says.



Above: Chef Hossein Karimi.

Top: Brasserie 25 offers a relaxed atmosphere, cosy corners for dates or family gatherings, and tantalising meals that are bursting with flavour.



This page: the chef first works with dough that is supple, soft and slightly sticky. He quickly flattens the dough, which is then sprinkled with black and white sesame seeds. The dough is then placed into the oven at top speed. With the temperature kept on high heat, the *sangak* cooks rapidly within the scorching hot oven. It is finally extracted from the oven using a hook. After being left to cool, the result is delicious *sangak* bread with its delicate texture and subtle flavours.

More and more clients fell in love with Karimi's cooking, which encompasses international cuisines and pastries, and, today, he has cooked for numerous royals and VIPs, including Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan of Brunei, and former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

SCRUMPTIOUS SANGAK

According to Karimi, the name *sangak* literally means 'little stones' or 'pebbles' in Persian, derived from the word 'sang', meaning 'stone'. "It's a very healthy dish in Iran, which doctors will even recommend," he says.

"The *sangak* oven had to be made just right to produce perfect bread. It has to have a dome shape and the right material so that the heat doesn't escape," Karimi adds. "Using pebbles and giving it direct contact with the bread actually gives it an incredible texture, while the bricks give it a certain aroma. Rather than using modern ovens to bake it, this keeps the *sangak* truly authentic as they are a cherished aspect of Persian heritage."

Although it appears deceptively simple, it is not only a dish on its own but it is also a key element in the breakfast of Iranians and eaten with cheese and nut platters, herbs, jams, butter and more, similar to Western high teas. *Sangak* can also be paired with juicy kebab meats such as lamb, chicken and beef, and can also be used as a utensil for scooping up dips like hummus. "My star product is actually my kebab, which made me who I am today. I make kebab from lamb shoulder, which people usually don't do because it takes about 1.6kg to get 1kg of meat. That's why it cooks really fast, and is so tender and juicy," Karimi says. "We will also be introducing chicken kebab, which is marinated in my own recipe of coriander chilli sauce, all of which will pair amazingly with the *sangak*."

"The neighbourhood surrounding Jalan Kamunting is known for its unique and diverse offerings," he continues. "I met Dato' Mark Yeoh, the Executive Director of YTL Corporation's hotels and resorts division, as a private chef. After learning about his passion implementing F&B concepts in YTL hotels, I thought that having the *sangak* oven in Hotel Stripes would be a great way to introduce Persian flavours to the guests and bring something new to the area."

For more information, visit www.stripeskl.com



AN EXCLUSIVE AFFAIR

LUK YU TEAHOUSE AND CLUB CHINOIS ARE AVAILABLE
FOR EXCLUSIVE HIRE AT THE STARHILL DINING,
FEATURING TAILORED MENUS BY GOURMET TASTEMAKERS.

Words by ALICIA CORBETT



Host a private event at Club Chinois and then feast your guests with exquisite Cantonese cuisine at Luk Yu Teahouse.

JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur is known as one of the city's finest hotels, thanks to its coveted address in the heart of Bukit Bintang, coupled with its reputation for luxury and service. If you are looking to host a birthday party, impress during a corporate function or just gather with your nearest and dearest, book the hotel's Luk Yu Teahouse for an unforgettable celebration.

With a maximum capacity of 110 persons, you and your list of carefully selected guests can have the exclusive space – which counts royalty and the country's elite as regulars – entirely to yourselves. On hand to whip up mouthwatering Cantonese cuisine, customised to your requests, is Chef Leong, who serves as the Senior Sous Chef. Completing the gastronomy troika is Chef Jun, the Senior Dim Sum chef, who works closely with Dim Sum tastemaker Chiu Chow cuisine master chef Alex Au of the famous Pak Loh Chiu Chow restaurant.

Host your guests amidst its stylish Chinoiserie-inspired interiors as you tuck into Crispy Egg Noodles with Tualang Prawns, or Invigorating Rice Vermicelli in Milky Superior Soup with Soon Hock Fish Head and Salted Vegetable. If Dim Sum is what you are after, sample exquisitely crafted Steamed Chicken and Prawn Dumplings, Steam Cheong Fun with Barbecued Chicken, or Steamed Buns with Golden Custard Filling.

The inspiration for the Tea House is the world's first known monograph on tea – *The Classic of Tea*, penned by Tang Dynasty poet Lu Yu. Naturally, a tea menu offering a laudable selection of fine teas from Taiwan and China is the perfect choice to enhance the meal.

For guests who value absolute privacy, the decadent spread may be served at Club Chinois, just steps away from Luk Yu. Additionally, you can choose from the selection of scrumptious fare from Shook!, with its globally inspired menu such as Southern Thai and Japanese cuisine, as well as fresh local seafood. Behind its closed Gatsby-esque doors, there are options to hire a live band or a DJ, and allow up to 60 guests to truly unwind by hitting the dance floor. The private dining room also includes a holding room for VIPs, if required, and includes a built-in bar space.

With a team of talented hands-on individuals to cater to your every whim, this is one event you won't forget in a hurry.



For more information, please visit thestarhilldining.com/outlets/luk-yu-tea-house/ or please email enquiries@thestarhilldining.com for bookings and enquiries.



LIFE FEATURE

PICNIC ON THE HILLS

ROMANCE REACHES ELEVATED GROUNDS AT CAMERON
HIGHLANDS RESORT WITH A PICNIC FOR TWO AMIDST
THE BOH TEA PLANTATION IN THE COOL HIGHLAND AIR.

Words by KARMUN NG Photos by MARCUS WONG





This and facing page: a picnic in the wondrous setting of Cameron Highlands would make for a perfect honeymoon or family holiday.

In the crisp highland air and in the midst of the sprawling tea fields of Cameron Highlands, Cameron Highlands Resort takes things up a notch when it comes to picnics on the green. Its Signature Picnic Experience comes paired with sweeping fields of fragrant tea for as far as the eye can see, served on a small shaded perch tucked under a tree. Have tea with sides of more tea, with panoramic views of the highland's famed BOH Tea Plantation painting the most scenic backdrop at whichever angle you turn to look.

Spend a romantic afternoon for two with the full frills of a personal tent, fluffy cushions and warm blankets, all the amenities you need to get comfortable in the idyllic outdoors. A picnic basket holds a treasure chest of goodies, from sweet rolls, cakes and bakes, to savoury sandwiches, wraps and snacks, served on a short table for the perfect cottage-core aesthetics so as to not take away from any of the sophistication of a sit-down session. Not amiss are full sets of cutlery and crockery for refined dining, complete with a wait staff at ready, dressed in white no less, for an experience that leaves nothing to want.

For the lips, nibble on a tier of afternoon tea delights, perfectly paired with a hot pot of tea of your choice. Scones are warm and buttery, perfect to be slathered with classic clotted cream and fresh fruit jam. Sandwiches are meticulously prepared in perfect bite sizes for minimal fuss. Finally, end things on a sweet note with a myriad of *petit gateaux*, with options that change depending on the availability of the day.

For the eyes, marvel at the rolling views of the valley and breathe in the fresh mountain air. Removed from nosy neighbours and immersed in the thick beauty of nature, the private picnic is an escape to the chilly hill countryside for immaculate privacy and something delicious – just the perfect way to idle away an afternoon in Cameron Highlands.



For more information, visit www.cameronhighlandsresort.com



TEA OF HERITAGE

ENJOY KRISTANG FAVOURITES SUCH AS DEVIL CURRY,
PULUT KUNG KAYA AND MORE IN A CLASSIC
AFTERNOON TEA EXPERIENCE AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA.

Words by KARMUN NG

Afternoon tea experiences are everywhere all across Malacca, a historic city that continues to upkeep some of the oldest English traditions, given its status as an old Straits Settlement. Sit down to a session that's out of the ordinary at The Majestic Malacca and its Kristang Afternoon Tea, a tea experience that features historical Kristang heritage and influences.

Originating from the time of the Portuguese rule in Malacca back in the 16th to 17th centuries, the Kristangs and their mixed Portuguese and Malay heritage are proud sentinels of a 500-year-old food legacy underlined by a harmonious mix of culinary styles. Their clever balance of Malay fiery sambals, Indian spicy curries and Chinese comforting stews promise enlivening flavours for unforgettable dining sessions.

Drawing from the food culture of Malacca's indigenous Kristang ethnic people, the afternoon tea spotlights the best of Kristang flavours, presented in dainty afternoon tea style. For savouries, the classic Tuna Sandwich and Egg

Mayo Sandwich are always reliable for a good bite, while the Cheese and Spice Chicken Sandwich heralds the fiery heat of the Kristang icon, Devil Curry.

Sweets steer from the ordinary with local Kristang *kueh* such as Pulut Kung Kaya, glutinous rice tinged naturally blue with *bunga telang* (butterfly pea), served with house made coconut jam, as well as Sago Gula Melaka, sago pearls in coconut milk with melted palm sugar. They are further accompanied by Bolu Koku, a traditional coconut cake, and Pastel de Nata, sweet Portuguese egg tarts. Washing it all down are premium tea options of your choice, brewed to the perfect temperature for slow and leisurely sipping.

The Kristang Afternoon tea is a serving of elegance translated for the palate by a selection of delicacies inspired by Malacca's rich heritage, served in the setting of timeless sophistication that is The Majestic Malacca.

For more information, visit www.majesticmalacca.com



The Majestic Malacca's Kristang Afternoon Tea highlights the best of Kristang flavours presented in dainty afternoon tea style.

LIFE FEATURE

HEALING MALAY SPA RITUALS TAKE TOP PRIZE

WHY YOUR CROWN IS NOT ON YOUR HEAD
BUT IN YOUR SOUL IN TANJONG JARA RESORT.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN





The Spa Village ethos of honouring healing cultures across the region was magnificently rewarded when Spa Village at Tanjong Jara Resort won the Best Global Spa of the Year at the 2024 SpaChina Wellness & Spa Awards ceremony. The host of the awards, SpaChina, is a leading media title for wellness, health and beauty. The award recognises the resort's Spa Village as an industry trailblazer and game-changer for Tanjong Jara's culturally immersive wellness therapies based on authentic Malay healing traditions.

The Spa Village Tanjong Jara is steps away from the crescent-shaped golden beach that makes up part of the 320km long Terengganu coastline. Tanjong Jara's concept of wholesomeness, or *sucimurni*, builds on age-old traditions that date back to the Javanese empire of Majapahit in the 14th century. The enduring nature of its rituals and practices is reflected in the fact that the sultanate of Terengganu has been ruled by the same family since 1701.

Tanjong Jara was chosen for this award after a rigorous fact-finding and experiential trip by one of the SpaChina award judges, Dr Gerry Bodeker. During Dr Bodeker's four-day stay, he also had a consultation with a Malay traditional medicine specialist. It is recommended that Spa Village guests take advantage of a consultation informed by a thousand-year-old health discipline to get their personalised *sucimurni* spa programme.



Dr. Gerry Bodeker (left) a judge for the Spa China Awards, with Peter Wong, Area Director of Resorts Sales and Revenue of YTL Hotels.



Guests can, for example, enjoy Ikal-Ikal, a Malay scalp treatment; Picit, a traditional Malay dry massage commonly practised in local family homes; or Tuam Pasir (heated sea sand), an ancient Malay therapy to restore strength and vitality using hot sand, fenugreek and blackseeds.

The most intrinsically Malay treatment is the Raja Sehari treatment (king and queen for a day), which, in Terengganu culture, is traditionally enjoyed by the bride and groom on their wedding day. It starts with pomp, circumstance, *kompang* music and a procession through the gardens to the spa. Lasting half-a-day for a couple, she is lavished with Dandan Puteri Tujuh – a Malay massage – followed by hair cream bath, facial and body scrub, fragrant milk bath and scented body steaming. For him, the Panji Alam kicks off with a warrior massage, followed by a hair roots treatment, herbal scrub, herbal spice bath and herbal oil steam treatment.

Raja Sehari will make you feel more royal than a crown. And your spiritual health and wellbeing will thank you for the whole week.

For more information about Spa Village in Tanjong Jara Resort, visit www.tanjongjararesort.com/spa-village

ABSOLUTE PRIVACY

BASK IN THE WARM SUNSHINE AND FROLIC
IN THE PURE WHITE SANDS OF GAYA ISLAND
RESORT'S PRIVATE TAVAJUN BAY.

Words by KARMUN NG

Sun, sand and sea come with the bonus of absolute seclusion at Gaya Island Resort, especially along its Tavajun Bay private beach. Located on Pulau Gaya, the largest of a cluster of five islands that form the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, the resort benefits greatly from its proximity to the natural conservation areas off the coast of Borneo and close to Kota Kinabalu. Being hidden away means it gets to keep the best to itself – from its golden sandy beach to rocky coastal outcrops, and vibrant coral reefs teeming with marine life. Completing this perfect setting is the stunning outline of Mount Kinabalu.

Enjoy the best of this precious seclusion at Tavajun Bay, a tranquil beach located just a short five-minute boat ride away from the main property. This private slice of sandy beach is home to the Gaya Island Resort Marine Centre that spearheads a slew of conservation efforts for the likes of sea turtles, tropical birds and even friendly forest critters. A private tour can be arranged to transfer you seamlessly to the centre, where an insightful discovery of local flora and

fauna awaits. While you're out there, bask in the sun and snorkel in the crystal-clear shallow waters if you like.

After an immersive morning discovering the conservation team's many noble efforts, indulge in a private lunch or personalised gourmet picnic on the beach. Dining options will be curated by the resort's skilled kitchen staff, serving up the best of Borneo flavours and native island ingredients.

Gaya Island Resort is committed to ecologically sustainable practices to minimise the carbon footprint within its environment – Tavajun Bay and its offerings is one of the few closest-to-nature experiences you don't want to miss. Other ecologically sustainable practices to minimise carbon footprint on its surrounding environments include villas that respect Sabahan architecture; using local materials that blend harmoniously with the natural environment; and implementing strict walking-only resort policies, which allows minimal use of motorised vehicles that are only for operational purposes.

For more information, visit www.gayaislandresort.com



LET'S GET TOGETHER

AC HOTELS REDEFINE
WHAT IT MEANS TO HOST,
TRANSFORMING GATHERINGS
INTO UNFORGETTABLE
MOMENTS.

Words by JUERN NG

It may be relatively new to the hotel landscape, but AC Hotels has quickly made a distinctive mark, with 252 properties worldwide, including three in Malaysia, since its founding in 1997. The hotel's founder, Antonio Catalán, who started the brand in Spain, believes that "hotels have the opportunity to be something better than a home". The brand carries with it a unique European influence, drawing from the legacy of German-American architect and designer Mies Van Der Rohe, renowned for his "less is more" approach.

AC Hotels' event spaces apply the same philosophy, focusing on clean lines and open spaces with a modern aesthetic. Elegance is achieved through minimalism, creating an environment that is as sophisticated as it is purposeful.

CITY SOIREE

At AC Hotel Kuala Lumpur, the pulsating energy of the city becomes part of the experience. With skyline views framed by floor-to-ceiling windows and cutting-edge AV systems, the hotel features 12 event rooms, perfect for business meetings, conferences and elegant social settings. Its largest banquet space spans 454 sq m, which can accommodate up to 400 guests. Located in the prime Titiwangsa Sentral area, the hotel offers easy access to rail lines and a wealth of cultural attractions, dining options and entertainment venues, inviting guests to experience the vibrant local scene beyond the event itself.

COASTAL CHARM

Situated in a charming coastal city, AC Hotel Kuantan is a refreshing contrast to the bustling urban scene. Its laid-back and inviting atmosphere makes it a lovely spot for weddings, sunset dinners and private gatherings. Boasting eight event



All three AC Hotels in Malaysia offer spaces and amenities that are ideal for any event.

rooms, including a spacious ballroom of 483 sq m that can accommodate up to 600 guests, the venue is ideal for guests to mingle and enjoy the freshness of the ocean breeze. For those interested in regional flavours and fresh coastal cuisine, AC Hotel Kuantan is located near a variety of local seafood restaurants. Additionally, the hotel is happy to provide catering services to ensure guests enjoy an unforgettable experience by the sea.

HILLTOP HARMONY

Nestled atop Bukit Jambul and surrounded by lush greenery, AC Hotel Penang invites guest to embrace nature's beauty, experience serenity and connection to the outdoors. A haven for intimate retreats, there are 11 event rooms in the hotel, with a ballroom encompassing an impressive 544 sq m that can host up to 700 people, suitable for team-building events, wellness workshops or family celebrations. Set on an island celebrated for its exquisite food and rich historical heritage, AC Hotel Penang is just a short drive away from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Georgetown and conveniently close to Penang International Airport, offering a unique venue that feels a world away from the city bustle while remaining close to essential amenities.

Whether it's AC Hotels in Kuala Lumpur, Kuantan or Penang, each space adds its own distinctive touch, offering venues that are more than just empty spaces but immersive experiences in their own right.

For more information, visit www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/kulka-ac-hotel-kuala-lumpur/events/ or www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/kuaar-ac-hotel-kuantan/events/ or www.marriott.com/en-us/hotels/penar-ac-hotel-penang/events/





A PAVAROTTI PARADISE

LUCIANO PAVAROTTI'S LEGACY LIVES ON DURING THE RECENT
OPERA IN PARADISE IN PANGKOR LAUT RESORT.

Words by ALICIA CHOO



Musical director Andrea Griminelli (centre) with tenor John Longmuir and soprano Cathy Di Zhang.

For one weekend of sheer sentiment each year, Pangkor Laut Resort hums with soulful sonority, enveloped by sun-swept shores and the ancient rainforest that has thrived for two million years. A special three-day, two-night escape on a private island, the Opera in Paradise showcase engages music admirers with gripping performances amidst a verdant landscape, creating an experience like no other.

Over the years, YTL has introduced numerous soundscapes to the public, embracing a unifying language that dissolves barriers of culture, race, religion and politics – a priority that they hold in high regard. Unlike musicals, opera is an emotive art form, relying solely on organic vocals and live orchestra. Rarely does such a performative medium take place in an outdoor setting like the Samudra gazebo, complete with stellar acoustics that bring every note to life. “Performing outdoors is an entirely different experience. The natural elements, such as the sound of the ocean and the rustling trees, add a unique dimension to the performance. It’s much more intimate compared with a venue like Carnegie Hall in New York City, where the acoustics are meticulously controlled but perhaps less true-to-life,” explained flautist and returning musical director Andrea Griminelli. He added: “At Pangkor Laut Resort, there’s a certain magical spontaneity that makes every performance one-of-a-kind.”

Last year’s edition was a heartfelt tribute to the prolific tenor Luciano Pavarotti, with Griminelli on the flute, joined by the angelic-toned Cathy Di-Zhang and the commanding tenor John Longmuir. “We are so pleased to be able to do Opera In Paradise for the second year. The performers truly stepped up to the challenge and gave everyone such a spectacular show. As we always say, this production is a celebration for all our guests, and we hope to continue this tradition, just as we did last year,” said Dato’ Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Hotels, reflecting on this occasion. The star-studded ensemble was handpicked by Dato’ Mark, focusing on classical and operatic works with an emphasis on vocal range. The addition of solo flute pieces and duets with the singers brought deeper intensity, making the show even more evocative of the grandeur of opera. While the previous edition featured a broader range of genres, the 2024 iteration returned to the roots of operatic tradition.

The evening took its course with sunset cocktails and canapés at the Fisherman’s Cove, where guests mingled in high style before heading to the gazebo. With sweeping 360-degree panoramic views, the Samudra lit up with the Habanera from Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*, a beloved melodic piece recognisable even to those unfamiliar with opera. Di-Zhang delivered a brilliant interpretation in native-like French. “A lot of people are familiar with the tunes, but they might not



Pangkor Laut Resort hit the high notes with gripping vocal and musical performances during the weekend extravaganza of Opera in Paradise.





realise that they're opera. That's why we've included some really popular pieces that people will recognise. It's a great way for our audience to experience and appreciate some of the most famous opera pieces," she said. "I think many people perceive opera as something very niche or elitist, but it's much more accessible than they might realise. It's for everyone, and I hope to convey that message."

Griminelli then stunned the audience with his flute performance of Ennio Morricone's *Gabriel's Oboe*. He spoke of the resort as a wellspring of inspiration: "Having visited the resort multiple times, what I cherish the most is the serene atmosphere. My first trip here was with Pavarotti, and we were both mesmerised by the island's beauty. One of my favourite pastimes is strolling along the beach, soaking in the tranquillity and allowing my mind to wander creatively. It's a place where I can truly relax and find inspiration." Longmuir, on the other hand, intensified the energy with Pavarotti's signature aria *Nessun Dorma*. A weighty number, the tenor took the stage with great reverence. "The rehearsal process started months in advance. We're fortunate that many of these pieces are ones we regularly sing, as it's a programme of great opera hits," Longmuir said. "The preparation hasn't been as intense as learning a brand new opera from scratch. We sing a lot, so it's more about refining and making sure

everything is in place," The show wrapped up beautifully with *Time To Say Goodbye*, as all three performers shared the stage in a glorious finale.

Following the show, guests were treated to a Pavarotti-themed gala dinner at the Feast Village, curated by chef Mohan Deligannu, Corporate Executive Chef of YTL Hotels. The dishes were presented with flavour-packed recipes, including standouts such as the classic Pavarotti penne with tuna ragu and shaved pecorino (taken from the *Metropolitan Opera Cookbook* from 1988) and the King's Medallion, which consisted of roasted wagyu medallion, wild rice risotto, carrot mousseline and shaved truffle (one of King Charles III's most-requested dish during his time at the resort).

Yeoh ended the night with a spirited speech, highlighting the triumph of this year's Opera in Paradise and expressing anticipation for the next edition. "Next time around, I would like to consider incorporating Chinese opera pieces into the mix," he said. "It's time to think of new ideas, with some unexpected elements thrown in."

For more information on Pangkor Laut Resort, visit <https://www.pangkorlautresort.com/>



The Ranch at The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui is now a Michelin Selected Restaurant.



MICHELIN- RECOGNISED GOODNESS

THE STEAKS AND SEAFOOD
AT THE RANCH IN THE RITZ-CARLTON,
KOH SAMUI ARE NOW MICHELIN-
RECOGNISED, STRENGTHENING ITS
STATUS AS A MUST-VISIT STEAK HOUSE
ON THE ISLAND.

Words by KARMUN NG



Dining offerings at The Ritz-Carlton, Koh Samui have never shied away from mirroring the island's offerings, where chili-spiked Southern Thai flavours are stir-fried, simmered and stewed to colourful life from ingredients picked fresh from bustling food markets. At The Ranch, beautifully crafted steaks and fresh seafood sing a different tune of indulgence with robust flavours, a song now recognised by the highly coveted Michelin Guide as a Michelin Selected Restaurant.

This bold steakhouse, which also serves up luscious sides and indulgent desserts in a cosy atmosphere, is a true home to meat lovers – described as the only real steakhouse on the island by the revered guide. Premium dry-aged beef is the specialty, skilfully grilled and lovingly served on hot plates with a wide range of sauces and side dishes, promising to cater to palates and appetites of all shapes, sizes and preferences.

Playing an equally strong supporting role is a line-up of grilled dishes, ranging from seafood to vegetables, bringing colour and variety to a menu already brimming with dizzying taste and texture. Produce come from local farms wherever possible, perfected on a plate by a team of startling local talent. A comprehensive selection of old and new world wines, proudly displayed along floor-to-ceiling shelves along a full wall of the dining hall, make for perfect pairing each time, no matter what you're having for the day.

Enjoy it all in a laidback environment of warm wooden fixtures and furniture, housed in a spacious room capped off with high ceilings. As you dine, peek at the sea from its modular French windows, and feel the sea breeze and warm tropical air as you savour your favourite prime cut. The Ranch promises an authentic steak experience, with no corners cut, right by the shores of Koh Samui.

For reservations, call +66 77 915 777, email rc.usmrz.sales@ritzcarlton.com or visit ritzcarlton.com/kohsamui



SPRING FRESHNESS

AS THE SNOW MELTS IN THE MOUNTAINS AND
DRIFT ICE RECEDES FROM THE SEA IN THE SPRING,
LOOK FORWARD TO THE CRISPEST VEGETABLE AND
SWEETEST SEASONAL SEAFOOD IN NISEKO, HOKKAIDO.

Words by KARMUN NG

In Niseko, the seas and terrains awaken from a long winter slumber bursting forth with edible treasures galore. The northernmost of Japan's main islands heralds the arrival of spring with a bevy of wild edible plants from the mountains, asparagus from the fields and seasonal seafood caught from the sea.

For the crispest taste of spring, look no further than the spring cabbage, a heart of loosely wound tender leaves resulting in softer bites and gentler aftertaste. Have it as a salad for purest sweetness, or boiled and drizzled with a dash of soya sauce to lend it a veil of umami. Not amiss is

asparagus, sprouting crunchy and sweet from the ground, drawing its richest flavours from the sudden temperature change from winter to spring. Simply sauteed with some garlic, or blanched with butter and seasoned with wasabi and soy sauce, each bite bursts with flavour and freshness.

From the sea, *asari* clams are fat and fleshy this time of year, feeding off the rise of glycogen and succinic acid in the waters. Simply steam them to enjoy their natural sweetness, simmer them in miso soup for a heart-warming bowl of goodness or braise them with *sake* for a bit of punch. Indulgence is cracked open from spring *uni* (sea urchins),



each packed with meat as they fatten up before spawning. The best way to experience it is on its own, freshly cracked and scooped up with a spoon, but having it over rice in a *donburi*, or folded into creamy pasta or silky smooth *udon* noodles will also satiate even the most discerning craving.

With its fertile inland, vast mountains and widespread coastlines, Hokkaido is home to a vast variety of ingredients that are often homegrown, promising only the freshest of fresh. Experience spring that you can taste at Niseko Village, the renowned resort where all of the above converge along with spectacular back country and vibrant tourism. Food, fun and family time await at this premier snow destination, featuring award-winning and much beloved properties such as Higashiyama, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Kasara Townhouses, Hinode Hills Niseko Village, Hilton Niseko Village and the Green Leaf Niseko Village.

For more information, visit www.niseko-village.com



Clockwise from above: asparagus bursting with flavour and freshness; Kasara Townhouses in Niseko Village; *asari* clams are delightfully fleshy in spring; *uni* (sea urchins) is a decadent indulgence for the discerning.



TREADING IN CINEMA'S FOOTSTEPS

WHY THREADNEEDLES HOTEL IS AN AMAZING
STARTING POINT TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN SOME OF
YOUR FAVOURITE FANTASY AND SCI-FI MOVIES.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

The film is about to end. Timothée Chalamet as Willy Wonka opens the bar of chocolate his mother left him years ago. He reads the message on a golden ticket: "The secret is not the chocolate, but who you share it with." Before the credits start to roll, Scrubitt and Bleacher are arrested, and Lofty the Oompa Loompa, played deliciously by Hugh Grant, is appointed tasting chef.

Willy Wonka was a phenomenally popular film. How often, after a film you loved has ended, have you wished you could stay in that cinematic world just a bit longer? Well, now you can – by indulging in a spot of set-jetting. Although the trend has been around since 2008, a new wave of set-

jettters emerged at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. After almost two years' of not being able to step outside their homes, viewers now wanted to visit the film locations of the favourite shows and movies that kept them company during lockdown.

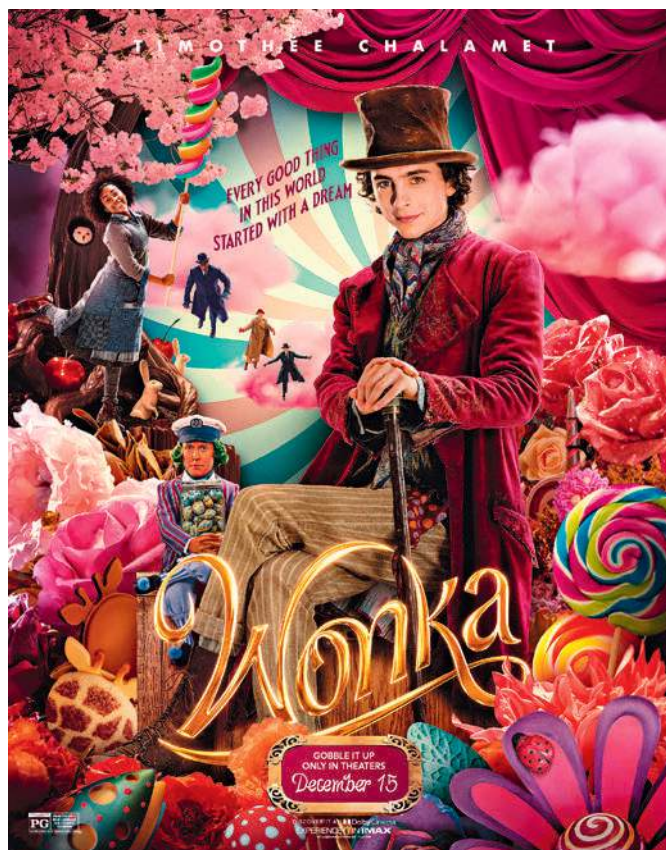
For all its historic connections to merchant banking and the London guilds, the five-star Threadneedles Hotel is also the perfect luxury accommodation to base yourself at for a spot of serious set-jetting in London. And this is due to its proximity to one of the city's most famous film location, the gorgeous Leadenhall Market. Threadneedles Hotel is only six minutes on foot from one of the oldest markets in London, selling meat and fish as far back as the 14th century.

Today, Leadenhall is more famous for its role in movies. From the first film of the franchise, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the magical Diagon Alley – where the wizarding world shops – was filmed at Leadenhall. If you're sharp, you'll be able to spot where Hagrid and Harry enter the Leaky Cauldron Pub. In *Tomb Raider*, Angelina Jolie as Lara Croft raced her motorbike through the market's narrow alleyways. One of Heath Ledger's last films before he died, *The Imaginarium of Dr Parnassus*, was filmed here, with the market standing in for the setting of the Doctor's new spectacular show. Meanwhile, the Cold War film *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, based on a John Le Carré novel and starring Gary Oldman, used the glass atrium of Leadenhall as the setting for an assassination in a Budapest café.

This same spectacular grand atrium inspired the visuals for *Willy Wonka*, even though it was not filmed at the market. The gorgeous columns, striking red paintwork and the architecture of the market fitted perfectly with Roald Dahl's description of Wonka's chocolate shop.

Social media influencers have named London as one of the world's top five cities for set-jetting. We recommend you ask the Threadneedles Hotel's concierge about walking tours to the market as soon as you've had a welcome drink at the hotel bar.

For more information, visit www.hotelthreadneedles.co.uk



BLOSSOM BOTHERING IN SPRING

WITH A STAY AT THE ACADEMY HOTEL IN LONDON,
GREET THE ARRIVAL OF THE NEW SEASON
AT THE GATES OF KEW GARDENS.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

Each year, as the days get noticeably longer in the month of February, hope springs eternal in the hearts of everyone in Europe that the winter has thawed and springtime is just around the corner. There are no hard and fast rules for the start of spring. For some, it is when the first daffodil flower is sighted. For others, it is when the first birds start building their nests to lay their eggs.

However, there can be no argument that, in London, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew is the place to welcome spring with an open embrace, where it is a joy to walk among their millions of spring bulbs, blossoms and blooms from the month of April onwards each year.

Malaysians have a very strong connection to Kew Gardens' history through its rubber industry. In 1796, Henry Wickham successfully brought back 70,000 rubber seeds from Brazil to Kew Gardens. Thousands of germinated seedlings were soon shipped to Ceylon, Burma, Malaya and Singapore.

If you are visiting London in spring, make sure you book a ticket to the Kew Gardens' collaboration with the Royal College of Music for the Sounds of Blossom concert, which showcases original pieces created by seven composers from the college. To celebrate the arrival of the season, concerts will be performed around popular spring hotspots in Kew.

Stroll along Cherry Walk at Kew from March to May to see the flowering Japanese cherry trees (or sakura) as they put





Clockwise, from top: Kew Gardens is the place to welcome spring; The Academy Hotel in London; cherry blossoms.

Facing page: Greet the arrival of spring with a visit to Kew Gardens.

on a spectacular display of white, pink and green blossoms. Meanwhile, daffodils – always a cheerful bright yellow – are like bursts of sunshine at Kew along the Great Broad Walk Borders, surrounding the Temple of Aeolus and in the Natural area surrounding Queen Charlotte's Cottage.

The diminutive primrose is one of the first signs of spring in wooded areas. In Irish folklore, these pretty flowers were thought to represent eternal love and were placed at the doorway to protect the home from fairies. See primrose and other woodland highlights in the Woodland Garden and the Natural Area at Kew. Then, the area around Queen Charlotte's Cottage is also a 300-year old woodland and home to one of London's best bluebell woods. The bell-

shaped flowers are a favourite with bees and butterflies, which feed on the rich nectar.

Tulips are the last of the spring flowers to bloom. They were a favourite flower in the opulent gardens of Ottoman sultans. Look out for the dazzling displays on the Broad Walk Borders and in the Palm House beds at Kew.

Ask the front of house staff at The Academy Hotel for tips on visiting Kew Gardens, and then nip back to this boutique property after your blossom-viewing in time for Mr Ma's Afternoon Tea.

For more information, visit www.theacademyhotel.co.uk



ROMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

HOW NETFLIX SERIES *BRIDGERTON* HAS ATTRACTED A NEW COHORT OF REGENCY-CURIOUS VISITORS TO BATH, AND WHY FANS SHOULD BOOK A STAY AT THE GAINSBOROUGH BATH SPA.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

Sometime in the late 1990s, a Harvard graduate, and a superfan of Jane Austen novels, thought to herself, "If Julian Fellowes could do it with *Downton Abbey*, I can too." So, between 2000 and 2006, she penned eight historical novels about an upper-class London family from 1811 to 1820. Each of the *Bridgerton* books follows the lives of one of eight siblings as they find their love match in English society. The novels were a sell-out success for the American author, Julia Quinn. The rest is streaming history.

Whether you love *Bridgerton* or hate it, it is one of the most popular Netflix multi-series ever streamed. When the first season premiered in December 2020, the costume drama garnered 625 million views in just the first 28 days of its release.

The series is a tale of the social rivalry between two upper-class families, the Bridgertons and the Featheringtons. The sumptuous series was filmed in locations all around England, but to truly immerse in the *Bridgerton* atmosphere, the many Regency-era locations in Bath make it the best destination a visitor could choose.

The Royal Crescent is one of Bath's most recognisable images and The Gainsborough Bath Spa (below) is the perfect venue from which to explore the city.



HISTORY AND HERITAGE AFTERNOON TEA

We recommend you stay at The Gainsborough Bath Spa, and round off your *Bridgerton* walk with the hotel's carefully curated teatime menu, where local experts – sometimes dressed in period costume – are also on hand with entertaining stories and tales about Bath.

The Brasserie's Festive Afternoon Tea deftly serves up seasonal cheer with an Asian twist. These include turkey breast and cranberry finger sandwiches, as well as Malay Curry Puffs, washed down with mulled wine or cider.

REGENCY WALKING TRAIL

Then, head over to the cobbled Abbey Green, which is an easy eight-minute walk from The Gainsborough Bath Spa. The Green is considered the heart of the *Bridgerton* world. The Abbey Deli, with a curved white shopfront, was used as the *Bridgerton* Modiste, where ladies go for dress fittings and gossip. After that, make your way to The Pump Room and stand with your back to it to enjoy the colonnaded Bath Street. This is where Simon, Duke of Hastings, canters on horseback in the first episode of Season 1.

The picturesque Trim Street is one of *Bridgerton*'s most featured locations in Bath. Look out for *Bridgerton*'s Gunther's Tea Shop, where a few romantic liaisons and a breakup took place between Simon and Daphne. The shopfront next to the hair salon was used in the series as the Hat Emporium, where posh ladies were shown 'window-shopping'. Meanwhile, Beauford Square is also often featured in the series, with its







This page, clockwise from left: the stunning views of Bath city; The Gainsborough Brasserie; the Holburne Museum.

Facing page: The Brasserie's Festive Afternoon Tea at The Gainsborough Bath Spa serves up plenty of cheer with an Asian twist.



attractive row of Georgian homes. The square has been used as the backdrop for passing carriages, a wedding procession and even dramatic horse rides after dark.

As you pop round to the Royal Crescent, look out for the grand house at number 1, which was used as the Featherington House. In Season 1 Episode 4, characters gallop on horseback along the Royal Crescent and Beauford Square at night on their way to duel at daybreak. Of course, Bath city's Georgian Guildhall was used for many interior ballroom scenes in *Bridgerton*. The sumptuous 80ft long hall is grandly decorated with fluted columns, portraits, friezes, four large chandeliers and a musicians' gallery.

Last, but certainly not in the least, is the Holburne Museum, located at the end of Great Pulteney Street, and is one of the

most recognisable buildings from *Bridgerton* because it is Lady Danbury's house in the series. Only the exterior of the building is used in the series, but it appears quite frequently when Lady Danbury is hosting balls or parties. In some camera shots, you can also glimpse Sydney Buildings, the fine Georgian terrace opposite the museum.

However, to really appreciate the atmosphere of this historic city, it should be seen at night. It's easy to pop out to Beau Street for a ramble after-dark and after dinner at The Gainsborough Brasserie.

For more information, please visit www.thegainsboroughbathspa.co.uk



GREAT SCOT

THERE'S PLENTY TO LOVE ABOUT EDINBURGH THIS SEASON,
FROM TRAVELLING ON THE CALEDONIAN SLEEPER TRAIN
TO STAYING AT THE GLASSHOUSE HOTEL EDINBURGH.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN



The romance of overnight train travel has featured in many books and films, such as Graham Greene's *Stamboul Express*, John Buchan's *The 39 Steps*, Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* and Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. Now you can enjoy this mode of travel from London to Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Every evening of the week, except Saturday, the longest passenger train on Britain's mainland network pulls out of Euston Station in London and heads north for the Scottish Lowlands. Hundreds of passengers travelling overnight in 16 coaches in eight carriages arrive fresh and breakfasted by 8am in Edinburgh.



The Caledonian Sleeper (left) takes passengers from London to Edinburgh's Waverley Station, which is just a 10-minute walk from The Glasshouse Hotel Edinburgh (above).

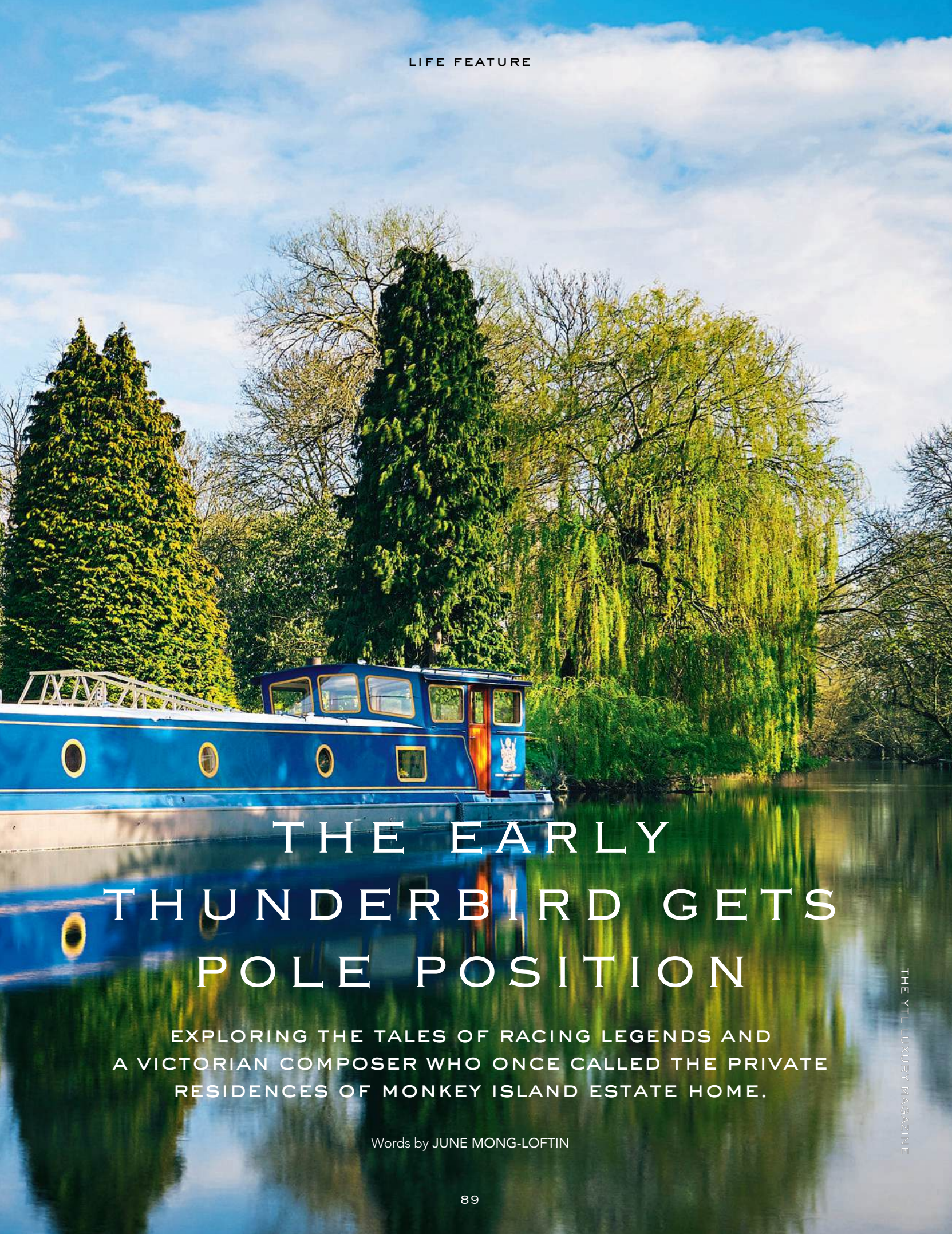
But this isn't any overnight train. It is the Caledonian Sleeper, which had its first journey from London to Edinburgh in April 2019 after a £150 million refit for this Scottish sleeper service. Travellers on the Caledonian have a choice of double beds, en-suite toilets, a Club Car menu of fine Scottish fare and a wide choice of malt whiskies, and modern air-conditioning in the summer.

Visitors to Scotland who arrive in Edinburgh's Waverley Station having travelled up on the Caledonian Sleeper will be fresh and ready to go sightseeing or even fishing, having travelled in style and comfort. Waverley Station is a mere 10-minutes' walk from The Glasshouse Hotel Edinburgh, part of the Autograph Collection, on the lively Calton Square.

Paul Theroux wrote in *The Great Railway Bazaar* that, "Anything is possible in a train: a great meal, [...] an intrigue, a good night's sleep [...]." Ensure you have the latter during your stay in Edinburgh by checking the website of The Glasshouse Hotel Edinburgh for accommodation offers such as their Whisky Experience Package, Long Stay (more than three-nights), Early Booking and the Romance Package.

For more information, visit www.theglasshousehotel.co.uk





THE EARLY THUNDERBIRD GETS POLE POSITION

EXPLORING THE TALES OF RACING LEGENDS AND
A VICTORIAN COMPOSER WHO ONCE CALLED THE PRIVATE
RESIDENCES OF MONKEY ISLAND ESTATE HOME.

Words by JUNE MONG-LOFTIN

It is a very well-kept secret that you can stay next to Monkey Island Estate in one of six luxurious private residences and enjoy the remarkable food, beverage and top-class service of the 40-room on a five-star island property. An inspired addition at this pastoral retreat upon the Thames is the creation of a Floating Spa, housed in a specially built riverboat moored along the bank. Treatments are performed in cabins and the whole 'spa journey' – using tinctures and liqueurs once made by monks – is a soothing delight. The services of a private chef are also available for an extra fee for private residence guests.



Previous spread: the Floating Spa.

This page, from above: the Monkey Room of Monkey Island Estate; the private property known as Long White Cloud.

LONG WHITE CLOUD

The property has four large bedroom suites accompanied by an impressive kitchen and a charming garden, ideal for al fresco dining in the summer months. Sitting on the banks of the River Thames, Long White Cloud also offers a private pool and jetty, which is ideal for those who may wish to arrive by boat.

Guests enjoying the peace of this bucolic, private island, with its gentle river views, will be pleasantly surprised to learn about the two illustrious former residents of this magnificent 19th-century property.

THE VICTORIAN COMPOSER EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

At the turn of the century, a frequent visitor was Edward Elgar, the most significant composer Britain had produced since Henry Purcell. After Frank Schuster, a wealthy arts patron, took possession of Long White Cloud in 1903 (the fashionable property was then known as The Hut in Bray), he often invited his friend Elgar to stay as a guest.

Elgar composed parts of some of his most famous works in the music room (now converted into the indoor pool area), including *The Kingdom* oratorio in 1906, which later would open the BBC Proms in 2014. It was said he enjoyed the Thames-side location and that the tranquil surroundings of Bray helped him compose. When Schuster passed away in 1927, the property was eventually purchased by Sir Stirling Craufurd Moss' father in the 1930s.

RACING LEGEND STIRLING MOSS (1929-2020)

Long White Cloud was the Moss family home until 1959 and was where Moss' father bought an Austin 7 for his son when





Clockwise from top left: Edward Elgar; inside the home at Long White Cloud; Sylvia Anderson, co-creator of the *Thunderbirds* television series; the Sundial Cottage.

he was nine years old. There are stories of him as a youngster speeding around the roads around Bray – and the rest is pretty much Formula 1 legend.

Stirling Moss came from a family with speed and racing in their blood. Both his parents were successful racers, and Stirling's sister, Pat Moss-Carlsson, was a successful rally driver. Moss, who raced from 1948 to 1962, won 212 of the 529 races he entered, including 16 Formula One Grand Prix.

THUNDERBIRDS CREATOR SYLVIA ANDERSON (1927-2016)

There is a wonderful 19th-century house located next door to Long White Cloud. Sundial Cottage, with its charming secret garden, is steeped in the same exciting history as Monkey Island itself. The property boasts three gorgeous bedrooms with a kitchen-diner and cosy living room.

Guests staying in Sundial Cottage will share the same four walls as the famed Sylvia Anderson, who created the cult hit *Thunderbirds* with her husband Gerry. The iconic 1960s

television series will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2025. Anderson's most famous creation was Lady Penelope, International Rescue's London agent in *Thunderbirds*, whom she gave the panache of a secret agent but also the poise of a cool aristocrat.

In an interview in 2014, Anderson said: "Americans think we're either cockneys or posh ladies in stately homes. So, you've got Parker, the cockney chauffeur, and Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward, who lives this glamorous life in her big house." This is not unlike the creator herself and her life in her version of a stately home, Sundial Cottage.

For more information on booking any of the six private residences at Monkey Island Estate – Long White Cloud, Brook House, Sundial Cottage, Bray House, Dormer Cottage and Lavender House – as well as updates on events organised for the 60th *Thunderbirds* anniversary in 2025, please visit www.monkeyislandestate.co.uk/pages/private-residences

LUXURY, LEISURE AND LOCAL CHARM

FROM SCENIC CITY STROLLS TO INDULGENT DINING AND
REJUVENATING SPA TREATMENTS, HERE'S HOW TO SPEND
24 HOURS EXPLORING PERTH'S FINEST OFFERINGS.

Words by LUANN ALPHONSO

Often overshadowed by its eastern counterparts, Perth quietly offers a richness to its culture and culinary scene – if one bothers to look. With just 24 hours, immersing yourself in the city's unique rhythm is easy, blending luxury with moments of genuine adventure. We'll show you how to savour every hour, from morning runs along the picturesque Swan River, to evenings steeped in Roman cuisine and refreshing spa indulgences, while staying at The Westin Perth.

SET THE PACE

Health is wealth. Begin your day with a brisk run through Perth's stunning urban scenery. The Westin Perth's curated 5km Strava route introduces you to the lush Queens Gardens, Riverside Drive and the calm vistas of Elizabeth Quay. As you pass through the city's iconic green spaces – Supreme Court and Stirling Gardens – you'll sense the pulse of a city that delightfully balances nature with its metropolitan energy.

Returning to the hotel, a dip in the rooftop pool with panoramic views offers the perfect post-run recovery.





This page: (clockwise from top left) The Art Gallery of Western Australia; The Relaxation Terrace at The Westin Perth's Bodhi Spa; take a private escape on the Indian Ocean with Sailing Eventide; explore Roman cuisine at Garum.

Facing page: The Westin Perth is a haven as you explore the best that the city offers.

Recharge at Garum, the hotel's signature restaurant, where a breakfast of Italian-inspired fare, paired with freshly brewed coffee, refuels even the weariest bodies.

THE ART OF AFTERNOON

For lunch, Haven Lounge's sleek sophistication awaits. It offers one of the most sought-after high tea menus (from 11am until 2:30pm, Friday to Sunday), one of which includes savoury bites, sweets and a chilled glass of Moët & Chandon. The evolving seasonal themes add intrigue, but the space's calm elegance lingers.

With your appetite sated, explore Perth's cultural heart with a visit to the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA). Contemporary and historic works converge here, offering a glimpse into the state's artistic legacy and global connections. If you're feeling peckish, take a short detour to Miller & Baker, a local bakery famed for its cardamom buns – a mini afternoon indulgence before you return to unwind.

SELLING SUNSETS

Back at The Westin Perth, treat yourself to a stretch of relaxation at the luxurious Bodhi Spa. Choose between a deep-tissue massage and a rejuvenating facial, letting the stresses of travel melt away. Post massage, Sunsets on the

Terrace at Haven Lounge with oysters wouldn't go amiss. Alternatively, relax in the Executive Lounge if you're staying in a Club King Room. As the sun sets, celebrate in true Roman style with an aperitivo at Garum – enjoy 50 per cent off drinks and bar snacks, making it a perfect prelude to your dinner.

Stroll along Riverside Drive for a relaxed nightcap as the Swan River glows under the setting sun. Perth's nightlife offers diverse options, from cosy lounges to vibrant cocktail bars. Try Terrarium Perth or Foxtrot Unicorn for unparalleled music, bites and vibes.

WAVES OVER WATER

After a night of blissful rest in The Westin Heavenly Bed, begin the day with an exclusive yacht ride from Fremantle to Rottnest Island. Sailing Eventide provides a private, luxurious escape on the Indian Ocean, capping off your stay with an unforgettable experience.

The Westin Perth offers the ultimate balance of luxury, adventure and relaxation. Whether lounging by the pool, savouring an exquisite cocktail, or discovering Perth's cultural heart, the city has got you covered.

For more information, visit www.westinperth.com





GOOD DAYS ALL AROUND

WHETHER YOU'RE CHASING
ADVENTURE OR EXPLORING THE
CITY'S RICH ARTISTIC SIDE, HERE
ARE THE COOLEST WAYS TO ENJOY
YOUR TRAVELS IN MELBOURNE.

Words by LUANN ALPHONSO

From aquatic adventures to exploring the city's rich cultural heritage, Melbourne offers plenty of ways to experience the very best of Australia and to make the most of your stay in the capital of Victoria. Whether you're paddling along the Yarra, enjoying a rooftop cocktail, or escaping to nearby vineyards, this guide invites you to dive in and to discover a new side to the city.

1. WATER ADVENTURE

Experience Melbourne's iconic landmarks from a unique vantage point as you paddle along the Yarra River with Kayak Melbourne. Whether exploring the city's sights in the warmth of daylight or gliding beneath the twilight sky during a moonlit tour, this kayak journey offers a refreshing perspective. For an added treat, evening tours include a relaxing break for in-boat fish and chips, letting you enjoy the city lights while dining on the water.

2. SURF IN THE CITY

Whether you're a novice seeking gentle crests or an avid surfer craving steep, barrel-forming waves, Urbnsurf caters to every skill level. With an impressive capacity to generate up to 600 lifelike waves per hour, you have the thrill of riding waves at this urban surfing destination without worrying about sharks lurking beneath the waterline out in the ocean.

3. RETAIL THERAPY

Hop onto a free shuttle to Chadstone, the southern hemisphere's largest shopping centre – boasting more than 500 stores, including more than 100 Australian and 40 luxury brands. For a unique, intimate shopping experience, explore Melbourne's laneways for local designers and artisans' boutiques. Don't miss the vibrant Queen Victoria Market, offering a wide array of independent wares, fresh produce, souvenirs, clothing and unique handmade items, embodying Melbourne's rich multicultural atmosphere.

4. ROOFTOP GEMS

Take a bird's-eye view of Melbourne's skyline from The Stolen Gem, which boasts 270-degree city views, a New York-

inspired vibe, adventurous cocktails and a weather-ready retractable roof. Or, dive into the 1980s at Good Heavens, with its limitless drink selection and delicious bites, all set against a Palm Springs backdrop. Otherwise, Loop Rooftop Bar offers hard ice teas and signature cocktails in a space that showcases emerging artists and musicians.

5. SWEET DREAMS

Enjoy gelato and ice cream in all colours of the rainbow and flavours with a selection around Melbourne and its outskirts. At The Timboon Ice Creamery, you can construct your own sundae or take part in their 'cow-to-cone' Sundae School. Meanwhile, Gelatina in Rutherglen offers lovingly crafted in-house gelato with local produce in 24 flavours. Then,



This page:
Melbourne and the state of Victoria boast a wealth of amazing cuisine and wineries.

Facing page, from top: the Australian Open promises a world-class experience; the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia holds the most extensive collection of Australian art worldwide.

there's the Yarra Valley Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery, which comprises 16 hectares of family fun with an emphasis on their selection of more than 300 hand-crafted artisanal chocolates that will tempt any sweet tooth. Free samples apply.

6. WINE VISTAS

If day trips are your thing, wander out to the three delightful acres on the south coast of Phillip Island at Phillip Island Winery for a glimpse of the Bass Strait. Alternatively, drink in the gorgeous vistas of mountains that complement the old-world charm of Montara Wines. Closer to home and just an hour's drive from Melbourne is 80 rolling acres of farmland and vines at Mount Macedon Winery, where indulgent, leisurely lunches await you.

7. DINING OUT

Just a three-hour drive from Melbourne, The Grampians is an underrated gastronomic gem waiting to be explored. Nothing beats dining with Australia's national icon – the kangaroo – and The Views Bar and Restaurant in picturesque Halls Gap offers just that. Or head to the agricultural town of Hamilton and into Izzy's Restaurant Wilfred – the greatest small-town surprise.

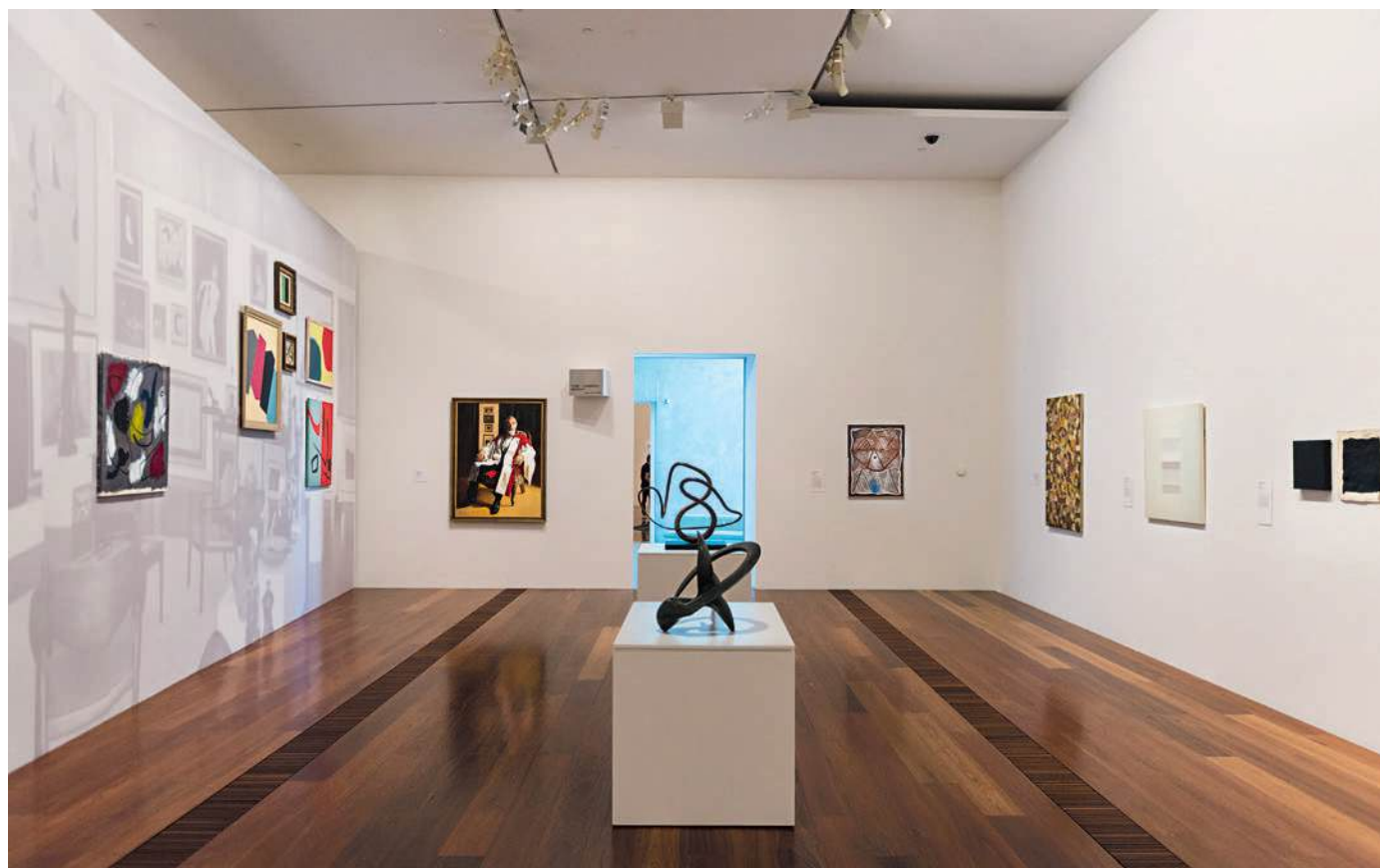
8. SPORTING EXCELLENCE

Melbourne boasts six world-class sporting facilities that are all within walking distance of its central business district. Whether or not you're a diehard sports fan, there's plenty

to do, see and experience at one of these grand stadiums, such as Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne Park (home of the Australian Open Tennis Championships), and more. The Australia Sports Museum is also worth visiting. Join a guided tour or take a leisurely walk along the Yarra River to the Melbourne Sports Precinct.

9. POLKA DOT PUMPKINS

Yayoi Kusama, celebrated for her immersive installations and iconic use of polka dots and repetition, continues to push boundaries in contemporary art. The upcoming National Gallery Victoria exhibition spans her eight-decade





This page: the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre delves into stories of the First People's survival and triumph.

Facing page: conveniently located in the heart of Melbourne's CBD, the Marriott Melbourne Hotel is a luxurious retreat after exploring the city.





career, offering more than 180 works, including her latest infinity mirror room and monumental pieces such as the 5m tall *Dancing Pumpkin*. Visitors will experience Kusama's exploration of infinite space, time and self through her signature infinity rooms, including one to be unveiled at this particular exhibition, as well as Kusama for Kids, an opportunity for little ones to acquaint themselves with her work.

10. AUSTRALIAN ART

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, located in Melbourne's Federation Square, proudly showcases the most extensive permanent collection of Australian art worldwide. Visitors can explore an impressive range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous art, from the colonial era to contemporary works. The gallery offers a deep dive into Australia's rich artistic heritage, with rotating special exhibitions and events that provide new perspectives on the nation's cultural landscape.

11. NATIONAL ORIGINS

If you require a thorough education on the resilience and richness of the First People's culture, let the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre be your first stop. The centre honours the Koorie experience with deep respect and authenticity. Its permanent exhibition, created in collaboration with local Indigenous communities, delves into stories of survival and triumph. Visitors can also explore the Milari Garden and Kalaya performance space, further bringing Indigenous traditions to life.



12. CITY ESSENCE

After your explorations, retreat to the Marriott Melbourne Hotel, strategically located in the heart of Melbourne's central business district. Stop by the sophisticated M Bar for a perfectly crafted cocktail or a glass of fine wine, setting the tone for the rest of your evening. Indulge in modern Australian cuisine at Essence, where every dish celebrates local flavours. Cocoon yourself in one of the hotel's 188 spacious rooms, where plush bedding ensures a restful night. For added exclusivity, Marriott Bonvoy Platinum Elite members and guests in M Club rooms enjoy 24/7 access to the luxurious M Club Executive Lounge.

For more information, visit marriott.com.au/melmc

ACROSS TIME AND LANDSCAPES

SYDNEY'S ESSENCE EMERGES IN THE THREADS WOVEN FROM THE RICH FABRIC OF FIRST NATIONS HERITAGE, THE AVANT-GARDE PULSE OF ITS FESTIVALS AND THE ORGANIC RHYTHMS OF ITS WILD SPACES. THIS IS A CITY WHERE EACH EXPERIENCE DEEPENS YOUR CONNECTION TO LAND AND STORY.

Words by LUANN ALPHONSO

Breathing life into every corner, Sydney is a unique destination, where the land's ancient whispers meet the vibrant energy of modern culture. Every experience invites you to explore its multifaceted spirit, from the pulse of First Nations history and stories carried through time, to the innovative artistry showcased in its galleries and festivals. Plunge into this fascinating journey, where tradition, nature and art converge.

CONSERVATION HERO

Australia is known to have some of the deadliest creatures on the planet, but that only adds to the mystique of their nature. The newly opened Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Centre (ARC) at Taronga Zoo – a mere 20-minute drive from the city centre – lets you immerse yourself in the hidden world of some of the planet's most extraordinary creatures. Explore six unique habitats, from alpine chill to desert heat, and meet the enigmatic Tuatara and the mesmerising Veiled Chameleon, among 42 other unique species. With interactive displays to ignite curiosity and inspire conservation, ARC provides a rare opportunity to connect with the wild and learn how you can become a protector of these remarkable creatures.

EMBRACE THE SOLSTICE

Renowned contemporary artist Angelica Mesiti invites audiences into the Tank at the Art Gallery of New South Wales for an experience like no other. Her installation, *The Rites of When*, transforms the cavernous 2,200 sq m World War II oil tank into a visual and sonic exploration of ancient rituals and seasonal cycles. Across seven monumental screens, Mesiti's poetic film reimagines the collective human relationship with winter and summer solstices, offering a meditative reflection on our connection to the natural world amid ecological upheaval. This will be on show until 11 May 2025; entry is free.





FIRST NATIONS BRIDGE CLIMB

BridgeClimb Sydney's latest offering is more than just a climb – it's a unique way to connect with the land. Partnering with Dreamtime SouthernX, the Burrawa Bridge Climb takes guests through First Nations history and culture. Burrawa – a local Aboriginal word meaning 'above' or 'upwards' – begins with a traditional Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony at Dawes Point Reserve, located directly under the bridge. Climbers are guided by an Aboriginal elder, during which they will learn about ancient customs and the significance of the land beneath their feet, before ascending the Harbour Bridge for awe-inspiring views of Sydney's skyline. Tickets start from A\$298.

CHAMPAGNE CRUISE

Step aboard The Jackson, a luxurious superyacht, and set sail across the sparkling waters of Sydney Harbour with the the Chandon Harbour Long Lunch. With a chilled glass of Chandon Garden Spritz, Chandon Brut NV or Atina non-alcoholic wine, you'll spend three and a half leisurely hours soaking up the views and warm breeze. Enjoy live entertainment and a thoughtfully crafted three-course menu as you glide past some of Sydney's iconic sights – a day for indulgence and pure relaxation. Tickets start from A\$175 per person.

WHERE TO STAY

Your gateway to the city's vibrant pulse, the Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel at Circular Quay is conveniently located close to Sydney's major transport links and landmarks. Unwind at Sydney's oldest bar, the Customs House Bar, before heading to Silvester's Restaurant and Lounge for some hearty dining. Retreat to their bright, spacious guestrooms at the end of your adventures and take in some of the city's best vistas.

For more information, visit www.marriott.com





BOLD AND UNBOUND

A CITY LONG OVERSHADOWED BY ITS COASTAL COUSINS,
BRISBANE IS STEPPING OUT WITH A NEW IDENTITY:
ONE THAT INCLUSIVELY CELEBRATES HERITAGE,
CREATIVITY AND A SPIRIT OF DISCOVERY.

Words by LUANN ALPHONSO

Known as a big little city, Brisbane is flipping the script with a wave of creativity and reinvention. Beneath its easy-going vibe lies a town bustling with fresh cultural experiences – think immersive First Nation tours, lively dining spots, sleek new developments and beach escapes. Although it may trail behind Sydney or Melbourne in terms of cultural vibrancy, Brisbane is stepping into its own as a dynamic destination for families, where history and modern flair collide and unexpected adventures are around the corner.

A WORLD APART

If you've ever wondered what a didgeridoo sounds like live, book yourself an interactive tour with BlackCard Cultural Tours. Each experience will be led by an Indigenous guide, who will walk you through local galleries, exhibitions and public art installations, giving deep insights into the world's oldest living culture – which culminates in a powerful live performance featuring the traditional Aboriginal instrument, drawing you into their culture and history.

For an experience that vibes with the little ones, check out Bluey's World. This expansive, multi-sensory experience



features real-life sets, recognisable scenes, and beloved characters and games from the hit show Bluey. It allows kids to explore the Heeler family's iconic Queenslander home, backyard and beyond in real life.

DINNER SOCIALS

Housed in a magnificently restored heritage building, Naldham House is leading the Brisbane culinary scene with two concepts that take advantage of the city's endless sunshine and fresh Australian produce. Ideally located just moments from the Brisbane River, Naldham House Brasserie & Terrace and Club Felix occupy this three-story venue. See and be seen at this lovely locale, and enjoy refined pan-European cuisine paired with expertly crafted cocktails.

Keeping in with the retro theme, Sasso Italiano transports you to a reimagined era of 1970s New York, where Italian-American culture pulses with life and good food. Its energetic, 110-seat space is a sensory adventure of intimate lighting, rich flavours and a vibrant atmosphere. Each detail – down to the faded sepia tones and lively conversations – is a nod to nostalgia, creating a place where the familiar and the unexpected collide to spark memories and inspire new ones.

WHERE TO STAY

The Brisbane Marriott Hotel blends urban sophistication with riverside charm. Stylish rooms feature plush beds and city or river views, while the 24-hour Executive Lounge adds an exclusive touch, available only to select members of the Marriott Bonvoy rewards programme or guests who book Executive Rooms. Relax at the outdoor pool or explore nearby Howard Smith Wharves for views of the Story Bridge.

Dining at the Brisbane Marriott Hotel ensures you support local farmers and producers, with a robust roster of Australian suppliers for its outlets. Motion Dining offers modern Aussie fare and cocktails in a sleek setting, or settle in at M Bar to wind down your day of exploration. It's where comfort meets convenience, perfect for families who seek the best of both worlds in this underrated Australian city.

For more information, visit brisbanemarriott.com





GAYA ISLAND RESORT
DISTINCTIVELY BORNEO



PANGKOR LAUT RESORT
ONE ISLAND. ONE RESORT



SET WITHIN TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN MARINE PARK, GAYA ISLAND RESORT IS A JEWEL LOCATED OFF THE CAPITAL OF SABAH, KOTA KINABALU. GOLDEN SANDY BEACHES AND CRYSTAL-CLEAR WATERS TEEMING WITH MARINE LIFE ARE COMPELLING ATTRACTIONS, WHILE ITS SPA VILLAGE OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO SAMPLE AUTHENTIC BORNEO-INSPIRED THERAPIES.

GAYAISLANDRESORT.COM



THIS LUXURIOUS RESORT IS SET ON A PRIVATE TROPICAL ISLAND ON THE STRAITS OF MALACCA. VILLAS EITHER FRINGE THE HILLSIDE OR ARE GRACEFULLY BALANCED ON STILTS OVER WATER. AN AWARD-WINNING SPA VILLAGE OFFERS WORLD-CLASS TREATMENTS DERIVED FROM CHINESE, INDIAN AND MALAY HEALING TRADITIONS.

PANGKORLAUTRESORT.COM





TANJONG JARA RESORT
UNMISTAKABLY MALAY



TANJONG JARA RESORT ON THE EAST COAST OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA EMBODIES THE ESSENCE OF MALAY CULTURE AND TRADITIONS. FACING THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND SURROUNDED BY THE LUSH GREEN BEAUTY OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE, THIS RESORT REVEALS A QUIETER BUT EQUALLY ATTRACTIVE SIDE TO MALAYSIA.

TANJONGJARARESORT.COM



CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT
TRAILS, TALES AND TRADITIONS



EVOKING THE SPLENDOUR, THE ROMANCE AND THE NOSTALGIA OF ONE OF MALAYSIA'S OLDEST HILL STATIONS AND ITS GRAND COLONIAL HERITAGE, CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT, WITH ITS LUXURIOUS ROOMS AND AWARD-WINNING SPA VILLAGE, IS THE BEST PLACE TO TAKE IN THE AREA'S ROLLING HILLS, TEA PLANTATIONS, ROSE GARDENS AND STRAWBERRY FARMS.

CAMERONHIGHLANDSRESORT.COM





THE RITZ-CARLTON

KOH SAMUI



NESTLED WITHIN THE EMBRACE OF A PRIVATE SUN-KISSED BAY, THE RITZ-CARLTON, KOH SAMUI IS SURROUNDED BY OCEANFRONT BEAUTY AND QUINTESSENTIAL EXPERIENCES THAT ARTFULLY REFLECT THE SAMUI WAY OF LIFE. THIS MAKES THE BEAUTIFUL PROPERTY AN IDEAL SETTING TO EMBARK ON WELLNESS PROGRAMMES, CULTURAL IMMERSIONS OR CULINARY JOURNEYS.

[RITZCARLTON.COM/KOHSAMUI](https://ritzcarlton.com/kohsamui)



THE RITZ-CARLTON

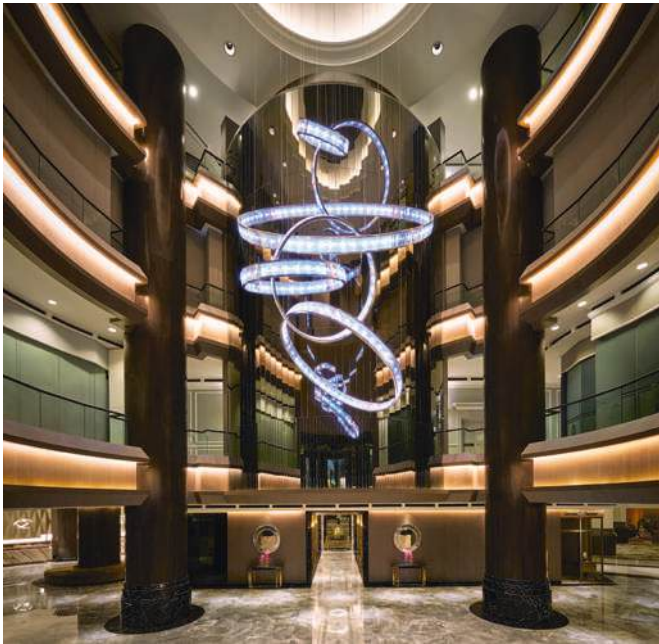
KUALA LUMPUR



LOCATED IN KUALA LUMPUR'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE BUSINESS DISTRICT, THIS STYLISH LUXURY HOTEL IS CONVENIENTLY POSITIONED FOR UPSCALE SHOPPING, DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT. IT IS HOME TO AN AWARD-WINNING SPA, AND GOURMANDS WILL BE DELIGHTED BY THE INDULGENT AFTERNOON TEA EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS LI YEN'S STELLAR CHINESE CUISINE.

[RITZCARLTON.COM/KUALALUMPUR](https://ritzcarlton.com/kualalumpur)





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

JWMARRIOTTKUALALUMPUR.COM



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

STRIPESKL.COM



S
THE
STARHILL



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

THESTARHILL.COM.MY



S
THE
STARHILL
DINING



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

THESTARHILLDINING.COM



KUALA LUMPUR
CHINATOWN

moxy



MOXY KUALA LUMPUR CHINATOWN IS A CONTEMPORARY HOTEL LOCATED IN THE EPICENTRE OF CHINATOWN. JUST STEPS AWAY, GUESTS WILL BE ABLE TO DISCOVER A DELIGHTFUL MIX OF SHOPPING, STREET FOOD AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES. THE HOTEL'S ZONE IN RESTAURANT SERVES UP DELICIOUS INTERNATIONAL CUISINE, WHILE THE ZONE OUT AREA IS A PEACEFUL HANGOUT WHERE YOU CAN RELAX, HAVE A SNACK AND EVEN MAKE NEW FRIENDS. NEED SOMEWHERE TO CATCH UP ON WORK OR TO THROW A PARTY? CHECK OUT THE HOTEL'S DREAM LABS EVENT SPACES. AT MOXY KUALA LUMPUR CHINATOWN, YOU'LL FEEL COOL, COMFORTABLE AND CREATIVE, THANKS TO ITS CLEVER, STYLISH INTERIORS AS WELL AS ITS VIBRANT, ENERGETIC HOTEL TEAM.

WWW.MARRIOTT.COM/EN-US/HOTELS/KULOK-MOXY-KUALA-LUMPUR-CHINATOWN/OVERVIEW/





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

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

MAJESTICMALACCA.COM



MAJESTICKL.COM



NV Niseko Village
Always in Season



HINODE HILLS
NISEKO VILLAGE

THE
GREEN *gb* LEAF
Niseko Village


Hilton
Niseko Village

KASARA
NISEKO VILLAGE
—TOWNHOUSE—



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

NISEKO-VILLAGE.COM



Higashiyama
NISEKO VILLAGE A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE



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

[RITZCARLTON.COM/HIGASHIYAMANISEKOVILLAGE](https://ritzcarlton.com/higashiyamanisekovillage)



THE SURIN

PHUKET



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

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



VILLA TASSANA

PHUKET



VILLA TASSANA IS SET ON PHUKET'S IDYLIC NAI THON BEACH, SET AMID A TROPICAL FOREST AND OVERLOOKING THE EMERALD ANDAMAN SEA. IT OFFERS 2,800 SQUARE METRES OF LIVING SPACE, WITH THREE OPULENT BEDROOMS, A 15-METRE POOL, AND LIVING AND DINING PAVILIONS. SPA, SPORTS AND GOLFING, INCLUDING THE BLUE CANYON COURSE, ARE WITHIN EASY REACH.

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THE
GAINSBOROUGH
BATH SPA



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

[THEGAINSBOROUGHBATHSPA.CO.UK](http://thegainsboroughbathspa.co.uk)



THREADNEEDLES
LONDON



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

[HOTELTHREADNEEDLES.CO.UK](http://hotelthreadneedles.co.uk)



THE ACADEMY LONDON



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

THEACADEMYHOTEL.CO.UK



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

MONKEYISLANDESTATE.CO.UK



THE GLASSHOUSE

EDINBURGH



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

THEGLASSHOUSEHOTEL.CO.UK



THE WESTIN

PERTH



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

WESTINPERTH.COM





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

MARRIOTT.COM/AU/MELMC



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

MARRIOTT.COM/SYDMC





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

BRISBANEMARRIOTT.COM



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

THEHAGUEMARRIOTT.COM





AC Hotel Kuala Lumpur.



AC Hotel Kuantan.



AC Hotel Penang.

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

AC-HOTELS.COM





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

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

SPAVILLAGE.COM



Q & A : ALEX GUZOWSKI

ALEX GUZOWSKI DISCUSSES HIS HANDS-ON APPROACH TO LUXURY RETAIL AS THE HEAD OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENT AND MERCHANDISE OF YTL RETAIL, AND HIS EFFORTS TO PRESERVE BRAND AUTHENTICITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE.

Words by ALICIA CHOO Photo by ANNA-RINA

With decades of experience in the fashion industry, how has your journey shaped your leadership style and strategic approach?

My leadership style has evolved through nearly 11 years at YTL, with each role broadening my perspective of operations and people management. Working closely with my team has deepened my understanding of how to balance day-to-day execution with big-picture strategy. I'm hands-on and have grown to appreciate the importance of fostering a culture where innovation and empathy coexist. I work to ensure our offerings reflect consumer expectations, leveraging insights to make informed decisions that uphold the identity of each brand. For me, it's always about driving innovation without compromising the human essence.

As head of retail development and merchandise, what do you think sets YTL Retail apart from others, and how do you maintain the exclusivity that these brands represent?

What sets us apart is our ability to make luxury feel both intimate and expansive. Luxury isn't just about exclusivity – it's about adding a personal touch that resonates with each individual. For instance, our store layouts are crafted not only for visual appeal, but also to create an immersive experience that brings each brand's world to life. We accommodate every aspect of the shopping journey, from marketing to in-store interactions, preserving the integrity of our brands.

What challenges do you face managing a portfolio of luxury brands, and how do you ensure consistency in delivering premium customer experience across all stores?

Making sure that each brand retains its originality is certainly challenging. Luxury shoppers expect uniformity in service and presentation, and it's my responsibility to ensure that every interaction reflects the brand's DNA. Each team member understands that their role extends beyond selling products. A key lesson I've learnt is to never underestimate the power of data – it gives us a clear view of trends, allowing us to anticipate customer needs and optimise our stock to meet demand. However, it's equally important to find the right



balance among data, intuition and experience, especially in the luxury space, where the human touch truly matters.

How do you foresee the future of physical retailing evolving, especially in luxury, and how is YTL Retail positioning itself to stay ahead of these changes?

Physical retail, especially in the luxury sector, is becoming more experiential. Although e-commerce is essential, physical stores will remain key spaces where customers can connect emotionally with brands. At YTL, we're preparing for this shift by integrating technology such as artificial intelligence to offer a personalised in-store experience, optimising stock levels based on customer preferences, and creating immersive settings that go beyond simply selling products. We want our stores to be a gateway into a brand's universe – a tangible, authentic experience that online platforms can't replicate.



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