

# YTL *Life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

Beauty In  
The East

Tranquility in Terengganu

Monkey  
Business

On the Proboscis  
Trail in Borneo

Eat, Love, Play

Diary of an  
Escape to Bali

Spiffin' Tiffins

Old World Feasts

Bali Fantasy Looks • Carly Paoli • Island Cooking School

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UNMISTAKABLY MALAY



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Your eyes lock with a Proboscis monkey's for the first time.

It makes a strange noise.

And you don't know whether to stand in awe or run.

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# YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

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#### \* Best Exotic Spa Experience Award

(Harpers Bazaar 2012)

#### \* Best Massage in Kuala Lumpur

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# A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



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

Japan has always had a special place in YTL's heart. Back in 1996, YTL Corporation became the first non-Japanese Asian company to be listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange and, through our Starhill Global REIT, we also own strategic properties in Tokyo. We continue to have great confidence in Japan and our investments are testament to this. I am pleased to share that Niseko United, of which Niseko Village is part, recently won Best Ski Resort in Japan at the World Ski Awards 2014 in Austria. This, together with the successful launch and opening of YTL Hotels' Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse and unique new shopping and dining experiences, makes Niseko Village even more exciting than ever. This new development embodies authentic Japanese charm, matched by contemporary elegance, and is part of our plan to put Niseko Village on the world map. The launch of the Kasara brand, YTL Hotels' first in a unique collection of hotels and resorts, also promises to deliver an unparalleled level of luxury, authenticity and timelessness to today's discerning travellers. Look out for more Kasara properties in time to come.

Closer to home, dive enthusiasts will rejoice that the season opens once again at Tanjong Jara Resort on the East Coast. For those who prefer to keep their feet on terra firma, do know it is the perfect place to immerse oneself in an authentic and unmistakably Malay experience. Over in Borneo, Gaya Island Resort has also unveiled a new interactive dining experience with the opening of Omakase. Perched on a hill, offering diners amazing vistas over Malohom Bay as well as majestic Mount Kinabalu in the horizon, we are confident guests will enjoy this exciting new development as eating well, a key element of any memorable holiday, is more important than ever. Within this issue are also features dedicated to unique and interesting aspects of all our hotels – from the ultimate island living at the estates at Pangkor Laut Resort to colonial-inspired curry tiffin lunches at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur – I invite you to discover, savour and experience them all.

Enjoy the issue and God bless.



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# Kasara Unveiled

YTL Hotels recently hosted a grand celebration in honour of the launch of its Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse and the new shopping and dining village at the Hokkaido Ballroom of the Hilton Niseko Village. The Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse, comprising of eight units of exclusive residences, is an architectural ode to old Edo and ups the bar for luxurious alpine living - a perfect debut for YTL Hotels' new Kasara brand. Also showcased were the new F&B and retail offerings at the village, now indisputably the main pulse of Niseko Village. As esteemed guests, comprising of local officials and members of the international media, sat down to a sumptuous dinner, legendary jazz maestro Freddy Cole entertained with his quartet, entralling guests with renditions of classic hits like *L-O-V-E* (made famous by Cole's legendary brother, Nat King) as well as, in the spirit of the season, Christmas favourites. Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh welcomed everyone with a rousing speech while, also in attendance, were Dato' Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Hotels, and Joseph Yeoh, Vice President of YTL Hotels & Properties. 📌

1. Freddy Cole serenading guests at the launch of YTL Hotels' Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse. 2. Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh and Dato' Mark Yeoh. 3. Joseph Yeoh. 4. Niseko Town Mayor Katayama Kenya, Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh and Kutchan Town Mayor Fukushima Seiji. 5. Specially invited guests join the Yeohs to mark the launch of YTL Hotels' Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse.



# Drink It Like Beckham

Malaysian fans of soccer superstar David Beckham were delighted when he made visited Kuala Lumpur recently for the worldwide launch of a new single grain Scotch whisky by Diageo - Haig Club. Distinctive and sophisticated, the whisky was developed in partnership with Beckham as well as British entrepreneur Simon Fuller. Part of the global icon's schedule also included a visit to The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, where he met with local media and fans at the property's equally-iconic Orchid Conservatory. 📌



1. David Beckham was at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur to launch Haig Club. 2. Professor (Dr) Dato' Jimmy Choo and David Beckham. 3. Graeme Harlow, Managing Director of Diageo's South-East Asia



## Time To Say Goodbye

The eighth instalment of *A Journey Through Time* (AJTT) ended on a suitably high note as British mezzo-soprano Carly Paoli dazzled a coterie of distinguished guests and dignitaries during the closing gala event. Having performed at distinguished venues, including at London's Royal Albert Hall and the opera theatre in Lecce, Italy, as well as on board the renowned Orient-Express train, the 26-year-old operatic sensation proved to be the perfect choice to bring to a musical close one of Asia's grandest watch and jewellery showcases. In attendance was Dato' Hj Azizan Noordin, Deputy Director-General (Planning) of Tourism Malaysia as well as luminaries from the worlds of horology and luxury. 🕒

1. Steven Holtzman and Qi Holtzman. 2. Su Jia Xian, Dolly Cheong, Dr Bernard Cheong and Thierry Gasquez. 3. Kuala Lumpur's cream of the diplomatic corps also turned up en force to support AJTT VIII. 4. Joseph Yech, Dato' Hj Azizan Noordin and Mohd Daud Mohd Arif. 5. Su Jia Xian presents the Timeless Jewellery Award to Garrard's Oliver Liew. 6. Carly Paoli, Dato' Jimmy Choo, Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh and Dato' Yeoh Soo Min. 7. Jonathan Purnell. 8. Rowena Sitra, Johanna Ezreen, Hisham Md Salleh and Ng Kar Yee. 9. Omangbe Ikpa receiving the Favourite Men's Watch Award from Thierry Gasquez.



### AJTT VIII Award-Winners

**Favourite Ladies' Watch:** Bédat & Co Ref 828.040.M04 • **Favourite Men's Watch:** HYT H1 Dracula • **Watch with Complications in Movement:** Ulysse Nardin Stranger Musical Watch • **Timeless Jewellery:** Garrard Snowdrop necklace • **The YTL Spirit of Classical Art Award:** Cecil Purnell V-16 GMT Double Tourbillon • **Ministry of Tourism & Culture Most Revered Award:** Breguet Classique 5335 Grande Complication Tourbillon Messidor • **The Judge's Choice Award:** Speake-Marin Resilience





**A typical day on set usually starts very early,** at around 5am. I go straight into hair and make-up for about an hour and half, accompanied by a bowl of porridge and a cup of PG tips. Acting starts at around 8am, which always feels like a completely unnatural time of the day to be pretending to be someone else! Lunch breaks are short, just about half an hour – enough time to sit and rest your brain – and I usually wrap up around 8pm, when I have a bite to eat, a glass of wine and learn my lines for the next day. If I can, I'll squeeze in some exercise.

**Off-duty, I'll wake up at around 9.30am,** go to the gym and return home to my one constant: porridge and tea. I'll check and return e-mails and have lunch in Soho, London, with my producer. I like going to galleries and meeting up for coffee with friends. In the evenings, I try to see a play or a film but, usually, I'll be catching up with friends and family to remind them I still exist.

**My sources of inspiration** are art, dance, theatre, film and, surprisingly, exercise. But for 2015, I'd like to explore Japan. It has always felt quite mysterious and exotic to me, a land of sushi and cherry blossoms.

**My dream holiday** depends on my state of mind. If I am exhausted, I need someplace warm where I can read and sleep a lot. I have been on two spa-type holidays with healthy food and no alcohol, after which I felt like I have pressed a re-set button, feeling rejuvenated in mind, body and soul. Alternatively, I love a good ski holiday. I've been going to the French Alps since I was a child and nothing beats a long day skiing, a log fire, a glass of red wine and family shenanigans.

**My recent Pangkor Laut experience was pure paradise.** Jade green waters, cheeky monkeys and relaxing massages every day! I loved the wonderful service and the sheer peacefulness of it all. It's just what the doctor ordered.

**But London, for me, is home.** My favourite things about it include friends, family, walking across Waterloo Bridge, the theatre, its black cabs as well as its unpredictable weather (it keeps me on my toes). ❏

# Babe Ruth

Two-time Olivier and Golden Globe Award-winning English actress Ruth Wilson has starred in an eclectic range of roles in movies as diverse as *Anna Karenina*, *The Lone Ranger* and *Saving Mr Banks*. She shares snippets of her life during a recent visit to Pangkor Laut Resort.

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

LUXURY SPAS BY YTL HOTELS

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01



02



03



04



05



06

# 01

## My Face Is My Fortune

A few days at **Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali** is enough to put that glow back on your face. But you can up the bliss by a few notches with the resort's fabulous facials. Choose from the *Mesipat*, a traditional Balinese facial massage that uses local herbs, sandalwood and tamarind leaves to leave the skin soft and smooth, or the organic clay facial that begins with a Balinese rice scrub before moving on to a coconut oil massage and ending with a clay masque of your choice – volcanic, seaweed or red clays. If either of the 50-minute treatment leaves you hankering for more (and we won't blame you if it does), tag on a wonderful wrap or body massage to make the spa experience complete.

# 02

## Love Is In The Air

It is romantic enough being able to retreat to one's over-water villa or perhaps stroll along the deliciously green waters of Emerald Bay but **Pangkor Laut Resort** now offers couples yet another reason to smile. A new *Romantic Retreat* package has been made available at **Spa Village Pangkor Laut** that begins with its signature *Bath House* experience, followed by a two-hour spa experience *à deux*, which includes a 30-minute chocolate body scrub followed by a 70-minute massage of your choice (choose from a strawberry or rose aromatherapy massage) before concluding sweetly with a 20-minute rose milk bath to nourish and soften skin.

# 03

## The Memory of Tea

Few things soothe the soul quite the way a cup of hot tea can. With this in mind, the team at **The Majestic Malacca** welcomes each guest into their old world-style rooms with a basket of hot tea, presented in traditional Peranakan style. With a tea culture that dates back centuries, tea-drinking also features strongly in auspicious ceremonies, like the *tuang teh* where newly-weds serve sweet tea to their elders in return for blessings. The sweetness of the tea is a symbol of happy memories. Likewise, The Majestic Malacca embraces this wholeheartedly in the hope that every sip of this special blend of lychee tea evokes treasured memories of your stay here. The tea is also available for purchase from **Spa Village Malacca** should you wish to bring a taste of Malacca home.

# 04

## Time For Tea

Ever tried a *Maids of Honour* tart? Well, now you can at **Newens Tea House**, brought in from London's Kew Gardens and exclusive to **Starhill Gallery**. Said to be a favourite of the Tudor king, Henry VIII, who had chanced upon Anne Boleyn eating them, the tarts were declared so delicious it was kept a royal secret for 200 years. It remained so until the 18th century when it was leaked by a palace cook to a bakery in Richmond, West London. *Maids of Honour* tarts are now yours to sample and savour at this luxurious new Art Deco-inspired 156-seater venue. Enjoy a languorous afternoon tea here, accompanied by Newens pies and other delicacies freshly baked on-site daily, matched by a menu of 60 varieties of specialist teas sourced from exclusive stockists around the world.

# 05

## Village Life

Niseko Village now has its own, well, village. Hailed as the main pulse of the resort, guests and visitors alike can pop in for a spot of retail therapy, world-class dining or *après-ski*. Indulge in a sinful hot chocolate at the **Village Patisserie** or savour the best of Hokkaido seafood at **The Crab Shack**. Fancy making a statement on the slopes? Pop in then to **i Gate Ikeuchi** for cool ski gear or **Otaru Taisho Glass** and **i Zone Ikeuchi** for made-in-Japan souvenirs, beauty and fashion products. And where there's ski, there's got to be *après-ski*. The place to head to? **Two Sticks** – an Asian tapas bar with a well-stocked bar and nightly live entertainment.

# 06

## Itadakimasu!

Ever imagine indulging in the finest Japanese cuisine with a view of tranquil Malahabu Bay and Sabah's majestic Mount Kinabalu in the horizon? Well, now you can at **Omakase**, the new two-storey restaurant at **Gaya Island Resort**, which specialises in *omakase*-style dining. By reservation only, Omakase is open for dinner and is divided into three main areas, ensuring guests a unique and private experience. Choose from three distinct dining rooms, offering *teppanyaki*, *shabu-shabu* and *nabe* (hotpot). After a long day exploring the marine wonders of the surrounding Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park or, perhaps, being ensconced in therapeutic bliss amidst the mangroves of **Spa Village Gaya Island**, we can't think of a more comforting (or delicious) way to end the day. ■

# Truly Sublime

A magical spot on the east coast of the Malaysian peninsula, Tanjong Jara Resort is a truly unique destination where you will experience the splendour and pleasures of an unmistakably Malay-style experience.

Text Brian Cheong Photography Yong Keen Keong & YTL Hotels

Having plumped for an early morning flight from KLIA, we touched down at Sultan Mahmud Airport in Kuala Terengganu at around 9am and were relieved to find our driver from Tanjong Jara Resort already waiting for us at the arrival hall. Still groggy from having to drag ourselves out of bed so early that morning, my photographer and I hopped into our ride and promptly fell asleep.

The journey from the airport to Tanjong Jara Resort, located about 78km to the south, takes slightly more than an hour, enough time for 40 winks, which can be a pity because the scenery along the way sets the tone for the vacation ahead. Shortly after leaving the city parameters, we were greeted by an endless stretch of fishing villages and bucolic towns, with occasional glimpses of the sea, just the reprieve needed from the soul-sapping urban madness in glass-and-concrete structures. Upon arrival at the beautiful lobby, fringed on one side by lily ponds, we were welcomed by a cheerful *pakcik* dressed in a smart *baju Melayu*. He proceeded to engage us in jovial chitchat about our trip and plans during our stay. As the resort staff checked us in, we were offered a cold glass of Roselle juice made from the extracts of hibiscus flowers that grow abundantly here. Rich in Vitamin C and antioxidants, it was a welcome drink with a healthy twist.

The resort's tagline, 'Unmistakably Malay', is complemented by the philosophy of *Sucimurni*, which means 'purity' and 'harmony' in Malay. Surrounded by a forest, a fishing village and the South China Sea, it is designed to be the ideal spot to relax and rejuvenate in a typical Malaysian countryside setting. The exterior of the 99 rooms sprawled across the 17-hectare resort is modelled after the grandeur and elegance of a 17th century Malay palace, complete with slanting roofs, spacious verandahs and stone steps. The interior is suitably rustic and timbered out from floor to ceiling.

Our Serambi Sea View Room, for instance, sits on the edge of a palm tree-dotted garden with a lone swing, which appears to be a favourite spot for selfies with the honeymooners. I paused on the verandah to take in the sight of the sea in the near distance and enjoy the inviting sounds of the waves. For a city dweller, such idyllic moments are hard to come by and are meant to be savoured whenever possible. And so I did.

## Silence, Please

No visit to a YTL Luxury Resort is complete without a stop at its award-winning spa, even if it is only for a foot rub, which is why the first thing on our agenda was to call in at the Spa Village Tanjong Jara. The Spa Village makes it a point to adopt indigenous healing methods in its treatments. At Tanjong Jara, ancient Malay therapies, handed down through generations, form the core of therapeutic remedies. The à la carte menu reads like a list of old home remedies ranging from the invigorating *Traditional Malay Massage* and *Traditional Malay Dry Massage* to the pre-wedding ritual of *Scented Body Steaming* and the migraine-busting *Malay Scalp Treatment*. If you are at a loss, opt for the *Traditional Malay Experience* that combines a host of treatments for truly indulgent pampering. Featuring separate combos for men and women, the former comprises, among others, the *Warrior Massage* that employs deep tissue strokes, the *Herbal Roots Scrub* and the *Herbal Oil Steam Bath*. For the women, the deep tissue massage is known by the more feminine *Urutan Gamelan* and is combined with a *Hair Cream Bath* and a *Fragrant Milk Bath* scented with jasmine, rose and magnolia. Each session kicks off with the *Malay Floral Bath* and ends with



Natural ingredients and remedies feature in all of Spa Village Tanjong Jara's treatments.

a serving of a herbal roots tonic drink brewed in an earthen pot, a traditional cooking method in Malay villages. The gift of a batik *sarong* at the end of each session was a nice touch.

## Yum List

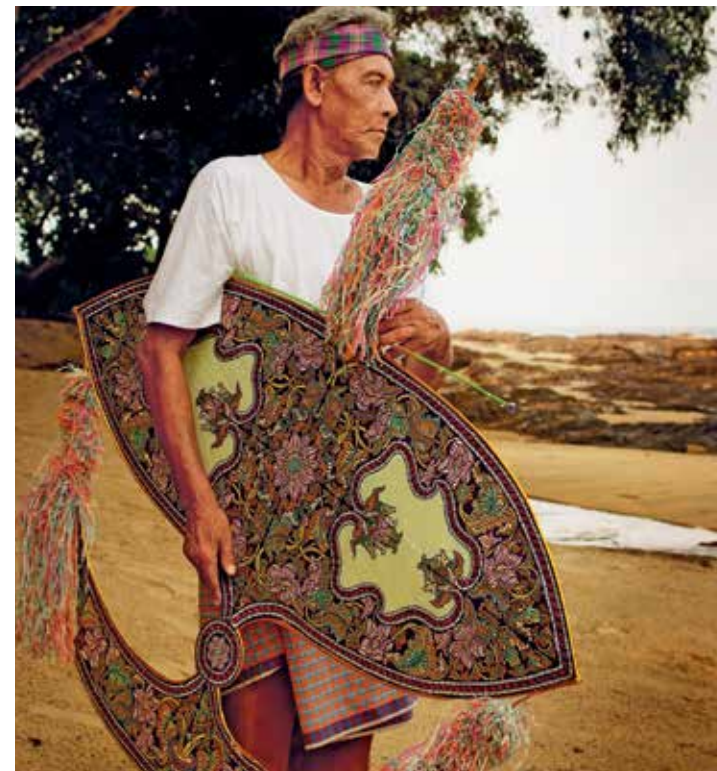
Lunch beckons at the beachfront **Nelayan** (Malay for 'fisherman') right next to the gorgeous infinity pool. The restaurant serves sun-worshippers light snacks and drinks throughout the day but, after the sun sets, it transforms into an elegant venue, complete with bamboo torches and gentle sea breeze, truly an inviting setting to savour delicious seafood. Pampered and fed, all we could muster next was to slap on the sunblock and reclined on deckchairs by the pool. Evening came and we headed to the **Di Atas Sungei** restaurant for dinner. The name means 'above the river'; the restaurant, in fact, is built on stilts over a tiny river that flows right out to sea. Dinner was interesting since the restaurant operates without a menu and is dependent on what fresh produce the chefs are able to find at the market each day. In lieu of a proper menu, we had to rely on recommendations from the Menu Masters. Di Atas Sungei is also the resort's breakfast venue and the spread is magnificent, with everything from local favourites such as the must-try *nasi dagang* to croissants that are baked in an oven in the dining room itself! With the smell of fresh coffee and bread lingering in the air, it's just the pick-me-up needed to start the day on the right footing.

## Tuning In

There is every reason to just relax in the resort throughout the vacation. In fact, I was tempted to sit by the pool all day with an unread pile of *People* magazines that I had brought along with me. But being the adventurous, outdoorsy type, I couldn't help but be drawn to the host of activities the resort has to offer. There is diving and snorkelling at nearby **Tenggol Island**, arguably the most popular attraction in this neck of the woods (see feature on page 22). Explore the local culture and environs by taking part in the half-day Marang River Cruise that lets you discover the wonders of the mangrove wildlife, before ending up with a visit to a Malay village where you get to see local handicrafts being made and sample home-cooked food.

I personally enjoyed the guided bicycle tour that begins on the coastal road of **Pantai Teluk Bidara**, which is the beach along the resort, and ends at Kampung Seberang Pintas, a fishing village where we could watch the locals building fishing boats using the old method that does not need a single nail. Along the way, we found a most charming path strewn on each side with a layer of cotton from the *kekubu* trees. If you are a budding chef, you could learn about local cooking from Chef Ann, a jolly, bespectacled woman who will introduce the secrets of blending herbs and spices. The cooking class always kicks off with a trip to the wet market in nearby Dungun, an old iron-mining town, where Chef Ann will pick out the fresh produce not just for the day's lesson but also for dinner at Di Atas Sungei. If you are not feeling up to venturing out, the resort brings the lively side of *kampung* (village) life onto its grounds every Saturday afternoon, where guests can partake in local food such as *lemang* (glutinous rice cooked in bamboo) and *lekor* (deep-fried fish sausages), and play traditional games like *congkak* and *sepak takraw*.

You could also ask a Malay gentleman to get his trained monkey to pluck coconuts from the trees – even if the temperamental animal doesn't always do as it's told,



Experience all the richness of Malay culture during the resort's Saturday Kampung Life sessions.

“Tanjong Jara Resort's 'Unmistakably Malay' concept is complemented by the philosophy of Sucimurni, which means 'purity' and 'harmony' in Malay.”

providing much amusement with its antics. If you are adventurous enough, sign up for a trek to **Chemerung Waterfall**, a 90-minute drive away. It is then an easy 30 to 45-minute climb through a rainforest. The reward that awaits at the top is a spectacular view, a refreshing dip in a water pool and a hearty lunch prepared by the resort. If the long drive puts you off, take the **Jara Hill Walk** through a lush jungle connected to the resort. At the end of it, be awed by a panoramic view of the coastline. And, if you are lucky, you might spot an eagle's nest.

Should muscles ache after partaking in the various activities, the Spa Village is just the cure. I was in such a state and opted for the *Traditional Malay Massage* this time. The long kneading strokes, using both the palms and elbows, coupled with the energising treatment oil of turmeric, cinnamon, garlic, onion and citronella, served to relax and revitalise the body. The resort has been a wonderful experience; I was already dreading the fact that I had to check out the next day after a three-day, two-night stay. There is something magical about the East Coast, with its unhurried pace and the warmth of its people, and Tanjong Jara Resort captures its rhythm beautifully.



# Just Dive In

Tenggol Island, on the doorsteps of Tanjung Jara Resort, is a diver's dream.

Text & Photography **Loo Kit Choong**

Practically right at Tanjung Jara Resort's doorsteps is Tenggol Island, home to some of Malaysia's most spectacular dive sites. Tenggol promises to mesmerise even the most seasoned divers with its abundant marine life. The diving season begins from March to October each year. I was at the award-winning Tanjung Jara Resort, the gateway to Tenggol Island, in March last year. Tanjung Jara Resort, just an hour's flight away or a leisurely four-hour drive from Kuala Lumpur, is tucked away near a beachfront and exudes all the charm of a luxurious Malay-style resort. It will take a lot of effort to peel yourself away from all the resort's creature comforts to go diving.

Protected as part of a marine park since 1994, Tenggol is rich in marine life, boasting over 20 dive sites. Tenggol fringes the famed Coral Triangle, considered the epicentre of marine biodiversity. We set out with the resort's dive team the next morning after a hearty breakfast at Di Atas Sungei restaurant. A van took us on a 10-minute ride to the Dungun River mouth jetty. From there, Pulau Tenggol is 50 minutes away by speed boat. The first stop was **The Edge**, a good 30m descent to the bottom of the sea. Down there, it's a surreal world of pastel corals and curious sea creatures.

The highlight of this dive was a sighting of a huge Humphead Parrot Fish just going about its everyday business of looking for food. I was actually more excited by a friendly Hawksbill turtle grazing on the corals quite oblivious to us. We saw schools of Fusiliers and Jacks, with an occasional stingray and an inquisitive Clown fish peeking up from the anemone as we passed by. They seemed to be lounging in the soft corals, turning this way and that for a massage on their stomachs or little heads. The territorial fish won't hesitate to lunge at you to protect their homes. We surfaced in a sheltered bay of Tenggol, where the cook had prepared lunch for us. The island is rocky and heavily forested and if you still haven't savoured enough of the crystal clear waters, you can wade out from the beach for a snorkel and be amazed at the staghorn corals – home to countless Damsels and Cardinals – in the centre of the bay.

We made our way back to our final dive spot, **Tokong Timor** (East Temple), a rock outcrop populated topside by seagulls. We back rolled from the seaward side of the rock, where the current was coming from, and, after descending, left the rest to the flow of the current. We witnessed even more beauty as coral walls formed a dazzling mass of olive greens, mauves and blues, while giant boulders loomed amidst more sea life. Tokong Timor was exhilarating. The next day's diving took us to **Nyireh Point** and **Coral Garden**. Along the way, three playful dolphins greeted us, occasionally surfacing to blow breathe and say hello to us. These friendly mammals of the seas stayed with us for most of the boat ride before disappearing into the deep blue. Nyireh Point should be explored at a leisurely pace as you soak in the prolific corals and their inhabitants.



Observe the diligent Parrotfish chomping away at the corals for food, or the curious Map Pufferfish and the very shy Blue Spotted Ray darting in and out of crevasses. Coral Garden definitely lives up to its name with its sloping topography adorned with gorgeous soft and hard corals. Christmas Tree Tube Worms were aplenty as were sponges and anemones, all teeming with coral fishes. On the final day of diving, we visited Amazing Grace. This site is blessed with an endless variety of nudibranch – miniature sea snails without shells, living on corals. They range from the size of your fingernail to the size of your thumb. Nudis come in vivid, vibrant colours in the most gorgeous of combinations – greens with orange, dark blues with pinks and rich purples.

They are carnivores and will assume the colours of their diet, algae, sponges, anemones, corals, barnacles and even other nudibranchs. Their colours help in camouflage, and some even retain the foul-tasting poisons of their prey and secrete them as a defence against predators. **Amazing Grace** was, simply put, amazing. Marine animals here are not particularly fearful of divers and, so, don't hide when they see a group coming their way. There are fewer divers here so marine creatures aren't afraid of strange two-legged bubble-blowing creatures. Marine life thrives here. Water temperature averages 29°C, so diving in Tenggol is as comfortable as it gets. With visibility of 15 to 20m, it's a breeze to observe marine creatures like Hawksbill turtles, Blue Spotted Rays, groupers, Map Pufferfish and snappers. Gentle whale sharks and graceful manta rays can also be seen in these waters in March, April, September and October as the area forms part of their migration route. In fact, it was reported that, in 2009, several whale sharks spent almost two months in the shallower waters, much to the delight of camera-toting divers. After three days of diving, I felt completely satiated. Tenggol had engaged all my senses with its wondrous sites. Rounding off the dives, Tanjung Jara Resort pampered me with superb cuisine and well-rested nights in luxurious ambience. I couldn't have asked for more. ■



*Divers will be treated to amazing marine riches at popular spots like The Edge, Amazing Grace and Nyireh Point.*

# A Muse for the Masses

Carly Paoli is the embodiment of how dreams do come true. During a recent stopover in Malaysia to perform at *A Journey Through Time VIII* – Asia's premier luxury watch and jewellery showcase – the talented mezzo-soprano met up with *YTL Life* to talk about her role as the newest ambassador of legendary Swiss timepiece brand, Bédat & Co, as well as what makes her tick.

Text **Maya Michael** Photography **Robin Liew**

At an age when most adults are still busy carving out their paths in life, Carly Paoli has certainly accomplished a lot within a short span of time. Born in Nottingham and raised in an English-Italian household, this 26-year-old was determined from an early age to pursue a career in classical music.

After attending The Rodney School in Nottingham and the respected Arts Education School in Hertfordshire on a full scholarship, Paoli completed her musical training with an honours degree in Vocal Studies at the prestigious Royal Northern College of Music. Shortly after graduating, she applied for a job as a school teacher. While she described the vocation as a lovely experience, she always knew that her true passion was to sing on stage.

It certainly didn't take long before Paoli's powerful vocals captured the attention of the classical music industry. For her international début, Paoli performed at the prestigious David Foster Foundation Miracle Gala, a glittering charity event, which also featured notable acts such as Aerosmith front-man Steve Tyler and Oscar-winning actress Jennifer Hudson. This was later followed by performances for audiences across Europe at world-renowned venues that included The Royal Albert Hall, St Paul's Cathedral, on board the Orient Express and Lecce's Politeama Greco Theatre.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Paoli has also been keeping busy making history in the

*For Carly Paoli, being an ambassador for Bédat & Co is truly a dream come true.*

world of luxury watches. In August 2014, she was appointed the newest ambassador of Bédat & Co, the luxury Swiss watch brand founded by the legendary Madame Simone Bédat. Paoli joins an inspiring line-up of ambassadors that includes Dutch supermodel Yolanda Foster and renowned sculptor-artist Eleanor Cardozo. Her appointment was finalised mere months prior to her stopover in Malaysia.

So how did an English rose with Italian roots end up becoming the newest ambassador for a Swiss luxury timepiece brand? According to Paoli: "I was attending a meeting in London with my manager. It was such a huge honour when they invited me to be the brand's ambassador. It's the single biggest thing that has ever happened to me. Since my appointment, I have lived out a dream that I previously thought was completely out of reach. And it wasn't until I was up there on stage performing with David Foster that I realised dreams really do come true. It has been an experience that was made possible thanks to Bédat & Co. It's everything that I could have ever wish for."

It is easy to see why Paoli was selected to be the next spokesman for a brand as iconic as Bédat & Co. With her effortless grace and talent, she embodies the ideal of the brand's founder – to strive for excellence in everything that women can achieve without compromising on elegance and beauty, something that Madame Bédat believed was intrinsic to all women.

"The more I work and learn about the brand, the more I love it. It was truly a wonderful thing she [Madame Bédat] did, which was to build a brand through passion. I really connected with that feeling since singing was always something I wanted to do. As one of the very few women to take on the male-dominated watch-making industry,

Madame Bédat's dedication to creating a timepiece for women when nobody else was doing it is truly inspiring, and very much embodies the aspirations of women throughout the world, no matter what industry they come from.

"It has only been a few months, but I've already realised a couple of my dreams, while serving as the global brand ambassador," she says. "I am honoured, grateful and feel truly blessed to be part of this iconic brand that was founded by women for women, and to be a part of its history. I intend to contribute to the brand's mission and promise to keep Madame Bédat's legacy alive as well."

When asked to pick her favourite timepiece from the collection, the English rose points towards her delicate wrist, displaying a bedazzling, rose-inspired watch. "As a performer, you're expected to be out there and be a little more flamboyant, especially during a showcase. So my pick would definitely have to be the *Ref 882* which is from the Extravaganza collection. It's just beautiful and really glitters on stage, which draws everybody's gaze. There's simply no timepiece quite like it."

As the newest 'Angel of Bédat,' Paoli's appointment also involves attending and performing at events in support of women throughout the world. Last year, she was given the opportunity to perform at the prestigious International Women's Media Foundation Courage Awards in Los Angeles, sponsored by Bédat & Co.

Paoli states that the experience was especially moving as her song *Because of You* had been specially written in honour of war photographer Anya Niedringhaus, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist



The 'Angel of Bédat' steals the show while performing at A Journey Through Time VIII.

who was tragically killed, while covering the presidential elections in Afghanistan. "I sang in front of some of the most important women in journalism who had gathered to honour the courage of their fellow journalists. The event served to celebrate those who continually put their lives at risk because they feel passionate about sharing with the rest of the world the things that are going on behind the scenes."

As for her future plans, Paoli says: "I hope to continue what I'm doing now, which is performing and collaborating with Bédat & Co. I'd also love to raise awareness of the brand and to share Madame Bédat's wonderful and inspiring story. As for my own message to the world, it would have to be to keep the inspiration alive, stay motivated, have courage and believe that women can achieve anything in any industry." ■



Enjoy complete privacy and attentive personalised service when you stay at the Estates at Pangkor Laut Resort.



# Prime Estates

The private sanctuary of the Estates in Pangkor Laut Resort is a veritable hideaway to reboot, rejuvenate and reconnect in an opulent setting.

Text **Brian Cheong** Photography **Law Soo Phye**

The sound of the sea waves lapping onto shore gently lulls you awake. The morning light casts golden streams through the windows, prodding you to rise from bed. You open the door to breathe in the fresh morning air, and a lovely sight of green and blue greets you. Soft footsteps make you turn, only to find your butler in a smart black-and-white uniform bringing you a tray of tempting breakfast treats.

Now, who wouldn't want to wake up to a scene like this every morning? I am staying at Estate One, one of eight private abodes that form the Estates at Pangkor Laut Resort. A gem within a gem, the Estates, which is accessible from Kuala Lumpur by helicopter or via car and luxury yacht, is located less than a five-minute drive (a good 20 to 25 minutes on foot) from the reception area and set within an ancient rainforest. Isolated from the rest of the resort, they are your personal slices of island paradise. Each Estate is a self-contained property, complete with a generous sized pool, a personal attendant and a personal chef. In fact, you don't have to set foot off your Estate if you don't want to.

Ross Sanders, the General Manager of Pangkor Laut Resort, describes the Estates as "the perfect hideaway. Total privacy is the biggest pull here and this begins from the time you arrive until the day you leave. The helicopter pad is located close

to the Estates so that guests can be whisked straight to their rooms without having to encounter anyone else on the island."

The Estates comprises four hill sanctuaries and four beachside properties along the private Marina Bay. The sizes vary from two to four bedrooms. The structures are built around the natural layout of the respective areas, for instance, the sinews of knolls for Estate Seven and the contours of a ridge for Estate Six, with minimal environmental impact. In return, the lush environment shields them from prying eyes. I know this for sure as I try to spot my villa during a cruise around the island but the low hanging branches of the trees along the shoreline of Marina Bay do a great job at hiding it.

Sanders says that the Estates was ahead of its time when it opened in 1998. "It's what I believe to be the first aspirational luxury stays (in the country), a standalone property within the

“The Estates comprises four hill sanctuaries and four beachside properties along the private Marina Bay.”



*Tranquility, both indoors and out, is among the best features of the Estates at Pangkor Laut Resort.*



resort with a great connection to nature.” Estate One is one of the smaller properties on the beach, with two sleeping villas that come with their own outdoor jacuzzis, a living pavilion, a dining pavilion and an infinity pool that seemingly flows onto the beach below. It also features a well-maintained garden of palm trees, frangipanis and other leafy plants. (The bigger Estates have the addition of a large lawn, a natural rock garden, a lily pond or, in the case of the hillside Estate Eight, a bedroom with a large balcony overlooking the island.) Everywhere you look is nature, the forest rising high above the villas in the back, and the beach and the sea at your doorstep. The choice of wood and granite rock walls for the exterior allows the buildings to blend seamlessly into the environment.

The tranquility of the outside is replicated inside, complete with a few carefully chosen trappings of luxury. The first thing that captures your attention upon stepping in is the massive poster bed, built into the villa itself, that takes up a large chunk of space in the room. The bed is surrounded on all four sides by a wooden frame that doubles as a ‘table’ to place your personal effects. In fact, dark red wood is a running theme throughout the villa, from the aforementioned frame to the floor and the cabinets. The spacious bathroom, however, breaks the theme with a marble floor. Decorative pieces such as ethnic

wood sculptures, bronze plates, woven bamboo frames and, fascinatingly enough, an old steel container with a wooden ladle hanging from its side, lend striking character to the informal yet elegant interior design that emphasises ease and functionality. The high ceiling is also a big plus, complete with a ceiling fan that comes in handy on balmy afternoons when you can leave the doors and windows open to let in the sea breeze.

The service is comparable to the tangibles, if not more. An Estate attendant is assigned to take care of your every need. Zayar, who hails from Myanmar, is the gentleman looking after me during my stay, taking on the multiple roles of concierge, driver, problem-solver and, my favourite part, early morning coffee deliverer. Whether it is booking a sunset cruise, ferrying you around the island or even getting you a late-night snack, the service is prompt and precise yet unobtrusive.

Speaking of late-night snacks, you also get your own personal chef who is stationed in the dining pavilion throughout your stay to ensure that every craving is met, no matter how big or small. Whether it is Chinese, Malay, Indian, Japanese or Western, the chef is tasked to deliver a satisfying meal every time, as my experience can attest. For instance, a request for a simple lunch of fried rice comes with the surprising accompaniment of calamari with three types of condiments as well as a sinfully good flourless chocolate cake with vanilla ice cream. The chef also makes the most addictive toasted bread with shrimps for tea, best enjoyed under the shady trees on the beach.

A chat with Zayar reveals that the Estates is extremely popular for family gatherings and get-togethers with friends. Indeed, the separate bedrooms offer some distance and privacy, but the shared compound is ideal for group activities, be it a lazy board game in the living pavilion or a lively barbecue party on the beach. Plus, the seclusion ensures that you won't be bothering anyone else, and vice versa. “The service is one of the best things about the Estates. It has that mix of the crisp European service with the warmth and approachability of Asian hospitality,” remarks Sanders.

Time flies when you are having fun. With a cup of Earl Grey in hand, I sit quietly on one of the beach chairs to watch my last sunset here. So, if you will excuse me, I'd like to get back to enjoying this rare moment of solitude. ■





# Cole IS HOT!

No one felt the wintry chill during Freddy Cole's lively jazz performance at the official launch dinner of the luxury Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse in Hokkaido, Japan, recently.

The name Lionel Frederick Cole might not be immediately familiar to most but, mention the name 'Cole' and 'music' in the same sentence, and it's a clear bet that things start making sense pretty soon. Part of the legendary musical Cole family, Lionel Frederick (or 'Freddy' to most) is the brother of Nat 'King' and uncle to Natalie, and is the name and talent behind the world-famous US-based Freddy Cole Quartet. Having performed for the grand opening of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, YTL Hotels once again called upon the fantastic four to do the honours for the launch of the luxury Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse in Hokkaido, Japan – a glamorous event that saw local dignitaries and international media come together for a gala dinner, held at the Hilton Niseko Village.

Although already in his 80s, few doubted that Freddy Cole still had what it takes to keep an audience enraptured. Belting out a non-stop stream of hits, including the groovy, romantic *L-O-V-E*, some of the guests were seen sidling out of their chairs to sing and clap in front of the stage. Having been

*The Freddy Cole Quartet was flown in specially from the United States for the launch of the Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse.*



## FREDDY COLE AT A GLANCE

**Born:** 15 October 1931 in Chicago, Illinois, to Edward and Paulina Cole.

**Siblings:** Nat 'King', Ike, Eddie and Evelyn Cole.

**Genre:** Jazz

**Instrument:** Piano

**Career Highlights:** Cole's first single, *The Joke's on Me*, was released in 1952; Inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame in 2007; and a Grammy nomination in 2010 for his *Freddy Cole Sings Mr B* album in the Best Vocal Jazz Album category.

playing the piano since he was six years old, Cole, the youngest of Edward and Paulina's five children, grew up in a musically infused home. "Music was all around me," he says, sharing the fact that musical supremos like Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Lionel Hampton were all regular visitors to the Cole home. His musical influencer, however, was Billy Eckstine. "He was a fantastic entertainer and I learnt so much just by watching and being around him."

It would surprise many that, despite his musical environment, Freddy Cole actually harboured dreams of, not being a musician, but, rather, a football star. It was an unfortunate hand injury that put paid to those all-American dreams. Fate, however, ensured that what the sports world lost, the music world gained – and how! Cole then began hitting the Chicago clubs as a teenager, impressing all those who heard his unique brand of music and vocals enough to, eventually, make a name for himself as a recording artist and consummate performer. After all, as Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh, Managing Director of YTL Corporation, asked the guests in his welcome speech at the gala event: "What is a celebration without amazing entertainment?" With customary YTL aplomb, the Freddy Cole Quartet was flown in all the way to the alpine village of Niseko from the United States to launch yet another exciting chapter in the world of YTL hospitality. "Freddy's recording career as an international jazz singer and pianist has spanned over 50 years. The leader of the Freddy Cole Quartet, which regularly tours the world, he gave us an outstanding performance at the launch of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur three years ago and we are truly delighted to have him perform for us again." ■



# Village People

A new F&B and retail development has just upped the après-ski ante at Niseko Village, Japan.

Photography **Jacob Termansen**

One of the great joys of skiing is what comes after. Few pleasures can equal that of a proper après-ski session, a term coined by the French, which alludes to any form of entertainment or recreation that takes place post-piste at ski resorts. They may range from a few hours throwing shapes around on a heaving dance floor to a simple night out savouring local cuisine and drinks after a hard day on the slopes.

Given the element of fun in such activities, the general rule of thumb is: the chic-er the resort, the better the après-ski. Taking this into consideration is YTL Hotels, which has just launched a veritable village within its sprawling 615-hectare Niseko Village property in Hokkaido, Japan, centred around special dining and retail experiences, and aimed at delighting even those who don't ski. Often hailed as the "Aspen of Asia", Niseko Village, which comprises YTL's Hilton Niseko Village, The Green Leaf Niseko Village and the

newly-unveiled Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse, is fast gaining traction as the definitive winter destination in the region.

"It is exciting for us to push Niseko Village to even greater heights with the unveiling of new après-ski experiences right in the heart of Niseko Village," said Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh, Managing Director of YTL Corporation, which owns YTL Hotels, in Japan recently. "Brand-new and exciting retail and F&B developments just moments away from our hotels, townhouses and ski lifts will add vibrancy and energy to Niseko as a destination, warmly inviting guests to take leisurely strolls or click off their skis to enjoy a host of carefully-curated entertainment, shopping, dining and more while adding a sophisticated pulse to the village community."

Visitors may nip in and out of the various stores, each one inspired by Japanese *machiya* architecture and crafted

Once you're done with the slopes, head over to the village at Niseko Village for food, drinks and a little retail therapy.

from dark woods and complete with traditional *shoji*-inspired sliding screens and wooden lattice facades. From shopping for designer luxuries and local artworks to enjoying spots of afternoon tea, sumptuous meals and post-prandial cocktails, all these delightful distractions may be found within this new enclave, just a minute or two's walk from the **Hilton Niseko Village** or a short ski away from the new **Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse** and **The Green Leaf Niseko Village**, both of which offer easy and seamless ski-in, ski-out access. If you prefer to move around in comfort, Niseko Village offers a free regular shuttle service, while Kasara guests may also enjoy the luxury of a complimentary driver-on-call service within Niseko Village.

Come Niseko's famous white season, seek respite from cold winds and snow flurries by nipping into the **Village Patisserie** for sinful mugs of hot chocolate or caramel latte, accompanied by creamy cakes or Royce chocolates (a much-loved Hokkaido export), watched over by a row of clocks that mark the passing of time on the slopes in world-famous ski destinations like Aspen and Courchevel. For those who feel the need to upgrade their winter wardrobe or perhaps bring home something special and wonderful from the region, the **i Gate Ikeuchi** and **i Zone Ikeuchi** stores offer a wide range of outdoor apparel and accessories as well as locally-made treasures, from the finest Hokkaido lavender toiletries to exquisite equestrian-inspired carry-wear by SOMÉS, Japan's only saddlery.

Naturally, a day of snow play requires energy and if you feel spirits flagging, revive yourself over hot drinks and meals at the village's new hotspots. **Yang Shu Ten**, the indigenous Ainu word for "fisherman", is a popular choice for Japanese favourites like sushi, tempura, teppanyaki or even a comforting dish of curry rice, while **The Crab Shack** is designed for languorous meals where you slowly sip lemon sours or thumping mugs of fine malt Sapporo Classic, the local



life feature //

“And with this new dining and retail village, our guests can have a better time – with or without the snow.”

Hokkaido brew, while grilling fresh-caught seafood like plump scallops, oysters and snow crab before finishing off with a hefty serving of cheesy Niseko potato pizza, a raclette-like take on hot pan hedonism.

If you feel the need to work off supper, adjourn then to the **Two Sticks**, where entertainment is served up live nightly, alongside a selection of South-East Asian-inspired meals and snacks, like chicken rice, crispy wonton dumplings, *laksa* and black Hokkien fried noodles. Prop up the bar, hit the dance floor

or simply find a quiet corner for cosy conversation as you please. “People love choice at ski resorts,” says Yeoh. “And with this new dining and retail village, our guests can have a better time – with or without the snow.”

Not that it's all about the cold weather. Given Niseko Village's enviable status as a year-round destination, it's equally wonderful spending days trekking, playing rounds of golf and horseback riding when fresh Siberian powder doesn't blanket the region.

*From Asian tapas and tipples at Two Sticks, to grilled seafood at The Crab Shack, there's something for every taste at the village.*

### Where To Stay

Newly opened, the first phase of the luxurious Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse offers eight exclusive double-storey homes that are just a push and glide away from the ski runs and lifts. Available for sale or rent, families or small groups of friends may enjoy the spacious comfort of the beautifully-designed townhouses, each of which comes with three fully furnished en suite bedrooms, thoughtfully stocked with L'Occitane toiletries and fitted out with Grohe hardware, a designer Miele kitchen and a dining room that may be converted into *nihonma* or a Japanese-styled room where children may bed down for the night on the *tatami* if they so

wish. Modern-day necessities like complimentary Wi-Fi, Apple TV and a Nespresso machine are all provided for. Most units look out onto majestic Mount Yotei and offers all the privacy of villa life with every convenience afforded by a five-star hotel. Don and doff your snow gear in the comfort of the heated storage room, while a garage is also provided for self-driving guests. Services like in-residence ski and snowboard fittings and a dedicated Kasara concierge are all made available to Kasara guests, while errands like stocking up the kitchen prior to arrival or during stay, in-residence sports massages, chef-on-call, child-minding as well as waxing services for snow equipment are just a call away.



“The Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse offers eight exclusive double-storey homes that are just a push and glide away from the ski runs and lifts.”

Alpine newbies may enjoy privileges like a complimentary one-hour guided Niseko Village mountain orientation with an instructor on the first ski day. The instructor may also show up at the doorsteps of their townhouse for private ski or snowboard lessons.

Experienced skiers can learn a thing or two about avalanche control from the experts if they are thinking of skiing or riding in Mizuno-no-Sawa, the bowl under the Hilton Niseko Gondola, which had once been off-limits to skiers.

Guests or owners may also avail themselves to every facility at the two neighbouring hotels – the Hilton Niseko Village and The Green Leaf Niseko Village – including complimentary usage of *onsen* (hot spring) facilities.

*Rates for Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse begin at US\$2,000 per unit per night. Guests interested in buying a unit should contact YTL at enquiries@ytl.com.sg. Owners will also have the option to have their properties leased and managed by YTL Hotels all year round. ❏*



*The new Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse is the most luxurious and private option to bed down for the night in Niseko Village.*





# What's Cooking?

Play chef for a day by signing up for Pangkor Laut Resort's *Chef's Kitchen Experience* programme.

Text **Brian Cheong** Photography **Law Soo Phye & Yong Keen Keong**



Learn all about spice and all things nice at Pangkor Laut Resort's *Chef's Kitchen Experience* programme.

Our day begins bright and early with a hearty breakfast at Pangkor Laut Resort's Feast Village. This charming beachside restaurant offers an amazing spread of local staples, from Chinese noodle soup and *nasi lemak* to *roti canai* and, surprisingly enough, *appam*, a rice pancake that is crispy around the side with a lovely white soft centre that is eaten with a serving of coconut milk.

As we tuck in, a gentleman in a black chef's uniform approaches our table. He introduces himself as Chef Amiruddin Muhamad and says that he will be taking us on a visit to the neighbouring Pangkor Island to discover where the resort gets its fresh catch from the sea every day. Chef Amiruddin has been working at Pangkor Laut Resort for the last three years after a stint at the JW Marriott in Kuala Lumpur.

## (Sea)Food Patrol

Not content with letting you just play 'chef', part of the highlight of the *Chef's Kitchen Experience* lies in a little field excursion organised by the resort, which takes you by speedboat to a fish farm nearby. Here, the phrase 'catch of the day'



“The *Chef's Kitchen Experience* programme at Pangkor Laut Resort offers guests the chance to bring home the needed-skills with which to whip up a Malaysian feast once on home ground.”

*Master the art of Malaysian cooking in comfort and style amidst the paradise-like setting of Pangkor Laut Resort.*

takes on new meaning as you are invited to try your hand at catching lunch.

It helps, of course, to pray for a spot of fisherman's luck and our party was indeed blessed with an easy catch of a Taiwanese garoupa hybrid which weighed a whopping 4kgs!

### Freshen Up

Back at the resort, we are greeted with a cold towel and refreshing iced lemon tea. But why stop there when the Spa Village offers a unique *Bath House Experience*? This surprising, but very much welcomed, item on the *Chef's Kitchen Experience* may have nothing to do with food, unless you count the herbs that make up the aromatically therapeutic bath, but it is delightful nonetheless, serving to re-energise the body after all the walking earlier. Before changing, I am treated to a floral footbath and a Chinese foot pounding session. Later, I change into a batik *sarong*, the very attire village folks in the old days don when taking a bath by the well or in the river. Up first is the *Malay Bath*, complete with a pool filled with gushing water from the spouts of oversized canisters. It begins with making a wish at a well, then wading through the cold water before ending with an invigorating inhalation of four different combinations of herbs labelled *Passion, Calming, Uplifting* and *Detox*.

Next is the *Japanese Bath*, where you sit on a stool and scrub your body with the *goshi-goshi* cloth. After this cleansing exercise, you take a dip in the heated *rotenburu* pool and sip on a small cup of cold green tea. The final act in this ritual is the *Shanghai Scrub*, using a body brush and rinsing with hot water. Feeling completely refreshed, I get dressed again and head back to the Feast Village for the next item on the agenda, the cooking class.

### Wok Station

Chef Kaliama, a 24-year veteran at Pangkor Laut Resort, is already waiting in an open kitchen facing the sea at the Feast Village. A table has also been set up in front of the kitchen for me to eat the lunch that I would be cooking – with help from Chef Kaliama, of course. After donning a chef's hat and an apron, Chef Kaliama announces that today's lunch is Indian and that we would be cooking three dishes (see sidebar for two of the recipes).



Pangkor Laut Resort's Chef's Kitchen Experience takes you from a kelong experience to spa and, finally, to savouring the fruits of your labour.



“What is particularly delightful about the *Chef's Kitchen Experience* programme is the spa break at the resort's famous Spa Village in-between.”

We begin by making *rassam*, a spicy traditional soup that she says is also good for the flu “because there’s so much goodness in it.” It is essentially a vegetarian dish but Chef Kaliama remarks that some people like adding fish or crab meat to enhance the taste. After this, we make Tandoori Chicken, marinating the meat with yoghurt, lime juice, garlic, ginger, red chilli, black pepper and cumin powder, before cooking it in the oven for about 20 minutes. For best results, Chef Kaliama recommends leaving the marinating chicken in the fridge overnight before cooking. The next dish is Prawn Masala, which involves sautéing the spices in a hot wok before adding vegetable stock and large prawns.

As we sit down for lunch, complete with a fragrant bowl of rice cooked in coconut milk and ginger, Chef Kaliama surprises us with a dish that has been secretly prepared in the back, the *garoupa* that we caught earlier, wrapped and grilled in banana leaves with onions and chilli. Needless to say, it is a most satisfying meal, especially since I have had a hand in making it. And, to prove it, I am presented with a certificate with my name on it for having completed the Chef's Kitchen Experience. ■



### Tandoori Chicken

#### Ingredients

- 4 Boneless and skinless chicken drumsticks or breast meat
- 3 Tablespoons lime juice
- ½ Cup plain yoghurt
- 1 Cup garlic and ginger paste
- 1 Tablespoon red chilli powder
- ½ Tablespoon garam masala

#### Method

1. Make deep cuts on the surface of the chicken meat
2. Mix yoghurt, lime juice, garlic, ginger, red chilli and garam masala, and pour mixture over the chicken, massaging it into the flesh. Marinate the chicken overnight or at least 30 minutes before cooking.
3. Cook chicken in the oven at 202°C for 18 minutes.

### Prawn Masala

#### Ingredients

- 12 Large prawns
- ¼ Red onion
- 1 Tomato
- 1 Cup garlic and ginger paste
- ½ Teaspoon cumin powder
- 1 Tablespoon red chilli powder
- 1 Tablespoon curry powder
- 1 Teaspoon turmeric powder
- 3 Curry leaves
- 100ml Vegetable stock

#### Method

1. Heat oil in frying pan.
2. Sauté onions, tomatoes, garlic and ginger.
3. Add cumin powder, red chilli powder and curry powder, and sauté mixture until well-blended.
4. Add prawns and stir-fry until cooked.
5. Add vegetable stock and let it simmer.
6. Serve hot.



# Sporting Soprano

Laura Wright, the up-and-coming singing sensation from Britain, talks to *YTL Life* about what inspires her.

Text **Jan Yong** Photography **Jane Lee**

When you first catch sight of Laura Wright from afar, you can't help but think she has a striking resemblance to Kate Middleton, the Duchess of Cambridge. Both have that elegant, almost regal bearing and a great sense of fashion. Both stand at about 5'9", so it's not surprising that Wright sometimes gets mistaken as the future Queen of England. "Yes, especially when I am in Pall Mall in London, where some of the royals hang out. Some tourists have mistakenly thought I was Kate," says the fast-rising star of the music world. As we chatted in the spectacular setting that is YTL Hotels' Pangkor Laut Resort, I get a feeling that I am talking to a star who will be wildly successful soon.

Come March 2015, she will be embarking on a solo tour across Britain. Even during this time, the gorgeous mezzo-soprano has sold over a million albums, making her one of the biggest-selling classical artistes this decade. She's also the first female singer since Katherine Jenkins to reach No 1 in the Classical Chart with her album *The Last Rose*.

Those in Malaysia lucky enough to have seen her perform at the Tourism & Culture Gala Night in conjunction with the *A Journey Through Time VIII* showcase at Starhill Gallery last November can certainly testify to her powerful vocals. If, however, you missed her there, just search YouTube, where you will find a soaring rendition of Barber's *Agnus Dei* (from her *Sound Of Strength* album). It's a slickly executed video, where the musical expression of the physical power and beauty of athletics is conveyed magnificently. Wright is, perhaps, the perfect singer to bring to life the intimate connection between sports and music – she is an accomplished sportswoman in her own right, having

"I love that music can transport you somewhere else. With sports, it's the same thing."

trained to county level in hockey, netball, tennis and javelin, and continues to play rugby for Rosslyn Park, while also occasionally raising money for charity in running and cycling events.

Athletic yet feminine at the same time, the mezzo-soprano had actually wanted to become a tennis or hockey player before she shot to fame at age 15 after winning a singing competition. She then joined an all-girls band, All Angels, and recorded three albums with them. But, when she went to study at the Royal College of Music, she decided to go solo. Those times with All Angels have, in a way, prepared her for her current fame. "Starting so young actually helped me. Now, at 24, I have a lot of experience. I feel very blessed that it's a steady climb upwards rather than a crazy start and then nothing," she says over mocktails with the stunning view of Pangkor Laut's Sea Villas in the background.

## Passion For Sports

Her love for sports never waned and, in 2012, the Rugby Football Union, which governs English rugby, appointed her its first official anthem singer and she has performed at international matches, the 6 Nations, the Barbarians games and the Rugby 7s at Twickenham. Wright has also sang at other sporting events like NFL matches, The Carnegie Challenge Cup Final, WSB Boxing, the Carling Cup Final,

*Laura Wright at Pangkor Island Resort. The British mezzo-soprano performed at Starhill Gallery's A Journey Through Time VIII.*





The Football League Championship Play-off Final, the FA Cup Final, polo matches as well as the World Triathlon Series in 2013, which saw her participating as a competitor as well.

A health enthusiast, Wright loves going to the gym and participating in team sports. "I have always been very competitive since young. Now that I am concentrating on my singing career, I quite miss that competitive aspect, so, with my latest album, I try to convey that sense of empowerment, invincibility, strength and independence that I get from sports," she explains of her latest album *Sound Of Strength*, which was released last September. "I love that music can transport you somewhere else. With sports, it's the same thing."

Sports and music have certainly brought the young singer to many places – from the Olympic Stadium (she was the first mezzo-soprano to perform there) to hallowed venues such as the Royal Albert Hall, Royal Festival Hall, the Royal Opera

Laura Wright performing at St Paul's Cathedral in London.

House, Wembley Stadium and Arena, The O2, Twickenham, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey and the Great Wall of China. She has toured with tenors Alfie Boe and Russell Watson, and opened the iTunes Festival for Andrea Bocelli. She describes an experience at Twickenham, where she led 80,000 supporters in singing the national anthem: "I can't explain it... when you walk into the stadium, that feeling of leading them to sing, uniting everyone before the game starts. It's an incredible and powerful feeling, and there is nothing like it."

### Music and Style

Wright has a first class honours from the Royal College of Music, where she met her music teacher, Kathleen Livingstone, who still gives her music and singing lessons today. The four 'tough' years at England's top music institution have given her a solid grounding and allowed her to compose two original songs for her *Sound of Strength* album. She also wrote lyrics for some of the instrumental pieces, including Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*.

Born in Suffolk, her early years were filled with music, sports and good times. Her father, Paul, a financial adviser, and mother, Caroline, an artist and lecturer, supported her endeavours and, perhaps, served as her early inspiration as their home was constantly filled with classical music while she was growing up. Although she looks up to the late tenor Luciano Pavarotti, she would love to duet with the age-defying Tom Jones and Canadian crooner Michael Bublé. "Tom is so timeless despite his age; his music and personality are great, too. Michael is a bit more jazzy and someone whom I could have fun with on stage."

No story about an operatic diva is complete without mentioning her stunning stage dresses and top of Wright's list is



is Amanda Wakeley, who also dresses the Duchess of Cambridge, Beyoncé, Angelina Jolie, Kate Winslet, as well as the late Princess Diana. "I want to look glamorous and elegant while singing but don't want to look older than 24. Amanda's creations suit me perfectly." Another favourite is Philip Armstrong, whose creations have been worn by Lady Gaga and Katy Perry. She also likes Ashley Isham's dresses: "They are stunning designs with lots of glitter and sparkle, which I love." Not surprisingly, Wright makes headlines for her fashion sense as well but, while her style is daring and glamorous, she is continuously pushing the envelope in music: "I want to create new sounds, new music." And it does seem she will. ■



Wright at the Queen Elizabeth II Park in London during the Invictus Games Opening Ceremony in September 2014; Laura Wright waiting to run the Virgin Money London Marathon in April 2014.



# Wild Encounters

Gaya Island Resort is not just a tropical haven for tourists looking for some fun in the sun, but also a sanctuary for wild inhabitants.

Text **Maya Michael** Photography **Edmund Lee & Scubazoo**

The jungle surrounding Gaya Island Resort is a place full of mystery and natural wonders. Covered in magnificent trees and hanging vines, one can only imagine the type of creatures that call this island home. And the best way to find out would be to go on an expedition guided by the island's most knowledgeable explorer, resident naturalist Justin Juhun. I was introduced to Juhun back in 2014, after being invited to experience one of the resort's many nature trails. Accompanied by photographer Edmund Lee, we had returned to the resort to investigate a quirky incident involving one of the island's most famous inhabitants – the proboscis monkey.

## Set Adrift

Earlier this year, it was reported that a boat filled with guests and team members from the resort had stumbled upon a most peculiar sight – an adult male proboscis monkey swimming in the middle of the sea close to the resort. Scott Mayback, the resident marine biologist, was one of the lucky few to have witnessed the incident first-hand.

According to Mayback: "The boat was on its way back to the mainland when the helmsman suddenly spotted something bobbing around in the sea. After making a quick turn, we realised it was a proboscis monkey swimming for its life. It took a couple of tries to get it to settle inside the boat. By then, it just looked really tired and was shivering, possibly from being in the sea for too long."

A closer inspection of the sad-looking critter revealed that it was also sporting a rather nasty gash on its signature

bulbous nose. Staffers onboard immediately reached out to Juhun, whose expertise – acquired from years of exploring the jungle – made him the most suitable candidate to treat the poor creature's wounds. But Juhun would not get the opportunity. As the boat approached the jetty, the monkey bolted, swimming towards the coastline before scampering off into the dense jungle, never to be seen again.

Based on the description of the incident, Juhun thinks that the monkey could have originated from one of the neighbouring islands and had been cast out following a dispute with another dominant male. "When it comes to territory, proboscis monkeys will often fight to the death. This particular male was most likely kicked out from the harem in order to prevent inbreeding. Even the females will drift off from their original group to join up with other harems."

Determined to see one in the flesh – or in this case, fur – Edmund and I decided to attempt the 'Proboscis Trail'. This approximately three-hour expedition leads to a special platform located deep within the resort's natural backyard, and is the perfect place for adventurous guests looking for an opportunity to observe proboscis monkeys in their natural habitat.

## A Hiking We Will Go

The next day, after breakfast at the resort's Feast Village, we made our way to the entrance of the trail to meet up with Juhun and his protégé, a local girl named Ifa. As we prepared ourselves, Juhun pointed out a couple of creatures that had decided to greet us close to the entrance.



*Gaya Island Resort's resident naturalist, Justin Juhun, is your go-to man for all things nature.*



“Covered in magnificent trees and hanging vines, one can only imagine the type of creatures that call this island home.”

The first was a large beetle that immediately let out a screech upon being picked up by Juhun, who then proceeded to demonstrate how it uses its powerful mandibles to snip off a stem with barely any resistance. The other creature turned out to be a bright green viper hiding amongst the leaves, which prompted Edmund to immediately venture as close as possible for a closer look with his camera. I thought of sneaking a quick peek for myself before deciding against it, just in case the viper decided to snap back.



As we made our way on the trail, I could barely suppress my excitement about the possibility of seeing a live proboscis monkey. Found only in Borneo, the monkey can easily be distinguished by its large, fleshy nose and potbelly. Due to these comical features, the locals decided to bestow the proboscis monkey with the Malay nickname *monyet belanda* (which translates to Dutch monkey, perhaps as a jibe at the former Dutch colonisers).

Both the males and females have large noses, while the juveniles have small upturned noses. These noses will eventually grow past their mouths, which can make eating quite a challenge. But despite such a setback, this distinguishing feature is necessary for proboscis monkeys to communicate with one another. Not only does the nose swell and turn red whenever the animal becomes excited or angry, but it also acts as a natural resonator, allowing it to vocalise its loud honks, which is used to signal imminent danger.

Proboscises are the largest of the colobine monkeys and survive mostly on leaves. Their large potbellies has a unique digestive system that is similar to that of buffaloes. Their stomach is



divided into compartments filled with cellulose digesting bacteria that can also neutralise the toxins of certain leaves.

### Hidden Sanctuary

We were barely an hour into the trail and, yet, I already felt transported far away from the resort's sandy beaches and delicious mocktails served at the Pool Bar. The surrounding jungle foliage is so dense that sunlight can barely peek through the gaps. This is probably a big relief to the various tiny critters scurrying around the muddy trail beneath my feet.

Upon arrival at the platform, it soon became evident that the spot was well worth the long journey. Not only was it the perfect vantage point for spotting reclusive monkeys, it was also surprisingly peaceful. The only sounds

came from a nearby stream and the occasional airplane flying overhead. Juhun himself admitted that he enjoys coming here alone and has spent countless hours catching up on his research while enjoying the view.

As we set our sights on what was beyond the canopy, Juhun suddenly spotted a Dollarbird perched atop a lone branch before being joined by a mate. Their fluttering shenanigans briefly served as entertainment as we waited with bated breath for the main stars to reveal themselves. To help pass the time, Juhun shared a few theories on how the proboscis monkeys ended up on Gaya Island. While some have claimed that they were placed there by humans, Juhun said this was highly unlikely since only a certain number would have been

*Playful proboscis monkeys were once nicknamed 'Dutch monkeys' as a jibe to the former colonists.*



Recline in luxury once you're done jungle-trekking or nature-watching.



**INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT PROBOSCIS MONKEYS**

- The male proboscis monkey is one of the largest monkeys in Asia and can measure up to 76cm in height and weigh more than 20kg.

- Both males and females have a long tail, which can easily be the same length as the body. This enables them to balance whilst leaping through the trees.
- Proboscis monkeys are adept swimmers and have partially webbed feet. This is particularly useful for paddling in the water and walking on the slippery banks.
- Due to its large size and almost entirely tree-dwelling lifestyle, proboscis monkeys have very few actual predators in their natural environment.
- Aside from clouded leopards and crocodiles, humans pose the biggest threat to the proboscis monkeys.
- Habitat destruction from logging and oil palm plantations could lead to their extinction in the near future unless better conservation measures are put in place.
- Classified as Endangered on the IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) Red List, the number of proboscis monkeys have declined at a rate of around 50 per cent in the last 40 years.

able to be brought in, which would, in turn, lead to inbreeding. "The monkeys just wouldn't have been able to thrive for as long as they have," he said.

A more likely scenario would have to do with the lush mangroves that can be found growing throughout Gaya Island. "Around 200 years ago, this entire area was a vast mangrove and was much closer to the mainland. It's highly possible that these monkeys used the mangroves as a makeshift bridge to cross over. As the city (Kota Kinabalu) continued to develop, the monkeys probably decided to stay on and eventually became more isolated."

**Return To Civilisation**

Almost an hour passed and despite Juhun's efforts to lure the proboscis monkeys by mimicking their howls, the only signs of activity were the leaves

rustling in the wind. Unlike the cheeky macaques – which can often be seen roaming around the resort – the proboscis monkeys prefer to shy away from humans, spending most of their lives living high in the canopy while gorging on leaves. Juhun said: "There are close to 30 proboscis monkeys that live on this island and they usually travel in groups. Spotting one in the wild mostly depends on the time and the season. Sightings are more likely to happen during the fruiting season in July, either early in the morning or towards the evening."

We eventually decided to call it a day and proceeded to depart from the platform. In order to make up for lost time, Juhun suggested we take a more scenic route that led through the nearby stream. Given the number of spider webs in the area, it is fairly safe to assume that not many have traversed this area. Upon exiting the

trail, we bade farewell to Juhun and Ifa before returning to the creature comforts that awaited us in our luxury villas.

As night fell and the stars began to illuminate the sky, I found myself seated at the patio while recollecting the day's events. It is here that Juhun's parting words come to mind: "I like to teach people and share my knowledge with others. I want our guests to learn in a memorable way since it makes them more likely to return to the resort for a chance to learn more."

And he most certainly has a point. Even if we didn't manage to encounter the proboscis monkeys, the idea of returning to this unique and secluded place for a chance to explore its other hidden secrets is certainly something to look forward to. ▣



# 'I Do'

Aside from something old and something new, every marriage could also do with a dash of fairytale romance. Why not look to YTL Hotels for fantasy locations coupled with faultless flair in making your wedding one to remember?

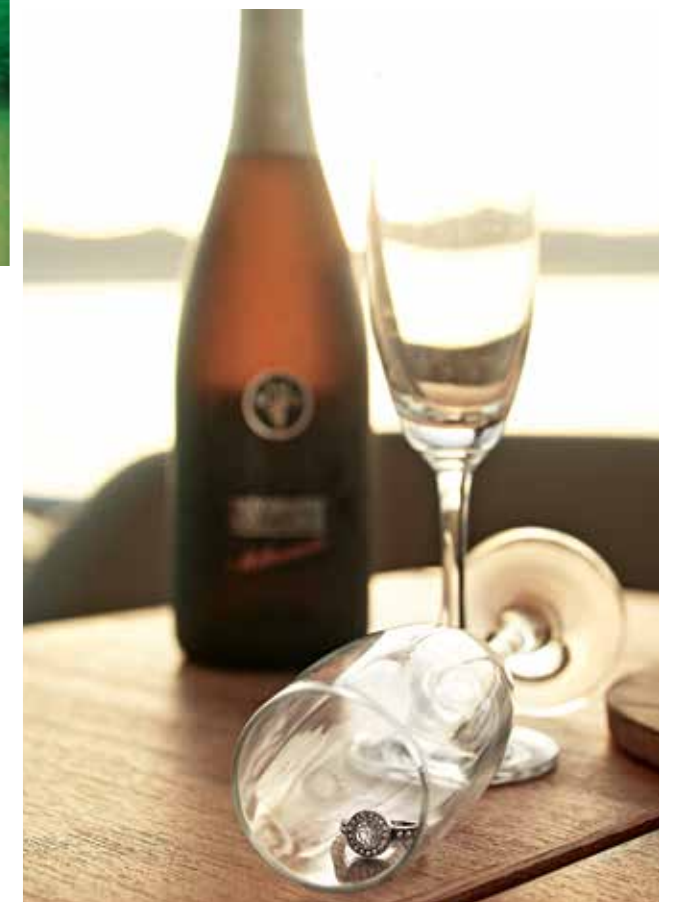
Saying 'I do' needn't be nerve-wracking. Let all the magic and romance of your courtship overflow to the special day where a new journey as man and wife begins. For a truly fairytale day to remember, consider the paradise-like settings of YTL Hotels for a dream day easily made real.

## Pangkor Laut Resort

**The Scene:** Set three miles off the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia and along the Straits of Malacca, Pangkor Laut is a private tropical island paradise. With secluded bays, including the renowned Emerald Bay, and age-old rainforest, the island is home to just one resort and eight private estates. Rich in natural beauty, the island is also home to friendly hornbills and a host of other wildlife. In the waters, cuttlefish, seahorses and other colourful marine life may be spotted right from the over-water walkways or by the jetty itself, while more sophisticated pleasures may be taken in the resort's several fine restaurants or its award-winning flagship Spa Village.

**The Elements:** Weddings here are definitely celebrations to remember. Pangkor Laut Resort offers three distinctive packages, including a signature wedding at sea on board the 65ft *YTL Lady I* motor yacht, a beach wedding at Emerald Bay and a lantern courtyard wedding. The most romantic, however, would have to be the first option, where you exchange vows aboard the yacht's petal-strewn deck against the backdrop of a setting, egg yolk-like sun, followed by champagne toasts and the lilting tunes of a live band. Once back on terra firma, continue the celebrations with a sumptuous seafood banquet before turning in for the night in one of the resort's beautiful villas.





**Highlight:** Walking up the makeshift aisle of a petal-strewn jetty to board the luxurious *YTL Lady I* to exchange vows in the waters off Pangkor Laut, just as the sun begins to dip into the sea. If this isn't the stuff of fairytales, we wouldn't know what is.

### Tanjong Jara Resort

**The Scene:** The East Coast of Malaysia, with its sweeping golden sand beaches, glass-like waters and rich Malay heritage, is steeped in age-old Malay traditions and offers couples the chance to experience all the splendour and pomp of a wedding ceremony infused with Malay grace and charm. Tanjong Jara Resort is itself located in paradise-like settings – the long stretch of pristine beach faces the azure expanse of the South China Sea, while the traditional architecture, redolent of a sultan's *istana* (palace), has won it numerous citations, including an Aga Khan Award.

**The Elements:** Here, exchange your vows right on the beach surrounded by strewn tropical petals and under a classic floral arch. An indulgent five-course seafood feast awaits after that at the Teratai Terrace, where a traditional *gamelan* ensemble entertains while you celebrate. If, however, your dream is to

experience all the colour and richness of a traditional Malay wedding, do ask for the *Nelayan* or *Bunga* wedding packages, which include an authentic Malay wedding procession, complete with bearers carrying tall poles of *bunga manggar*, a celebratory decoration that is a must-have at Malay nuptials, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of the *kompang*, and, perhaps, a kampong-style dinner with food prepared and served from little wooden huts.

**Highlight:** If you've ever attended a traditional Malay wedding, you'd be able to understand and appreciate the gaiety and festive air the occasion affords. And, if you're looking for a memory to immortalise, a traditional *bunga manggar* procession escorted by a *kompang* troupe, looking wonderful in their traditional attire of *baju Melayu* matched with colourful *samping*, is pretty hard to beat.

### Cameron Highlands Resort

**The Scene:** Imagine verdant peaks hidden amidst a blanket of mist and clouds, undulating tea plantations and just a little whiff of mystery in the air... that is the scene awaiting you at Cameron Highlands, Malaysia's most popular cool-weather retreat and the preferred hill station of planters, army folk and

expatriates looking for respite from the muggy heat during colonial times. Perched on a little hillock, the stately Cameron Highlands Resort, overlooking the green of the local golf course, exudes colonial charm from every timber beam, roaring fireplace and plantation-style white shutter and offers a unique tropical highland location in which to conduct and host an intimate matrimonial celebration.

**The Elements:** Cameron Highlands Resort offers its *Signature Colonial Wedding* package for matrimonial highland flings. The resort makes full use of the area's famed flower gardens and nurseries to flood the space with Cameron Highlands' famous roses while saying your vows on the terrace, framed by misty hills and pine trees. A special fireplace lighting ritual also awaits the newlyweds, aided by flowing Laurent-Perrier, before moving onto a colonial-inspired dinner as a pianist tickles the ivories. A 50-minute couple's spa experience at the award-winning Spa Village Cameron Highlands and two nights' complimentary stay at any YTL Hotels' signature properties in Malaysia and Bali is also included in the package.

**Highlight:** The incredibly romantic ambience. After all, there are very few places in South-East Asia where you can say you got

1. Its paradise-like setting and award-winning traditional architecture make Tanjong Jara Resort an ideal venue for your dream wedding.



2

“Marriage is the golden ring in a chain whose beginning is a glance and whose ending is Eternity.”  
~ Kahlil Gibran ~

married amidst pine-scented greenery, mist-swathed hills and an abundance of highland blossoms.

### Gaya Island Resort

**The Scene:** Imagine a tropical island paradise in the South China Sea, the majestic Mount Kinabalu on the horizon and all the richness, colour and natural beauty of Sabah, affectionately referred to as 'the Land Below the Wind'. Gaya Island Resort, just a 10-minute speedboat ride away from Sabah's capital of Kota Kinabalu, offers unique spaces in which to celebrate and commemorate one of the most important days of your life. Sunsets in this part of the world are particularly breathtaking and the little island of Gaya itself offers secluded bays, exotic mangroves and lush rainforest in which to celebrate the occasion.

**The Elements:** Stroll down the aisle through a rainforest arch at the serene Tavajun Bay, a private beach on Gaya Island, and, as the sun sinks beneath the horizon, celebrate with a champagne toast and a delectable five-course Asian dinner. You may also opt for the Kadazan Blessing Ceremony, where you and your partner, dressed in elaborate black and gold garments of the Kadazan tribe, exchange vows before an esteemed Kadazan priest. In the Golden Sunset Ceremony, an intimate wedding at the Gaya Island Resort is followed by a sunset cruise onboard the luxurious 64ft yacht *Lumba-Lumba*. As you leisurely explore the South China Sea, toast the start of your new life together — with champagne, of course. All weddings packages at Gaya Island Resort come with five-course contemporary Asian dinner for the wedding couple as well as duet stretching and a 50-minute *Couple's Spa Experience*.

**Highlight:** Located within Sabah's famous Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park and in the area's famed Coral Triangle, Gaya Island is a gem of a location should you desire an island

2. Gaya Island Resort offers the richness, colour and natural beauty of Sabah as the backdrop for your wedding. 3. Exchange your vows amidst verdant peaks and undulating tea plantations at Cameron Highlands Resort.



life feature //



3

4. The Majestic Malacca gives your wedding all the colour and pomp of an authentic Peranakan-inspired ceremony. 5. Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is a mystical setting for a wedding. 6. Enjoy a tranquil wedding at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali.



wedding. The hotel is also a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, so rest assured any experience here will be, naturally, world-class.

### Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali

**The Scene:** The mystical island of Bali, so beloved of the gods, seems as magical a setting for a wedding, if ever there was one. Located in the quieter part of the island's north point, the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is ideal for those wishing for a tranquil, culturally-infused wedding, set against a backdrop of volcanoes, black sand beaches and the cerulean hue of the Bali Sea.

**The Elements:** Imagine hypnotic *gamelan* music playing while Balinese dancers execute their graceful movements, with each flick of the wrist or look of the eye rich with significance and meaning, as you pledge your lives to each other. If this scene gets your approval, you might want to consider an exotic Balinese wedding. The resort's signature package offers the wedding couple complimentary bouquet and *boutonniere*, as well as a host of other delightful touches, including a bamboo-lined and frangipani-strewn aisle, rustic wedding arch accented with tropical flowers, Balinese dancing, a five-course Balinese banquet and more. The bride and groom will also be treated to a couple's spa experience and a gift in the form of two night's complimentary honeymoon, inclusive of accommodation and breakfast, at any YTL Hotels property in Malaysia and Bali with every wedding experience booked.

**Highlight:** Getting married to the beat of the hypnotic *gamelan* while being entertained by graceful Balinese dancers. Beyond exotic and magical!

### The Majestic Malacca

**The Scene:** Set within a historical 1920s mansion, right by the famous Malacca River, and infused with all the colour, pomp and splendour of an authentic Peranakan-inspired wedding ceremony, The Majestic Malacca offers a most unique and unforgettable experience. After all, how many couples can say they exchanged vows in true Baba-Nyonya fashion in a classical Straits Settlement mansion?

**The Elements:** Begin your life together as man and wife in Straits Chinese splendour, with a *tuang teh* or traditional tea ceremony, dressed in an intricate Peranakan wedding ensemble, followed by a trishaw ride around the heritage heart of the town, before sitting down to a sumptuous feast of Peranakan delicacies that may include signature Malaccan-style Peranakan dishes like *ayam pongteh*, *udang nenas masak lemak*, *ayam cincaluk* and assorted *kuih-muih*, while being entertained by a traditional *dondang sayang* performance.

**Highlight:** The *dondang sayang* performance – a traditional Sino-Malay form of entertainment where Baba-Nyonya singers trade poetic musical exchanges in a light-hearted, often

humorous fashion, accompanied by Malay *rebana* drums, a *tetawak* (gong) and the violin. It's also quite the sartorial experience playing the role of a Baba groom or a Nyonya bride. The costumes are beyond elaborate and will consist of various gowns, robes, headdress and accessories, including the all-important *kasut manik* (beaded slippers) for the bride – the traditional hallmark of the bride's prowess in sewing, often seen as a great bargaining chip during the marriage negotiations.

### The Surin

**The Scene:** Phuket's perfectly-formed Pansea Beach, fronted by the emerald-hued Andaman Sea and verdant coconut groves. Having been completely renovated in 2011 by celebrated architect Ed Tuttle, The Surin offers private wedding as well as wedding party packages.

**The Elements:** Choose from Thai or western-style wedding ceremonies, which will be held on the resort's patch of perfectly-pristine beach. There will be abundant displays of exotic flowers, including orchids and lotus blossoms, as well as complimentary four hours' photography service, in-room honeymoon decoration for the wedding suite, spa treatments and a personalised souvenir for the couple and breakfast in bed the morning after the wedding.

**Highlight:** The flying lantern ceremony – iconic of many Thai celebrations – truly an experience to cherish! 🏮



# Time To Sparkle

Immerse yourself in a world of opulent luxury with these amazing timepieces and gorgeous baubles.



## Classic Beauty

Timeless with a slight retro touch, the new *Ladymatic* model from **Omega** represents the perfect harmony between state-of-the-industry movements and exquisite materials. Stunning features on this captivating timepiece include 11 diamond-set indices complemented by an intriguing 'supernova' design on the dial. The timepiece is powered by a Co-Axial calibre 2500 hidden within the 35mm case – which is available in an impressive selection of materials including 18K red or yellow gold, stainless steel or a lustrous combination of both.



## Cuff Couture

Dare to be bold by unleashing your inner Wonder Woman with these latest arm accessories from **Louis Vuitton**'s new Cruise 2015 collection. Crafted from metal with an artisanal touch, each of these sculptural cuffs feature unique details that will certainly stun any onlooker who dares to get in your way.



## Luna Time

First introduced to mark the 35th anniversary of the iconic model designed by Henri d'Origny, the new *Arceau Petite Lune* features asymmetrical lugs resembling a stirrup motif, which has become synonymous with the house of **Hermès**. Powering this classy timepiece is the H1837 manufacture movement hidden within a 38mm steel case. Hours and minutes are displayed on a shimmering mother-of-pearl dial enhanced by two complications: a moon phase and a date indication. Available with or without diamonds, other additional personalisation options include interchangeable straps, available in a wide range of colours.



## Taking Flight

Meticulously crafted by the oldest jewelry house in the world, these bedazzling accessories are a re-interpretation of **Garrard**'s iconic Wings 10th Anniversary collection. Designed to evoke the graceful movements of wings taking flight, each of the intricately sculpted pieces is enhanced by dazzling splashes of colour. Available in white and rose gold, the collection is limited to only 250 pieces.

# THE BLUE BEYOND

LOOK THE PART AS YOU REJUVENATE - MIND, BODY  
AND SOUL - AT THE OASIS OF TRANQUILITY THAT IS  
THE SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI.

Photography **Ian Wong @ Home Studio** Photography Assistant **Faris Jamaluddin** Styling **Calvin Cheong**  
Hair & Makeup **Kenny Yee** Model **Dasha @ Attitude Models**

CALM  
WATERS  
Long sleeve see-through  
top, Kenzo.



**LADY COOL**  
Funnel neck leather jacket  
and matching mini skirt,  
McQ Alexander McQueen.

Asymmetrical jacket and  
pencil skirt, Khoon Hooi.





## SPA WARRIOR

Knitted cardigan,  
M Missoni, sunglasses,  
Kenzo.

—  
Chevon print jacket, Kenzo.





## AQUATIC LIFE

Leather biker jacket and  
matching pants, McQ  
Alexander McQueen.

Satin biker jacket  
and pencil skirt with  
embellishment,  
Khoon Hooi.





WATER  
NYMPH  
Ostrich feather jacket,  
netting dress  
Khoon Hooi.  
—  
Net top, Khoon Hooi.



# Colourful Wonders

Experience all the colours of the world with these high fashion trends.



## Boho Beauty

Synonymous with elegant eveningwear and classic designs, these flirty and fun frocks from **Valentino** were inspired by feminine women with a thirst for adventure. Top picks from this sensational collection include high-waist dresses in dazzling motifs and hypnotising patterns. Pair them with high heels or comfy flats and you're good to go!



## Perfect Curves

Renowned for its craftsmanship and feminine design, the latest from Italian women's footwear specialist **Sergio Rossi** highlights the elegant silhouette of the female foot. Flats and heels feature sinuous lines and bold colour combinations, while matching clutches help to add just the right amount of pizzazz to any outfit. Together, they will definitely give you a spring in your step while strutting around downtown.



## Artsy Beachwear

Take beachwear to the next level with the latest designs from the house of **M Missoni**. The designs were inspired by the phantasmagoric works of the famous Mexican painter, Frida Kahlo de Rivera. Featuring ethno-graphic details in vibrant shades, these funky designs will definitely make a splash at the beach!



## Say It With Print

Bright scarves are like the missing link between the end of winter and beginning of spring. Help your wardrobe make that transition by incorporating these latest designs from **McQ Alexander McQueen**. Made from lightweight material, these will be perfect for extra warmth or as an accessory during that next big tropical vacation.

# A Charming Lunch

Filled with nostalgia and the elegance of a bygone era, the Sunday Tiffin Curry Lunch at the Colonial Cafe of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is the perfect way to spend a Sunday get-together with the family.

Text **Ong Chin Huat** Photography **Yong Keen Keong**



While the British have their traditional Sunday Roast, consisting of roast beef, mashed potatoes, boiled veggies and Yorkshire pudding, and the Americans have their backyard barbecue with ribs, burgers, corn on the cob and hot dogs, what speciality do Malaysians offer the entire family for Sunday lunch? Why, the Sunday Curry Tiffin, of course, and where better to experience this delightful and comforting fare than in the nostalgic and elegant Colonial Cafe of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

With a light and airy feel, warm colour scheme and colonial-inspired décor, the Colonial Cafe is a gem in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. Upon entering it, you are transported back to the grandeur and laid-back charm of a bygone era. Divided into two equal sections and separated by The Bar, the cafe boasts cosy banquettes, rattan-backed chairs and crisply starched white table linen, which look inviting enough to persuade the most world-weary traveller or jaded gourmand to hang up his hat and take a breather by trying out some of the restaurant's signature colonial dishes, the Sunday Curry Tiffin being one of its highlights.

If the weather isn't too warm, sit under the sky light and catch the rays of the mid-day sun while you feast on the dishes, making sure you also order a tall, cool beer to quench your thirst. If you arrive early, The Bar is the place to head for. Sit on one of the stools under the gold-leafed domed ceiling and order the *Tanqueray Blue*, *Malayan Colada* or *Straits Sling*, often rumoured to be the precursor to the *Singapore Sling* and specially created by Johnnie the barman. Ask him how The Bar's signature cocktail, *Code 55 and 2 Bulat*, came about and you might be surprised by how this beer, lemonade, gin and whiskey concoction got its name.

*Finish your Sunday Tiffin Curry Lunch at The Majestic Kuala Lumpur's Colonial Cafe with a nice glass of masala tea.*

We visited the Colonial Cafe recently and were escorted to our table in the centre, the perfect vantage point for people-



“The Colonial Cafe boasts cosy banquettes, rattan-backed chairs and crisply starched white table linen, which look inviting enough to tempt even the most world-weary traveller.”



You can look forward to a variety of spicy dishes in your Sunday Curry Tiffin Lunch as well as a refreshing Sago Gula Melaka to sweetly end your meal.

watching. The dulcet tones of Isabella Soliano filled the restaurant with upbeat jazz classics, creating a light-hearted and toe-tapping mood. Soon, the friendly staff showed us the cafe's eclectic menu. Comprising mainly colonial-era inspired dishes such as Mulligatawny (spiced peppery broth with Indian spices and lentils), Hainanese Chicken Chop and Traditional Hainanese Boiled Beef, the menu also has perennial favourites such as Lobster Thermidor, Chateaubriand and Bread and Butter Pudding.

We were here, however, to try the Sunday Curry Tiffin Lunch and that was what we ordered. Once the order was taken, each of our plates was lined with banana leaf. An assortment of chutneys and condiments were placed around the leaf after some steamed rice was offered. An explosion of colours, textures and aromas accompanied this appetite-inducing ritual as no Sunday Curry Tiffin is complete without these mouth-watering appetite-whetters. Mango chutney, pineapple slices, fish *puttu*, salted eggs, toasted coconut, toasted salted peanuts, marinated cucumbers and banana crisps provided a visual fare and are only a precursor of more tempting dishes to come.

A choice of salted *lassi* or *masala* tea is offered and I ordered the former, its cool and thirst-quenching creamy flavour providing an antidote to the mid-day sun. Soon after, the main dishes arrived. They came in a brass and porcelain tiffin carrier – circular bowls stacked one on top of the other and secured by a brass stand. Consisting of five dishes – Hainanese Chicken Curry, Mutton Varuval, Egg Masala, Fried Masala Fish and Crispy Bitter Gourd – this balanced selection went well with the assortment of condiments: the sweetness of the chutney harmonising with the spices in the chicken curry, the tartness of the pineapple slices balancing the thick and pungent mutton, the coolness of the marinated cucumber complementing the fiery fried fish and the crunchy saltiness of the toasted peanuts bringing out

the piquant Egg Masala. The crispy bitter gourd proved to be a hit and a second serving was requested. All in all, the food was an explosion of different flavours and tastes for the palate, something which will definitely awaken any taste buds that have been dulled or deadened by bland and unimaginative fare.

Dessert came in the form of Sago Gula Melaka, presented in a cocktail glass and a refreshingly sweet contrast to the savoury dishes earlier. With a cup of warm *masala* tea to end the meal, we left the Colonial Cafe happy and satiated. ■

*The Sunday Curry Tiffin Lunch is priced at RM78++ per person and served every Sunday from noon to 2.30pm at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Colonial Cafe. For more information and reservations, please call +60 3 2785 8000 or visit [www.majestickl.com](http://www.majestickl.com)*



### HISTORY OF SUNDAY CURRY TIFFIN IN MALAYSIA

With the advent of colonisation and the British Empire expanding its imperial powers globally, it was inevitable that the customs and cultures of the countries they colonised would find their way into British life. Food, being very much a part of any country's culture, was probably one of the first noticeable influences that was adopted by the British colonial elite posted to the Far East.

When the East India Company spread its reach to Asia in the 18th century and, later, when India came under British rule, curry became omnipresent in the British diet and was a favourite dish among British merchants and army officers. Soon, this spicy gravy became a highlight of any colonial menu and was referred to as 'Indian Tiffin' in the subcontinent or the 'Sunday Tiffin' in Borneo, Malaya and Singapore.

The word 'tiffin' originated from British India and is probably a derivative of the obsolete English slang 'tiffing', meaning to take a light drink or sip. The word emerged when Indian custom superseded the British practice of an afternoon tea, leading to a new word for the afternoon meal. Indeed, the British in India referred to tiffin as a light lunch and the Sunday Tiffin was a relaxed and languorous affair.

Comprising several dishes such as chicken, beef, mutton, prawn, fish and vegetable curry as well as several side dishes called *sambals*, which could number as many as 20, the Sunday Curry Tiffin is undoubtedly not for the

minimalist. The side dishes are usually prawn crackers, eggs, peanuts, cucumber marinated in coconut milk, sliced onion, desiccated coconut, sliced banana, diced tomatoes, raisins and mango chutney, among others.

Served mainly on the balconies or verandas in the homes of the British elites, the Sunday Curry Tiffin was also served in many restaurants, clubs and hotels the British frequented. With the arrival of the Chinese from the Hainan province of China, many who took up employment as cooks and chefs in the private homes of the expatriate community, the Sunday Curry Tiffin served in Malaya and Singapore took on its own twists and tastes, with these Hainanese chefs adding their own ingredients and re-interpreting the Curry Tiffin.

Often served in imported English crockery with beer as the standard drink of choice, the Sunday Curry Tiffin has earned its place in the culinary history of Malaya and Singapore, not just as a traditional Sunday feast but also as one of the longest meals of the week, which is looked forward to by all who indulge in it.



“Beloved, we join hands here to pray for gin. An aridity defiles us. Our innards thirst for the juice of juniper. . .”  
 - from *Infants of the Spring* by Wallace Thurman



The Bar at The Mansion in The Majestic Malacca is one of the few places to serve rare Tanqueray Malacca Gin, where it is used to mix up cocktails like Gin Berry and Spiced Straits.



The Bar at The Mansion is one of the few watering holes in the world that serves rare Tanqueray *Malacca Gin*. For a taste of this cult-status tippie, visit The Majestic Malacca today to try three uniquely Malaccan cocktails that feature its namesake gin.

**GIN BERRY**

1 lychee, fresh or canned • 15ml lychee liqueur  
 15ml Crème de Cassis • 30ml Tanqueray *Malacca Gin*

**TANQUETINI**

15ml Cointreau • 30ml Martini *Bianco* • Splash of Angostura bitters • 30ml Tanqueray *Malacca Gin*

**SPICED STRAITS**

2 slices ginger • 15ml hazelnut syrup  
 Fresh mint to garnish • Fresh apple juice  
 30ml Tanqueray *Malacca Gin*

# Gin Up!

For a true taste of Malaysia’s most historical state, saunter over to The Bar at The Mansion for a hat-trick of delicious tipples, all made with mythical *Malacca Gin*.

Few drinks are as evocative as gin. Perhaps it’s the unique flavour of the juniper berries or the head-spinning bouquet of botanicals that transform mere drink to liquid poetry but for the world’s many gin-lovers, no other drink would do. Although simple in essence – even its name is a basic derivative of the word “juniper” in several languages, including *jenever* (Dutch), *ginepro* (Italian) and *genièvre* (French) – its potency is not to be sniffed at. Writers have long raved about gin’s qualities, with some claiming a gin cocktail done right has the ability to transform boys to men and Joe Bloggs to James Bond.

Essentially, a neutral grain spirit, gin has the ability to morph into a cornucopia of delights. It is a must, however, to begin with good-quality gin. Of course, imbibing neat gin is an acceptable pleasure but, given its aromatic composite of berries and botanicals, which may range from bitter orange peel, anise and angelica root to elderflower, hibiscus, nutmeg and saffron, in the right hands (ie a talented mixologist), gin can turn into the nectar of the gods.

Of the several famous gin-producing names, Tanqueray is always a good bet. With several iterations to offer, many gin-lovers still hold a candle to its *Malacca Gin* – a sweeter botanical blend that is currently sought-out by many gin-obsessed bartenders around the world. First introduced in 1997 as a “wetter alternative” to its London Dry, Tanqueray’s *Malacca Gin* has a distinctively sweeter, fruitier palate. Although discontinued, Tanqueray has released limited edition cases of this well-loved gin a couple of times because of overwhelming response from bartenders.

If you’re looking to knock back a classic martini or to just enjoy it with tonic water and lemon, a classic London dry gin might suit your needs better. But, if you’re feeling slightly adventurous and willing to let the friendly face behind the bar take you places without leaving the perch of your stool, take a trip with *Malacca Gin*. Oh, the places you’ll go. 🍸

# Taste of Time

Heritage food finds a new home in Malaysia's historical city of Malacca.

Hailed as Malaysia's de facto historical capital and designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2008, Malacca now offers foodie travellers yet another reason to visit the unassuming yet thoroughly charming city. Recently opened at The Shore Shopping Gallery is the latest outpost of the phenomenally successful Lot 10 Hutong, a veritable gourmet village offering the best of Malaysian hawker heritage cuisine under one roof.

Having debuted in Kuala Lumpur in 2009, the Lot 10 Hutong concept has since taken the "eaterati" by storm, going on to open a second sprawling outlet in Guangzhou, China, in 2013. The opening of Lot 10 Hutong @ The Shore marks its third outlet as well as a fitting way to celebrate five years of delighting foodies around the world.

"Malacca is an awesome place," Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh, Managing Director of YTL Corporation and the visionary behind the Lot 10 Hutong concept, points out. "A lot of people love Malacca and there's a reason for that – its history dates back hundreds of years and the Malacca government has done well not to let its past be forgotten."



*Lot 10 Hutong's latest outpost in the historical town of Malacca features the best of Malaysia's hawker heritage under one roof.*



"Comfort food is, historically, very important for the soul. In Malaysia, it is part of the soul of the Chinese and we will never forget our heritage."



A mutual desire to build on Malacca's reputation as a heritage city, while expanding its attractions for visitors has led the YTL Group to team up with Kerjaya Prospek, which owns The Shore Shopping Gallery, to launch Lot 10 Hutong, giving residents and tourists the chance to enjoy authentic Malaysian comfort food amidst a wonderful lifestyle ambience. "I am delighted and honoured to have Hutong come on board," says Datuk Tee Eng Ho of Kerjaya Prospek. "With its track record of serving only the best, time-tested original and authentic Malaysian food, we are confident this will uplift the identity of The Shore."



"Comfort food is, historically, very important for the soul," says Yeoh. "In Malaysia, it is part of the soul of the Chinese and we will never forget this part of our heritage. Our forefathers worked very hard and all they had to look forward to, at the end of a back-breaking day, was a simple but satisfying meal; something to fill their stomachs so they could live to work and fight another day. What Hutong represents is a great Malaysian story – a story of good food, hard work and preservation!"



Located at Level 2 of The Shore, the Lot 10 Hutong gourmet heritage village features a variety of stalls, each offering a delicious take on Malaysian hawker fare from noodles to pastries and soups. "We will also ensure the best of Malaccan food is present to complement Hutong," says Yeoh.

The Shore is one of Malacca's most vibrant malls, which also houses Melaka Oceanarium, the world's longest aquarium of its kind. With numerous retail outlets and all the pleasures Malacca has to offer at its doorstep, The Shore and Lot 10 Hutong make it exceedingly easy for the most focused foodies to work up an appetite (and, indeed, walk off some calories) in between meals. ■



# Bernie Takes A Break

Emcee, model and actress **Bernie Chan** visits the tranquil Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali for a few days of sun, sea and spa treatments.

Photography **Sam T**

One of Malaysia's most well-known faces, emcee, model and actress Bernie Chan has been gracing magazine covers and runways for a while now, appearing on countless glossies as well as in TV commercials, theatre production in Kuala Lumpur well as Singapore, and in television programmes in Australia and Germany. Together with her brother Henry, they fought, cried and entertained viewers in the third season of the reality show, *The Amazing Race Asia*. She says her love for travelling started when she began modeling all those years ago and realised how much she loves new sights, sounds and food. Here, she shares excerpts from the diary of her stay at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali.

## Day 1

My flight touched down at Denpasar's Ngurah Rai International Airport in the afternoon, and we were greeted by staff from the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali. We were then ushered into a waiting van for the long drive north. The ride came equipped with bottled water and snacks – a nice touch – and, as it is quite a long

“Les Waterfall is perfect for a morning trek and few things beat jumping into the ice-cold waters if you've been huffing and puffing to get here.”

drive, the driver will thoughtfully ask which route you'd prefer – the coastal road or through the heart of Bali, via Ubud. I love Ubud and its verdant surroundings, so I plumped for the inland route. Luck wasn't on my side, though, as it began to rain heavily, obliterating the view for most parts of the journey.

For those who don't like long car rides or hilly terrain, the journey could prove a little gruelling, so it is a good idea to pack along some *assam boi* (preserved salted plums) to nibble on or even some essential oils to keep spirits up. The Ubud route is scenic, bypassing beautiful nurseries selling intricate stone carvings for the garden as well as emerald green padi fields and the ubiquitous temples. But the rain also brought mist and, this time around, we really couldn't see much at all. It was early evening when we finally drove past a long bamboo-lined driveway to arrive at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali.

Upon arrival at the resort, I was immediately seated and treated to a much-appreciated foot bath and scrub, using black volcanic sand from the beach – the resort's signature welcome ritual. I'd seen black sand years ago when I was in Tahiti for a modelling assignment. It brought back lovely memories. I was also given a much-needed neck and shoulder massage, which immediately did the trick, removing all the stiffness from the travelling that day, not to mention helping to put me in a spa frame of mind. I immediately checked into my suite and changed into something loose and comfortable as, first up on my itinerary, was a visit to the spa!

To get to the spa, you walk past lovely gardens and it is all very nature-oriented and peaceful. Every spa treatment, for

example, uses the bounty of the garden; from bright and beautiful blossoms for a ritual flower bath to ylang-ylang flowers, with their cute curly ends, for tonic drinks. My experience began with the *Segara Giri*, which means 'ocean' and 'mountain' in Balinese, a respectful nod to the resort's location in-between the Bali Sea and the island's mother mountain, Gunung Agung. Here, my feet and lower legs were steamed in a purpose-built pit filled with hot volcanic black sand, which the locals believe is a way of purifying oneself from negative energy, as the feet act as a conduit between one's energy and that of the earth itself. An attendant popped in shortly to hand me *es bola* (ice balls doused in palm syrup) to suck on. Spa life here is certainly indulgent!

My masseuse, Luh Muli, then led me to a treatment room where, for one glorious hour, I was kneaded, pressed and rubbed to near-heaven. Her touch was excellent – intuitive yet firm and the perfect antidote to rattled nerves and stressful city living. The treatment ended with a warm *jamu* (herbal) drink of turmeric, tamarind juice and palm sugar – delicious and the perfect post-treatment treat! The sweetness didn't end there. When I returned to my suite, I found the staff – all lovely Tembok locals – had run a flower bath for me, using a variety of flowers, each with different uplifting qualities. After a short rest, I strolled down to the Wantilan Restaurant for dinner and enjoyed a simple supper of pumpkin soup, the catch of the day and a particularly delicious chocolate fondant. The set menu changes daily, so it is nice knowing each meal offers new surprises, much like returning to one's suite nightly to find little presents – a poem, a few sweets – left by the staff here.



## Day 2

My day started early with an exploratory walk on the rocky, pebbly beach. I chose some beautiful specimens as souvenirs and marvelled at the beach's beautiful dark sand. I kept thinking how strange and wonderful it was to see a truly beautiful black sand beach after almost 20 years. I even waded into the water but didn't go too far as the waves were rough. After filling my lungs with fresh, salty sea air, I headed back to the resort for a healthy breakfast. At 10am, it was time for another spa treatment – this time, the *Penganten Melukat*, part of a bride-to-be's grooming ritual. Although no wedding bells are ringing for me anytime soon, I still had fun being pampered from head to toe!

A traditional *boreh* paste of galangal, rice, ginger and clove was first smeared all over me. After a minute or two, you'd feel the effects of the herbs gently heating up on your skin, and it is a really nice feeling. As the skin tingles and the body warms up, your therapist then uses fresh milk to rub it all off. All you need is a light rinse to realise how good your skin feels after this treatment. But the sybaritic pleasure didn't end there as a long, soothing massage brought the experience to a suitable close.

After downing my *jamu* tonic as well as a few iced strawberries, I went over to the lovely infinity pool to read. I liked that you could hide within the billowing curtains of an outdoor pavilion or simply find a seat in the sun. After lunch, Chef Martin Büchele, who looks after all the resort's F&B, took me to visit a local cashew nut factory, just a short drive away. It felt unnerving to leave the sanctuary of the resort, but it was also exciting to explore and observe all the noise and colour of the outside world. A celebration had just ended at a nearby temple and I loved seeing the women, beautiful in their colourful lace *kebaya* and bright sashes, milling about or riding side-saddle on motorcycles heading home. We also had to drive through the village to get to the factory and it is amazing how clean and neat everything

is. The Balinese take great pride in their homes and surroundings, so it was very much a visual treat for me. The path then goes off-road for a bit before you come to the factory. Set up by Aaron Fishman, a young American who first came to Bali as a volunteer and then found his heart belonged to the mystical island, the factory initially opened in October 2012 to help provide employment for the local women.

The entire surrounding area is covered with thousands of cashew nut trees and is a positively thriving business. Not limited to just women, the factory has since grown to be a source of livelihood for the entire community, with the men roped in to see to the harvesting, while the women take over once the haul reaches the factory. I learnt it is quite a tedious process preparing cashew nuts as the raw fruit is toxic and needs to undergo a thorough cleansing and preparation process – drying, which may take up to five days, steaming, hulling and, finally, roasting – before it is safe for consumption. I peeped into the storerooms and was greeted by the sight of thousands upon thousands of gunny sacks filled with the delicious nuts! I was also shown around the premises and saw that the factory was indeed a blessing for the community.

A daycare centre, complete with teachers, sits on-site, ensuring the younger children, from one to six years of age, are taught and cared for while their mums work. There is also a play area, a chicken run and soon-to-be-ready rabbit hutch. I can imagine what a relief it must be for the women to be able to work, supplementing their families' incomes, knowing their kids are nearby and well looked-after. I later learnt that, just 7km away, up in the hills, lay villages that still had no access to running water or electricity.

So, it was heartening, yet sobering, for me – a city girl through and through – to see the impact the factory has on the lives of villagers here. Chef Martin took the opportunity to collect his supply of organic vegetables, all purchased from the local



farmers, before we headed back to the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali.

Before dinner, I decided to try out a session of Hatha Yoga, which was conducted in a lovely, wall-less pavilion where we enjoyed our practice to the music of crickets and cicadas. I hadn't practised in a while so it was a great feeling being able to stretch and sweat for a bit. I'd wanted to indulge in a spot of star-gazing (a popular pastime here) before calling it a night, but heavy cloud cover ensured I got to bed early.

## Day 3

I'd initially planned to visit the famous Ponjok Batu temple to undergo a purification ritual but, instead, found my way to Les Waterfall nearby. It is a beautiful walk up to the falls – hardly a hike and which can be easily done with flip-flops. It is an incredibly picturesque part of the island and gives visitors – particularly jaded city-slickers – an up-close look at real village life. I also judge a town by the way their animals are treated and, here, I observed how friendly and happy the animals seemed to be. Cats and dogs lazed about together and were clearly not threatened at all by human life, content to sun themselves and watch the wind blow!

"Every spa treatment uses the bounty of the garden; from bright and beautiful blossoms for a ritual flower bath to ylang-ylang flowers..."



Les Waterfall is perfect for a morning trek and few things beat jumping into the ice-cold waters if you've been huffing and puffing to get here. There were a few village girls enjoying an invigorating swim and I immediately realised how surreal life seemed that instant. There I was, living in luxury in my spa resort suite yet was given access also to all these basic, earthy pleasures. I feasted my eyes on the beautiful bamboo forests all around me and took stock of the clove, rubber, cashew and fruit trees all around. How rich life seemed here! It made me realise you don't need all that much to be happy.

The afternoon was spent at Taman Gili, the resort's name for the pavilion around which most handicraft activities are centred. The activity of the afternoon was candle-making and I enjoyed the opportunity to chat with the friendly resort staff, this time, to Mustika, a trainee masseuse who also doubles-up teaching arts and crafts whenever she is free. Under her guidance, I managed to make a candle, using just beeswax paraffin and moulds, which resembled a camellia. Candle-making proved surprisingly easy and fun, and it felt good being able to create something with my own hands; an increasingly-rare pleasure in this fast-paced, digital world. What I also enjoy about staying at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is that it celebrates the simple – yet meaningful and enriching – things in life.

My entire day so far had been immersed in waterfalls and traditional crafts. The resort also provides guests with a full calendar of activities throughout their stay. So, if you're not content to while away the days by the poolside, there's so much to occupy your time and attention – from yoga to cooking classes, candle-making and more. It is nice to know you can easily reconnect with what's important here.

The spa beckoned again after a healthy lunch, this time, a three-point massage and a flower scrub. I was getting used to this routine by now. After close to two hours of being massaged and bathed with



fragrant frangipani and ylang-ylang, it was time to pick up a few healthy cooking tips – simple skills I could bring home to ensure all the spa goodness didn't evaporate the minute my plane touched down in Kuala Lumpur! Chef Martin is incredibly observant and immediately pointed out a scar on my arm – “An oven burn!” – the result of my attempt at baking the family's signature Eurasian pie over Christmas.

So, despite knowing I could cook, I wasn't asked into the kitchen. Instead, we focused on easy, no-cooking-required recipes like making fresh cashew nut milk and raw vegan ice-cream. I'm not a big fan of dairy, although I do like cheese and cakes, and I normally take oat or rice milk anyway. So, learning how to make cashew nut milk proved most useful. I also thought the vegan ice-cream, made with locally-grown vanilla pods, tasted amazing – high praise indeed for someone who's nowhere near vegan!

The resort also contains the essence of locavorism at its best. Everything, from the spa to the kitchen, uses locally sourced produce, many coming from its very gardens. I also enjoyed being shown another example of how healthy food could indeed prove most delicious;



#### BERNIE'S TEMBOK TIPS

- Forget about doing any work here! Wi-Fi is available but only in the lobby and reception area.
- There's no television (which is great) so bring the book you've been meaning to catch up on.
- Life is gentle here so speak softly and learn to listen more to the land and the life which surrounds you.
- Make the most of the resort's complimentary activities, tempting though the pool may be. It is a precious chance to experience authentic Balinese life and culture.



and that there's always a better way to eat and live. I then cheekily suggested serving the ice-cream as dessert of the day to the guests that night. All I could hear from Chef Martin was nervous laughter!

My last evening in Tembok was spent cruising in a *jukung*. Resembling a catamaran, I was a little nervous at first as I'd never been in one but, once my life jacket was on, I was 'king' of the sea! It is a strange vessel – very narrow – and even my long legs were dangling off the floor. The sea was choppy and the sky overcast, so we didn't get the majestic sunset we'd hoped for. I asked how deep the sea was here and, as the boatman told us it was well over 100m, my knees suddenly felt weak. Just as I wanted to head back to land, he shouted to us to look ahead and, there, we spotted the fins and tails of a small pod of dolphins.

We felt chuffed as they are rare to spot during the monsoon. I also learnt whales can sometimes be seen during the right season and I couldn't help but feel blessed enough to have seen dolphins on my very last day.

I also tried my hand at playing the *rindik* – a traditional bamboo instrument – before dinner that evening, enjoying its calming, almost hypnotic, music. Here

in Tembok, I found myself falling into a deep sleep every night, from as early as 10pm – something that would never have happened back in Kuala Lumpur. I'd been suffering from a nagging body ache prior to my Bali trip but, here, it went away easily, with no fuss. I'd also been eating healthy, enjoyed rejuvenating spa treatments and restorative tonics and juices with every meal and, generally, doing things that were good for both body and soul. I slept well and deeply and I just... breathed.

#### Day 4

With the long journey home imminent, I decided to go for a brisk walk on the beach. I walked for about 2km, not far at all, but given the beach's rocky terrain, it was a good distance. I saw the fishermen coming in already and I made the most of my time, soaking up all the sights and sounds of this special part of Bali, where sun, jungle, sea and mountain all came together beautifully. It was a special experience for me, discovering this new corner of an island I've always loved. I'd experienced so many facets of Balinese holidays, from surfing trips to the vibe of Seminyak and even homestays. But, this was different – calming, peaceful, restful and a place to really detox from all the stress of a fast-paced life. It was a retreat, I am sure, my mind, body and soul truly appreciated. ■

# Envious Beauty

Uplift your spirits with these latest must-have scents and skincare products.

## Bright Eyes

Renowned for its unique and luxurious skin formulas, the latest *Illuminating Eye Gel* from **La Mer** offers the perfect solution for tired eyes. Packed with the brand's *Miracle Broth*, the secret ingredient of which is mineralised algae, it helps to both revive dull eyes while protecting the sensitive skin around the eye area from premature aging.



## A Fine Romance

Introducing *Love Edition*, an enticing box of wonders produced by the creative mind of designer **Terry de Gunzburg**. Fun and irresistible, this set includes the latest *Reve Opulent Eau de Parfum*, which features an exquisite blend of gardenia and jasmine mixed with subtle hints of rose, orange blossom, ylang-ylang and Sri Lankan cinnamon. Pair it with the *Terrybly Fuchsia* lipstick included within and you're sure to turn heads wherever you go!



## Divine Waters

Renowned for its scented candles, **Diptyque** certainly made a big splash last year following the reveal of its first *L'Art du Soin* skincare range. One of the highlights from the five-piece collection is the *Infused Facial Water for the Face*. This refreshing Damask rose hydrolate with nasturtium extract is infused with a blend of up to nine traditional plants and flowers to help restore the skin's natural radiance.



## Ocean Breeze

*Millésime Imperial* is a heady scent inspired by memories of exotic citrus groves and a lush flowery landscape beside the Sicilian seaside. First launched in 1994 to celebrate **Creed's** 140th anniversary as supplier to the Imperial Courts of Europe, each 'Antique Gold' glass bottle contains a sublime scent with hints of wood, musk and marine notes.



# In The Footsteps of Isabella Lucy Bird

Embark on an epic spa journey with The Majestic Spa by Spa Village's *Malaya Golden Chersonese* experience, inspired by intrepid author and explorer Isabella Lucy Bird's travels around the Malay Peninsula in the 1800s.

Text **Diana Khoo**

It's not often that the gateway to a journey inspired by a fearless woman explorer begins amidst elegant architecture and with a refreshing glass of Pimm's-spiked lemonade; but those who have enjoyed The Majestic Spa's *Malaya Golden Chersonese* spa experience can attest that adventures of a softer kind may be had.

One of the spa's signature experiences, the *Malaya Golden Chersonese*, designed for both couples as well as individuals, celebrates the epic journey of Isabella Lucy Bird. Born in 1831 in North Yorkshire, England, Bird, the eldest daughter of a clergyman, was born frail and sickly. One day, when her doctor suggested that a sea voyage might do her some good,

the intrepid Bird, armed with GBP100 in her pocket, took the first step into an adventure that she would replicate time and time again over the course of her life.

Beginning with America, Bird travelled her way through most parts of the world – an incredible feat considering she was a single white woman as well as the conventions of the day. Not only did Bird see the world, all the while battling health issues, she also made a career for herself as a writer, publishing books based on her journeys and adventures, many of which were hugely successful.

One of her most famous, however, was the chronicles of her time spent in British Malaya, which went on to be published under the title *The Golden Chersonese*, the ancient name used by Greek geographer Ptolemy in reference to the Malay Peninsula.

It is in her honour that The Majestic Spa by Spa Village offers a thoroughly pampering 2.5-hour spa ritual called *Malaya Golden Chersonese*. To be enjoyed alone or with a special someone, this inviting experience begins, as all The Majestic Spa's treatments do, with a welcome drink of lemonade, fortified with a shot of fruity Pimm's, or a non-alcoholic alternative of ginger ale and ginger beer.

You are invited to relax in the salon which, architectural enthusiasts might recognise as a discreet homage to the great Charles Rennie Mackintosh's famous Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow. As you slowly but surely feel the stresses of city life fade away, which you undoubtedly will after lounging amidst the serene surroundings, it is time to don a waffle-weave robe to follow Bird's footsteps, albeit from a decidedly sybaritic stance.

Every treatment at The Majestic Spa begins with a pre-spa ritual. And here, taking into account The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's colonial past, it is done

with a Victorian twist. After changing, your therapist will lead you upstairs to a secluded lounge, where she will first bathe and scrub your feet with warm, lavender-scented water and lavender buds, to be followed by a scalp massage using rosemary hair tonic. This not only works to stimulate circulation and to refresh the scalp, but it also serves to get you into the right (and relaxed) frame of mind with which to begin the spa journey.

Once done, your ever gracious therapist will put your slippers on for you before leading you to the treatment room, where the first part of your *Malaya Golden Chersonese* adventure begins with a series of deep, relaxing breathing exercises before being rewarded with a neck and shoulder massage.

My therapist, Shaidatul, possessed extremely intuitive fingers, knowing exactly where the kinks and knots were hidden. She then applied blended fresh banana, coconut cream and honey as a cooling, fragrant hair masque, all the while with the faint melody of traditional gamelan music playing in the background. As the masque is left to set, you are then slathered with a mixture of papaya, grated coconut and coconut milk, which is then left to work its magic as you drift away in a bliss-induced haze. After about 20 minutes, Shaidatul returned to slough everything off, leaving the skin feeling soft and incredibly smooth.

A quick rinse in the shower precedes a languorous soak in a traditional Victorian clawfoot bath. It might seem incongruous to take a hot bath in a tropical climate but, I can assure you, it is delightful. It felt like all the cares of the world are melting away as you slowly sink into the warm, lime-scented waters.

The highlight of any spa treatment for me is a good massage and, here, Shaidatul did not disappoint. Initially beginning with long flowing strokes, which she administered with the use of her elbows and forearms,



# Flight of The Bird

A quick look at the life and times of Isabella Lucy Bird.



1831

Isabella Bird was born on 15 October at Boroughbridge Hall, North Yorkshire, the eldest daughter of a clergyman, the same year Victor Hugo publishes *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, and Charles Darwin sails off on the *HMS Beagle* on an epic voyage.

1854

At the age of 23, Bird embarks on a journey to America as Charles Dickens begins work on *Hard Times*.

1856

Bird's American journey proved to be such a success that she was inspired to publish a book of her experiences, titled *An Englishwoman in America*. Meanwhile, in Dublin, the great dramatist George Bernard Shaw is born.

1872

Despite poor health, Bird embarks on yet another adventure – this time to Australia and Hawaii, where she climbed an active volcano. Back in America, Yellowstone National Park is established, making it the world's first national park.

1873

Bird revisits America and explores the Rocky Mountains as well as successfully climb Long's Peak. Across the pond, in the French town of Yonne, a girl named Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette is born. She would go on to be one of France's best-loved and most enigmatic novelists, producing works like the *Claudine* series as well as the celebrated *Gigi*.

1880

Bird's restless feet take her onwards to Japan, Indonesia and the Middle East, which resulted in yet another title – *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*. Back home, William Ewart Gladstone becomes Prime Minister for the second time, beating out Benjamin Disraeli in the British general elections.

1883

The publication of one her most famous books, *The Golden Chersonese*, details much of her travels and personal sketches around old Malaya, including the then-British colony of Singapore as well as the jungles of the Malay Peninsula, further bolstering her reputation as an intrepid explorer as well as paving the way for Bird to become the Royal Geographical Society's first woman fellow. In the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, the volcano Krakatoa erupts – one of the most violent and ferocious recorded in history.

1904

Isabella Bird passes away in Edinburgh, Scotland, at the age of 73. Still a time of great discoveries, Egyptologist Ernesto Schiaparelli discovers the tomb of the legendary Nefertari which, today, remains one of the largest and most spectacular in the Valley of the Queens.

## 4 STEPS TO BLISS

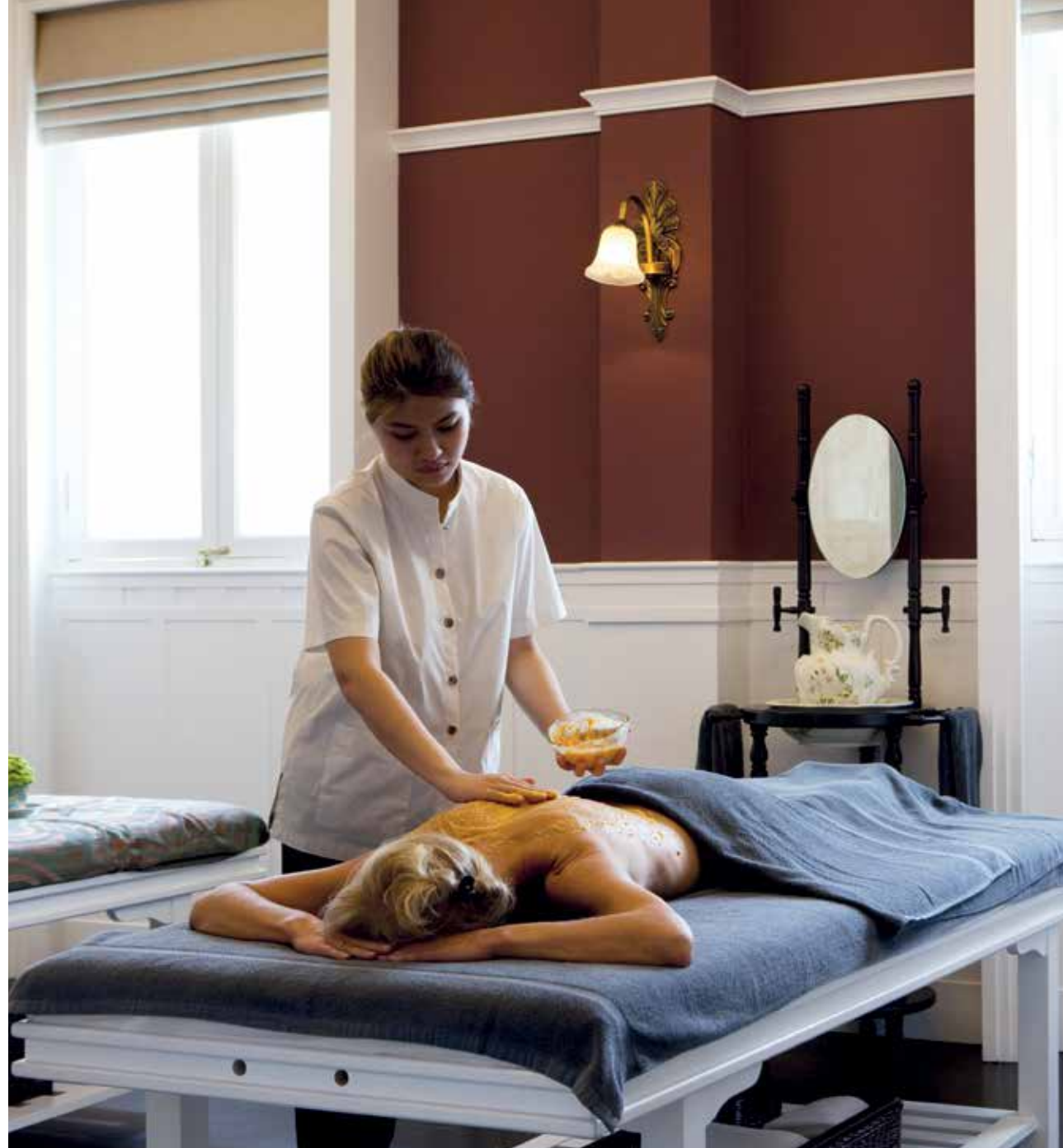
The *Malaya Golden Chersonese* experience

### For Her:

Banana Coconut Hair Masque  
Papaya Coconut Scrub  
Lime Blossom Bath  
Bunga Rampai Massage

### For Him:

Banana Honey Hair Masque  
Malaya Herbs Scrub  
Herbal Steam  
East Indian Spice Massage



it segued into expert fingerwork, applied consciously around key problem areas like the shoulders and neck. As you dip in and out of consciousness, you barely notice the passage of time until you are gently awoken and invited to slip on your robe once again, before being led to the changing room, out of the treatment area and, alas, back into reality.

Thankfully, The Majestic Spa allows for a gentle re-introduction back into the real world, aided – in a most civilised manner and in a way Bird would surely have approved of – by hot cups of soothing chamomile and biscuits.

As we said before, it's not often someone as fearless and adventurous as a 19th-century woman explorer is linked to the pleasurable world of spa traditions and treatments. But The Majestic Spa's *Malaya Golden Chersonese* offers modern-day personages the chance to re-imagine Bird's Malayan experiences – albeit through rose-tinted glasses and, might we add, scented with lavender and essential oils. ■



# SNOW'S HAPPENING HERE

Niseko's wintry White Season has to be experienced to be believed. With the ski season going on well until March before it melts into the vibrant hues that heralds the Green Season encompassing Spring, Summer and early Autumn, it truly is a year-round destination.

**Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh**, Managing Director of YTL Corporation, shares his personal favourites about this all-season wonderland.



## Taste Of Japan

If you want to sample the best Japan has to offer in cuisine, I'd advise you to head to the **Hilton Niseko Village**, where its restaurant **Ren** offers a triumvirate of outlets in one location. **Pirka** is great for teppanyaki, **Rera** serves up the freshest sushi and **Sisam** focuses on Japanese dishes using seasonal produce. All are excellent.

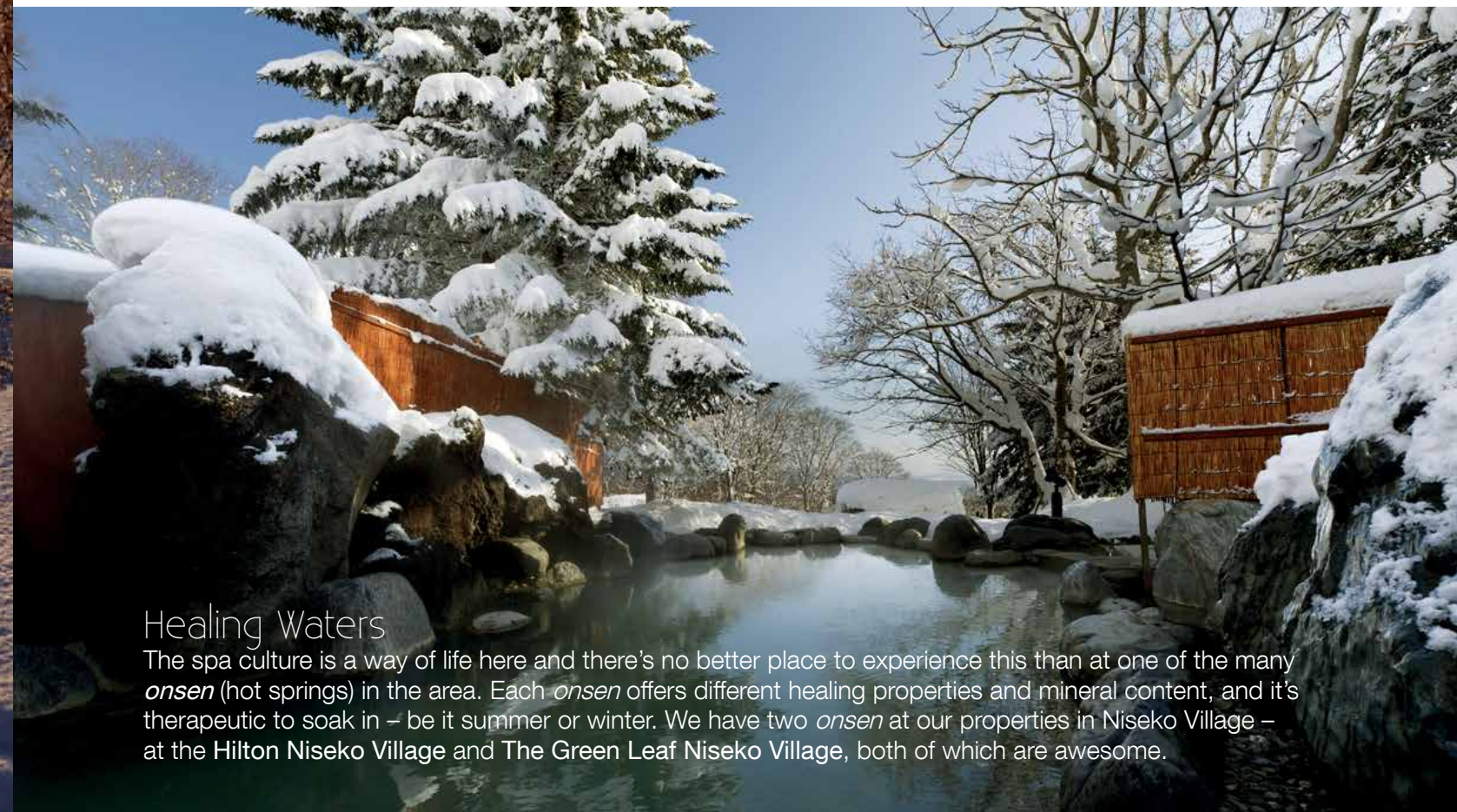
## White Nights... And Days

I think one of the greatest wonders of God's creation is snow. It is such a gentle marvel and it reminds me of beauty and purity, and of how a great sweep of it suddenly brightens and cleans up the mess of the year. It is such a wonder to see and I marvel at how each and every snowflake is different. It is truly a reminder of God's greatness.



## Coffee Break

Our new **Village Patisserie**, located in the heart of Niseko Village, is a favourite time-out spot of mine. Reminiscent of a springtime garden within a winter wonderland, the Patisserie is open year-round and is the place to sample delicious pastries, Japanese cakes and warming drinks. My recommendation? The caramel latte. Simply terrific. If you are here during the year-end, enjoy it with *panettone*, the perfect Christmas bite.



## Healing Waters

The spa culture is a way of life here and there's no better place to experience this than at one of the many *onsen* (hot springs) in the area. Each *onsen* offers different healing properties and mineral content, and it's therapeutic to soak in – be it summer or winter. We have two *onsen* at our properties in Niseko Village – at the **Hilton Niseko Village** and **The Green Leaf Niseko Village**, both of which are awesome.

## A Shot Of Scotch

You might have read how Japanese whiskies recently came out tops, beating even the best Scottish names. If your schedule permits, make it a point to visit one. Nikka, one of Japan's top names in whisky, has a distillery in Yoichi, a short drive from Niseko, with an interesting story to tell. It was set up in 1934 by Masataka Taketsuru, widely acknowledged as the founding father of Japanese whisky, together with his Scottish wife, Rita Cowan. At Yoichi, it's an opportunity to sample their entire liquid portfolio.



## Pistes Of Pleasure

Niseko Village is wonderful for all levels of skiers. Beginners would benefit from our world-class ski school and friendly slopes. But if you are already an experienced skier, I tell you nothing beats the pleasure of skiing off-piste on fresh powder snow. I have just gone for a session and it was as if I were heli-skiing. The snow was second to none and the experience was most exhilarating. The off-piste runs around here are safe but still challenging. You must, however, always make sure to go with a guide.



## Seafood Diet

I love sashimi and Yang Shu Ten, also within our new F&B and retail village, serves awesome food. The cold sea off Hokkaido offers a mind-boggling array of seafood and you can't come to Niseko Village without eating here. I know the restaurant owner, Yasuo Takahashi, personally. He's an old friend who had decided to retire to Hokkaido. I always enjoy going to his place. I think the name of his restaurant says it all. Yang Shu means 'fisherman' in the local Ainu language while Ten, in Japanese, alludes to the best.

*From superb skiing to delectable cuisine, Niseko Village is a holidaymaker's dream.*



**Feeling Crabby**  
 I don't know about you but, after a day on the slopes, few things beat tucking into a seafood barbecue feast at the Crab Shack. I love eating here, seeing my fresh seafood grilled right before me on the table. You can do it yourself or have the chefs prepare it for you, seasoned with their special sauces like *shoyu* and *mirin*. The variety is astounding – from amazing abalone to gigantic king crab. This is the real deal.



**A Yen For Yakitori**

Just a short drive away from Niseko Village in the town of Kutchan is Torimatsu, one of the best places to indulge in *yakitori* (grilled chicken). It's part *izakaya* (casual places for after-work drinking), part *yakitori* restaurant, and is a top favourite with locals and visitors alike. Even the famous food personality, Anthony Bourdain, has found his way to Torimatsu! This is a must-go place.

**Hit The Sticks**

If there's ski, there's got to be après-ski. And Two Sticks, also at the new village, has it all. Good music, a great space within which to chill out and some spice – literally. We have a chef there who's a pro at preparing all the best South-East Asian dishes, from *laksa* to chicken rice and even Hokkien fried noodles.



What's ski life without après-ski? Indulge and unwind at Niseko Village's Two Sticks.



Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh is the Managing Director of YTL Corporation.