

# YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

## Estate of Grace

Cocooned in Luxury  
at the Muse Pangkor  
Laut Estates

## Time Travel

Exploring Kuala Lumpur's  
Historical Mile

## Festival Island

Bali's Galungan &  
Kuningan Celebrations

Winter Recipes . Spa Village Shaoxing . The Art of Afternoon Tea

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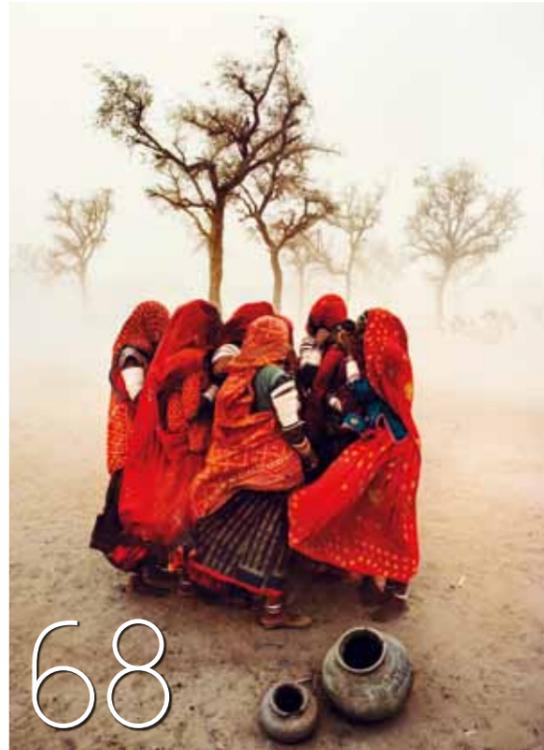
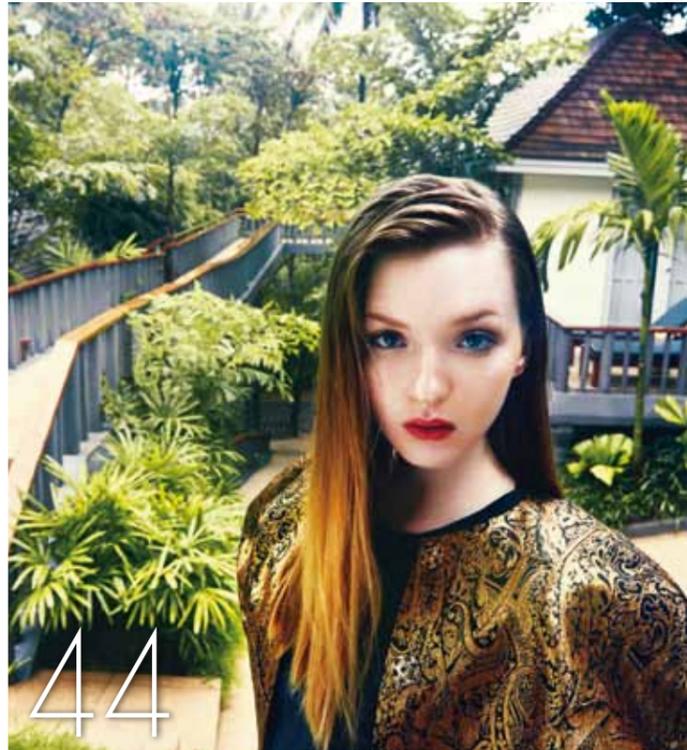
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# Contents



## Life Events

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

## Life Bites

14 Hot happenings at YTL Hotels.

## Life on the Cover

16 With just eight luxuriously appointed residences, the MUSE Pangkor Laut Estates is the embodiment of life's finest and most inspiring.

## Life Feature

24 The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur sits in close proximity to some of Kuala Lumpur's most historically and architecturally significant sites.

32 Browse and shop in Cameron Highlands' many farm-fresh specialties at the weekly night market in Brinchang.

36 The twin festivals of Galungan and Kuningan are the most extravagant and melodramatic of Bali's religious ceremonies.

58 Celebrated author Wendy Hutton talks about *Natural Wonders*, a newly released coffee table book that celebrates the best of nature focused around YTL Hotels' collection of Asian resorts.

64 French actress Anne Parillaud shares her thoughts on her first visit to Malaysia with *YTL Life*.

68 One of the great photographers of the 20th century, Steve McCurry discusses the inspirations behind his métier.

## Beautiful Life

42 Add an extra spring to your step by looking – and smelling – your best.

44 Stand out in spectacular style amidst the clean lines and sleek architecture of The Surin, located on Phuket's perfect Pansea Beach.

## Life of Luxury

56 Banish the shadows with these gorgeous accessories that will brighten any occasion.



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### Spa Life

**76** Rejuvenate your mind, body and soul this November at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's special Karmic Yoga Retreat, conducted by world-renowned life coach, healer and spiritual consultant, Diana Manilova.

**78** Rich in history, legend and culture, one of Zhejiang Province's oldest cities is also home to a most modern destination spa – Spa Village Shaoxing.

### Life Cuisine

**84** At The Smoke House in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, bartender John Yap plays a happy guide to the delights of cocktails.

**88** There is nothing as soothingly civilised as the ritual of taking afternoon tea.

**94** The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's elegant Colonial Café offers fancy gourmet meals that won't break the bank.

**96** Akira Saito, Executive Chef of The Green Leaf Hotel & Spa in Niseko in Japan, a YTL Hotel, shares with us four of his favourite dishes, ideal for staying warm during the forthcoming cold season.

### Life Guide

**100** There's nowhere quite like Borneo for a paradise-like setting of jungle, mountain

and sea all together. Jeff Mong, the General Manager who opened Gaya Island Resort, shares his passion for island life.

### Portfolio Of Life

**105** Explore the world of YTL Hotels.

### My Life

**120** In America and across the world, the songs of crooner Tony Bennett has thrilled and soothed spirits across an astounding seven decades. Making his first-ever concert appearance in Kuala Lumpur recently, he talks to *YTL Life* about life on the road, painting and leaving his heart in San Francisco.



Mount Kinabalu appears mystically behind the parting clouds.  
And once again, you remind yourself that you're not dreaming.  
Your moment awaits.

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THE  
GREEN *gb* LEAF

Niseko Village

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## PERFECT POWDER SKI HAVEN

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

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**YTL HOTELS**  
Treasured Places, Treasured Moments

# A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



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

As we enter the winter season, I am pleased to be able to share an exciting new chapter happening soon for our two properties in Japan – the Hilton Niseko Village and The Green Leaf Hotel, both in the charming Niseko Village, Hokkaido. Those who've been there during the white season can attest to its inimitably fine powder-like snow – a magnet for ski and snowboard enthusiasts from around the world! A popular destination during winter, we at YTL Hotels are constantly striving to up the experience ante for our guests. Sometime in the future, we will unveil a new Village Core for Niseko, which will represent the first kick-off in what we want to achieve here. The Niseko name itself carries so much value among discerning travellers and this new core will include plenty of new food and beverage, and shopping options, giving our guests a whole new dimension of enjoyment and experiences. If you haven't yet been, this coming white season represents the best opportunity to come and experience Niseko's incomparable snow for yourself. It really has to be seen and felt to be believed.

Next spring, we will proudly unveil the Gainsborough Bath Spa in the United Kingdom to the world. Located in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage City, this looks set to be the new jewel in our collection of majestic, historical properties. If you've ever wanted to experience the healing waters just as the Celts and Romans did two thousand years ago, this will be your chance.

We are also extremely honoured and gratified that our two newest properties have made it to *Condé Nast Traveler's* Hot List of the world's best new hotels and spas for 2013. Gaya Island Resort and The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur were evaluated for style, location, service, comfort, value and chic, and both passed with flying colours.

Do take the time to explore the rest of our hotels and properties. If privacy, exclusivity and luxury are essential elements to your holiday, take a leaf out of our cover story this issue and discover the delights of staying at MUSE Pangkor Laut, a collection of private estates offering an experience which surpasses five star. However you like to holiday, we certainly have the resort for you. Enjoy the issue and God bless.



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# Hawker Hit

Malaysia's celebrated hawker cuisine is now available in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou after the recent opening of a branch of the famous **Lot 10 Hutong**. Located at the **Tsai Lan City of Fusion Foods** in Guangzhou's Fuli Yingxin building, a special launch event was held to mark the occasion with a host of big names, including Hollywood star **Michelle Yeoh**, shoe designer **Jimmy Choo** and celebrity chef **Martin Yan**, in attendance. The dining concept is the brainchild of **Tan Sri Dato' Francis Yeoh**, Managing Director of YTL Corporation. "This represents a full circle in the historical and cultural ties between the communities in China and Malaysia," he said. "From my grandfather to myself, we were brought up on these comfort foods. And these stall owners, now into their third and fifth generations, fed millions of struggling Chinese in Nanyang for decades with this simple but delicious fare. These foods represent, to me, the Chinese culture of fortitude and perseverance." Over a dozen renowned hawkers from Malaysia, including Kim Lian Kee Hokkien Mee, Imbi Road Original Pork Noodle, Soong Kee Beef Noodles, Hon Kee Porridge and Campbell Mini Popiah, have all set up in Tsai Lan City of Fusion Foods, while YTL plans to open more outlets around China before venturing further into Tokyo, Paris and London.



1. Some of Malaysia's most famous street food spreads its wings to Guangzhou.
2. Food critic and television personality Chua Lam.
3. Renowned chef Martin Yan demonstrates how to be a wok star.
4. Tan Sri Michelle Yeoh, Joseph Yeoh, Chui Ling, Dato' Jimmy Choo and Tan Sri Francis Yeoh sampling some of the delicious Malaysian hawker fare now available in Guangzhou.
5. Tan Sri Francis Yeoh of YTL Corporation gives his opening address.
6. Martin Yan, Dato' Jimmy Choo, Dato' Sri Dr Ng Yen Yen and Qin Jianhong.
7. Hollywood star Michelle Yeoh makes her entrance.
8. Chui Ling and Morrison Ni.
9. Oriental Dessert offers Chinese patrons a taste of Malaysia.
10. Dato' Jimmy Choo cooks up a storm.

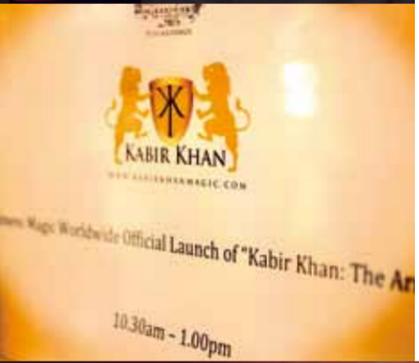




# Magical Life

It was the first psychic entertainment show at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, and master magician and mind-reader Kabir Khan, who is known as Malaysia's very own David Copperfield, provided a spellbinding and entertaining show. The performance, entitled *Kabir Khan: The Arrival*, featured a series of mind-reading predictions. Guests were astonished by Kabir's ability when his drawing of a pentagram matched that made secretly by Mohd Nazifuddin Najib, son of the Prime Minister of Malaysia. The evening was made even more memorable when Kabir was bestowed with two awards by The Malaysian Book of Records, as the first Malaysian magician to perform in both Hollywood and in London, and becoming one of the few certified magicians in the world.

1. Richard Hoy, Krishna Shanmugam and Evita Devandara.
2. Mohd Nazifuddin Najib showed the sealed letter containing his drawing for Kabir Khan to guess.
3. Dato' Wong Yew Kai, Kabir Khan and Mohd Nazifuddin Najib.
4. Dato' Ringo Kaw, Datuk Danny Ooi and Nelson Chew.
5. Datin MY Low and Karen-Michaela Tan.
6. Tim Chan, Aily Yap and Dato' Clement Tan.
7. Ramesh Kana and Ailla Aziz.
8. Dato' Ho Hak Kiew and Tan Sri Lim Ewe Jin.



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- Scalp Massage
- Served with Ginger Tea & Refreshment

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**PRICE: RM390**



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- Bath with your choice
- Excellent Donna Massage
- Scalp Massage
- Served with Ginger Tea & Refreshment

Usual Price: RM580

**PRICE: RM390**



## SCRUB PACKAGE (2hours)

- Scrub with your choice
- Excellent Donna Massage
- Scalp Massage
- Served with Ginger Tea & Refreshment

Usual Price: RM550

**PRICE: RM390**



## NECK & SHOULDER MASSAGE

- 40 minutes RM150 nett

## FOOT MASSAGE

- 40 minutes RM120 nett
- 60 minutes RM150 nett

## MANICURE

- 45 minutes RM90 nett

## PEDICURE

- 45 minutes RM90 nett



\* **Best Exotic Spa Experience Award**  
(Harpers Bazaar 2012)

\* **Best Massage in Kuala Lumpur**  
(Time out Magazine 2010)

\* **Things to do in Kuala Lumpur**  
(Lonely Planet)



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



01

# 01

## Turtle Sanctuary

Gaya Island Resort officially opens its **Gaya Island Resort Marine Center** this October. Located within Sabah's Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, it aims to take a more proactive role in conservation, advocating the following themes of turtle rescue, coral reef restoration and raising awareness for sustainable seafood choices. Turtle rescue is a cause particularly close to Gaya Island Resort's heart as too many of the oceans' turtles suffer as a result of pollution, encounters with humans and development. Gaya Island Resort's Marine Center is the first of its kind in Malaysia and will also offer turtle education and adoption programs.



02

# 02

## Say Salud!

The great wines of Spain will be celebrated in style in October as **The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur** previews wines from Viticultores del Priorat, a highly-rated winery in the Tarragona Hills owned by the Freixenet group, for nine days, in line with the Spanish National Day celebrations happening that same month. Executive chef Yoann Bernard will be joined by two visiting chefs from the Andalusian province of Malaga to create a special dinner menu to be paired alongside three specially chosen Priorat wines. Served buffet-style, the *tapas* dinner is priced at RM180++ per person and is available from 1 to 9 October 2013.



03

# 03

## Taste Of Malaysia

If you're visiting Kuala Lumpur and want to sample all of its justifiably famous street food under one roof, there's no better place to head to than the **Lot 10 Hutong**, located in the heart of the city. Billed as the country's first 'gourmet heritage village', sample favourites like fish head noodles, fried *Hokkien mee* and fragrant oyster omelette, all served up *à la minute* by local masters of the wok. The Hutong culinary concept has also taken its first step to global domination with the opening of the first of many Hutong food courts, beginning with its first in Guangzhou, China at the **Tsai Lan City of Fusion Foods**.



04



05

# 04

## Yuletide Cheer

YTL Hotels' much-awaited annual Christmas Tree Lighting takes place at the **Cameron Highlands Resort** from 22 to 24 November 2013. Escape from the tropical heat by retreating to this colonial-influenced hill station and enjoy the cool, misty climate in style at the resort, with its dreamy four-poster beds, award-winning spa and semi *al fresco* Japanese restaurant – the perfect venue in which to enjoy steamy meals of *shabu-shabu*. Begin your advent countdown as the resort takes on a twinkling, celebratory feel this year-end. A special sumptuous Christmas menu, which will be featured at the resort's main dining room, will also be unveiled during this time.

# 05

## In Spa-Radise

Designed to nourish while combating dryness as well as balancing the winds of change, China's **Spa Village Hangzhou** offers a special 180-minute Autumn Bliss Package that includes a sweet soak in chrysanthemum blossoms and honey water to restore and soften dry skin and fatigued muscles, followed by a nourishing wrap and a warm walnut oil massage, which features deep rhythmic massage, incorporating healing and therapeutic elements of acupressure, deep kneading and soothing long strokes. Linger awhile in the spa's luxurious relaxation room with fruit, warming green bean soup and hot lemon water before making your way back into the real world.



06

# 06

## Bath Time

Start planning your Easter holidays in the picturesque, historical city of Bath, England, as YTL Hotels prepares to open the doors of **The Gainsborough Bath Spa**, the only natural thermal spa within a hotel in the UK, in the spring of 2014. Fans of Jane Austen would recognise Bath from two of her celebrated six published novels – *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* – while international travellers know the city as a thriving spa town with much to see, do and experience in the area. Once you're done exploring the region, retreat to The Gainsborough to soak up the warm, rich mineral waters at the in-house spa, the same way the Celts and Romans rejuvenated themselves 2,000 years ago. ■

For more information on YTL Hotels' events and promotions, go to [www.ytlhotels.com](http://www.ytlhotels.com)

# Island Inspiration

With just eight luxuriously appointed residences, bespoke tropical paradises that are designed to be in complete harmony with nature, the MUSE Pangkor Laut Estates is the embodiment of life's finest and most inspiring.

Text **Vivian Chong** Photography **Yong Keen Keong**

The Little Princess skimmed the waves while we sipped iced juices and nibbled on finger sandwiches. We had set sail about 10 minutes ago from Marina Island, a less than two-year-old facility built on reclaimed land in Lumut, where YTL Hotels has its waiting lounge and sales office. Most guests arrive here first, on the mainland, before being ferried to the private island of Pangkor Laut. Helicopter transfer is also available, from Subang Skypark or the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, via the YTL-owned and operated Island Air.

On speed boat, it's a quick 15-minute ride each way but we took a more leisurely pace. The Little Princess is one of three regally-named luxurious yachts that are reserved for the exclusive use of guests staying at MUSE Pangkor Laut Estates, a collection of eight intimate retreats set over the hilltops and beachfront on the northern end of the island and a few minutes' uphill drive from Pangkor Laut Resort.

*Choose your own private patch of tropical heaven at MUSE Pangkor Laut Estate.*





“The estates were, after all, designed to be in harmony with and make the most of the natural surrounds.”

*Clockwise, from top left: Guest arrive on the island in one of three luxurious yachts reserved for the exclusive use of MUSE guests; the entrance to Estate Five; each of the estates blend a mix of local design and British Colonial detailing.*

the bottom of sun-dappled waters framed by sandstone walls, while a Jacuzzi bubbles away on one side. Towering above and enveloping the Estates are thick tropical trees, part of the lush biodiversity that is the two million-year-old rainforests covering about 80 percent of the 300-acre island.

Recline on the poolside deck chairs and look up: flitting among the trees or perched on the top branches, their prominent casques, claw-like bills and long tails make for distinctive silhouettes that are easily identified, even from far. The Oriental pied hornbills, and there's a healthy population of them here, usually make their presence felt in the mornings and evenings. If you can't see them, you would hear them: part-squawking, part-screeching that's not altogether pleasant but here, amidst such natural settings, sounds right.



The estates were, after all, designed to be in harmony with and make the most of the natural surrounds. Landscaping details such as flagged stone walkways, wooden bridges, rock steps, and lily and *koi* ponds complement the tropical lushness. To protect the sanctity of the environment, the existing ponds, trees and even boulders dictated the layout and placement of the villas. In doing so, each estate became a unique sanctuary that boasts inimitable appeal.

Estates One, Two and Four sit on the fine sand beach of Marina Bay that is closed

Originally named Marina Bay when it opened in 1998 and, later, The Estates at Pangkor Laut, it is now a part of the MUSE brand of bespoke properties that are conceived to inspire and evoke the senses while celebrating the finest things in life. Befittingly, MUSE has hosted many prolific guests, including former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and speed king Michael Schumacher, while Hollywood actress Joan Collins famously honeymooned here with her fifth husband Percy Gibson.

Each of the eight estates – a ninth, the Yeoh family's private getaway, is not open to guests – is made up of several villas and pavilions that house the bedrooms, and dining and living areas. Built in the vernacular architecture styles of the Malay Archipelago, they showcase a mix of local elements and British colonial detailing.

In essence, all the estates share similar features, from the generously spaced bedrooms to free-form infinity pools that look out towards the Straits of Malacca. Dark blue tiles shimmer at

off to other guests. The latter features a stunning living pavilion that sits above the sea waters, while Estate Two is highlighted by a natural freshwater pond. Estate Five is the most private, sealed off at the eastern tip of the crescent-shaped hilltop, where it affords 270° panoramas of the rainforest and the sea. Estate Six's large open areas are bathed in abundant sunlight that reflects off the lap pool and outdoor hot spa.

The largest, Estate Seven, is also the hilliest and its villas are staggered on varying altitudes in accordance with its surrounding knolls. Luxuriant greens shade much of Estate Eight, giving it a fairytale-like aura, while Estate nine is home to a geological wonder: a 200 million-year-old natural rock garden that's part of a 3,500km chain stretching from Yunnan, China, to the Belitung Islands in Indonesia.

Choosing one to be your home for a minimum stay of three nights is certainly no easy task but, whichever Estate you choose, you are promised an intimate experience enveloped in the height of luxury, with a butler, chef and driver at your convenience around the clock.

Your butler will see to your every need, from food and drink to making reservations and arranging transfers to Pangkor Laut Resort's facilities, all of which are available to guests of MUSE. A pampering session at the award-winning Spa Village, with its menu of Asian healing traditions and therapies, is not to be missed, nor is the sunset cruise on board a traditional Chinese junk. In between savouring canapés and wine, enjoy 360° views of the island while the captain regales you with tales about the resort and its famous visitors.

At your Estate, the chef tailors every meal to your preference. With advance notice, your choices are practically limitless as MUSE's versatile chefs, who come from various parts of the world and are based at the resort's food and beverage outlets, cover a wide culinary repertoire between them.



*Above: Complement your stay at the MUSE with Asian-inspired treatments at Pangkor Laut Resort's award-winning Spa Village.*

*Right: Sailing into the sunset is a pleasurable activity to indulge in while on the island.*



*Clockwise from right: Each Estate boasts its own unique design; find your inspiration while holidaying here; MUSE's chefs are versatile and talented, capable of whipping up whatever strikes your fancy; fancy a decadent chocolate mousse for dessert? Consider it done.*



On our first night, at Estate Five, chef Edward Chung whipped up his signature seven-course '1 Malaysia' dinner comprising Chinese, Malay and Thai dishes, which included the day's catches, straight off the trawlers from nearby Pangkor Island. The next night, he switched to a Western menu of sea bass served in two different but equally delightful ways: grilled to a lovely crispness, and coated in a beer batter then deep-fried to crunchy perfection. The meal ended with a decadent chocolate mousse and a silky crème brûlée infused with Earl Grey that he attempted for the first time upon our request. For breakfast the next morning, we were satiated with a scrumptious prawn *sambal* to accompany fragrant, fluffy *nasi lemak* and the chef's specialty, a soufflé-like egg white omelette.



After such indulgences, it was pertinent that we spent much of our stay working off the consumed calories – while, paradoxically, working up an appetite for more – with laps around the pool. In between, we slipped into the hot spa adjacent to second bedroom and soaked in views of the sea beyond the verdant trees that surround the estate. More active options include tennis and a well-equipped fitness centre, both at the resort side of the island, and jungle walks guided by the resort's resident naturalist.

Indeed, as guests of MUSE Pangkor Laut Estates, you will revel in fine culinary offerings, and be waited on hand and foot while luxuriating in the serenity of the island. Complete relaxation and enjoyment are not only possible, they're inevitable. MUSE is, after all, so named to reflect the qualities of the nine original muses who were considered the goddesses of inspiration. You could well find yours after a stay here. ■



identity and make themselves at home. One of the many things they did to cater for their leisure was to create botanical gardens in Penang, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. This horticultural undertaking would later lead to the introduction of the rubber tree that would become one of the financial backbones of the colony.

In 1888, a planter, Alfred Venning, who came to Malaya after working in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), persuaded Frank Swettenham, the Resident of Selangor, to agree to his garden plan. Over the next 10 years, Venning and his team, which included many local botanical buffs, turned 100 hectares of ancient tropical forests in Kuala Lumpur into what is now the Perdana Botanical Gardens or Lake Gardens. The basic early footprint of the park, with its natural contours and manmade lake, and the many meandering scenic walks and trails are still

# In Good Company

A landmark in itself, The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur sits in close proximity to some of the capital city's most historically and architecturally significant sites. **Victor Chin** makes a survey of Kuala Lumpur's built heritage along its famous historical mile.

The Majestic Hotel, a landmark piece of architectural heritage built in 1932 in Kuala Lumpur, is surrounded by five other distinctive buildings and a park that reflect the history and culture of Malaya and, later, Malaysia. This unique square mile allows visitors an opportunity to see and experience the characteristic architectural legacy inherited by the city's inhabitants from the colonial times in the 1880s to the present day.

By the time the British moved into Kuala Lumpur in the 19th century, they were at the height of the Victorian Empire. Although they were here explicitly to extract as much local resources as they could, they also wanted to exert their





“These dome-shaped pavilions are supported by slender columns, with round, multi-foil arches on an octagonal base with a decorated balustrade.”

Their architects in India were cheerfully incorporating existing British-European elements with traditional Indian aesthetics that were influenced by the Mughals, Persians and Turks. This new British ‘Raj’ architectural style resulted in such distinct buildings as the Mysore Palace, the Madras High Court, the Chennai Egmore Station and many others throughout the Indian subcontinent.

In Malaya, at that time, the Public Works Department (PWD) was in charge of civic constructions, and among its staff were British architects like CE Spooner, AC Norman, RAJ Bidwell and AB Hubback, all of whom had worked in India. They transferred their experiences here and, consequently, a number of ‘exotic and elaborate’ civic buildings can be found in Kuala Lumpur, the grandest of which is the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station, built in 1911, and the Railway Administration Building, built in 1917, both designed by Hubback, who had already worked on some of Kuala Lumpur’s iconic buildings, including the magnificent Old City Hall (1904) and the Jamek Mosque (1909).

By 1911, Malaya was on its way to become one of the world’s major suppliers of tin and rubber, and the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station was imperative in the transport of these commodities to Port Klang and, later, linking up the whole country. The main façades of the station and administration building face each other, from either side of Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin, and this has created one of the finest architecturally resonant



*Kuala Lumpur’s historical heart beats proudly with a number of beautiful heritage buildings, including the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station and its headquarters.*



in place. Although there are many new additions to the park over the last 100 years, the original landscaping still retains its informal, artful gardening charm of the Victorian English garden.

Lake Gardens, today, is a popular public green lung that offers essential release for city folk and visitors. One can spend the whole day exploring the different parts of the park – the orchid & hibiscus section, the Deer Park, Bird Park, Butterfly Park, herb garden and lotus ponds. On the other hand, you can just bring along a picnic basket to your favourite spot and simply enjoy the tranquil surroundings.

Besides gardens, the British were keen to display their prominence through public structures on a grand scale.



settings in the city's landscape. The distinctive elevation of the station's HQ and its grey and formal look, suggests the serious work going on behind its walls; on the opposite side, however, the fanciful and undulating frontage of the station, gives the impression of a place that is informal, fun and busy with movement of goods and people.

The administration building's domes with pinnacles sit close to the roof line, while those on top of the station are elegantly transformed into *chhatris*. These dome-shaped pavilions are supported by slender columns, with round, multi-foil arches on an octagonal base with a decorated balustrade. The rest of the details on the two façades display Hubback's masterful handling of the different forms of arches – ogee, drop, round multi-foil and horseshoe – and their permutations and variations into the rows of colonnaded veranda-way, making these buildings and this site, perhaps, his crowning achievement as an architect in Malaya.



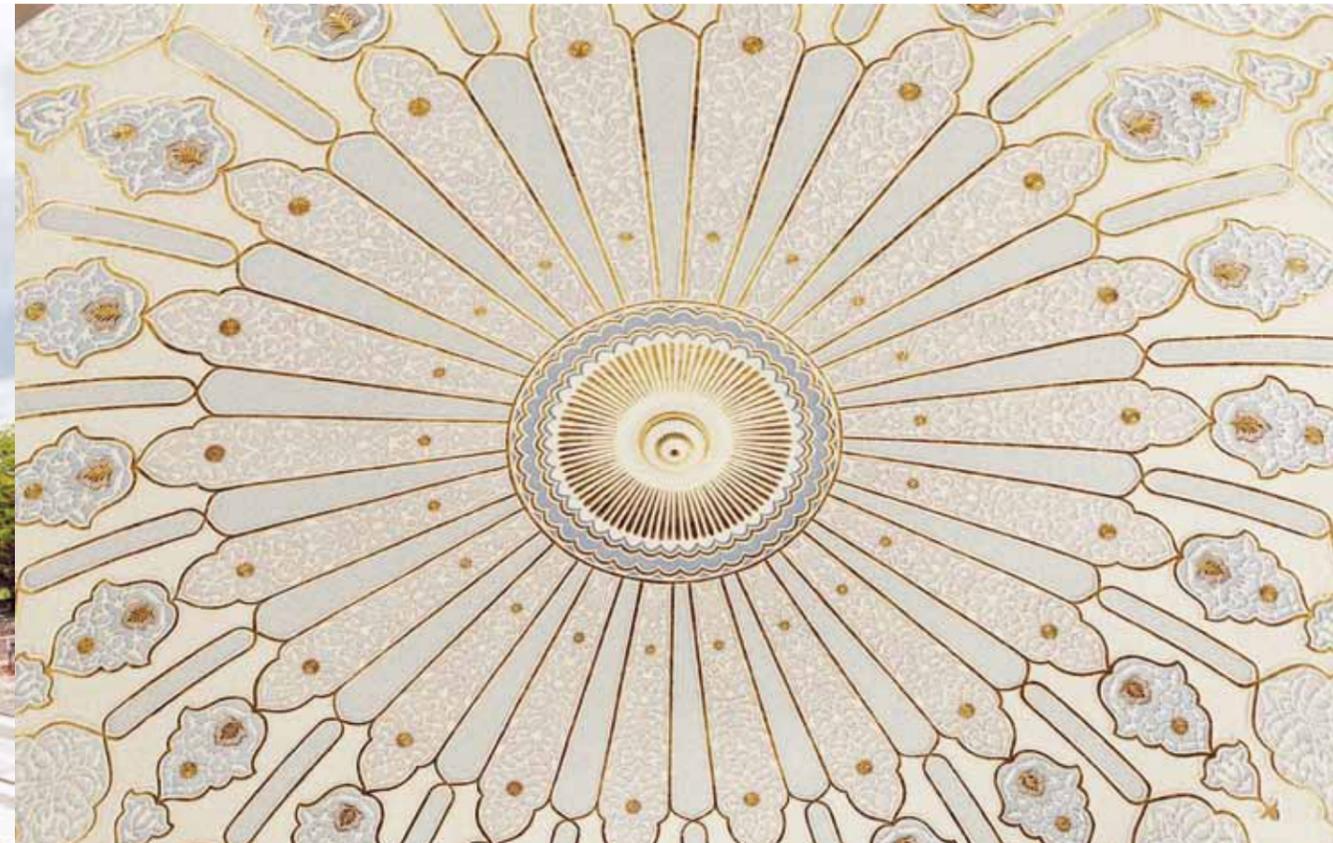
*Clockwise, from top left: The National Museum's architecture offers traces of Austronesian elements; the expansiveness of the National Mosque; Cheong Laitong's renowned mural adorns the façade of the National Museum; the National Mosque's unique umbrella-shaped dome.*

After independence in 1957, a new national pride sparked a series of building projects that projected the nascent country's own identity. Built in 1963, the National Museum was designed by Singaporean architect, Ho Kok Hoe, who was closely guided by nationalistic aspirations. As a result, the building looks like a massively enlarged vernacular architecture with roots in the Austronesian world. The elongated modern concrete building has pitched roofs on its wings and, in the middle, a double-pitched roof for the entrance and back. At a distance, it looks as if it is standing on stilts, emulating the charming wooden, thatched-roof traditional Malay houses.

The gable endings of the front and back and on the two wings are projecting gable horns, a distinctive feature of many traditional early structures in South-East Asian countries. These beautifully conceived roof endings are more than ornamentation; they also have auspicious cultural and religious significance for various communities. Another distinctive feature of the National Museum is the two colourful stylised mosaic murals, illustrating key historical events in the history of Malaya until independence, on either side of the front façade, the artwork of Cheong Laitong.

Another of Kuala Lumpur's new constructions was the National Mosque, to project the country's religious and cultural aspirations. It was completed in 1965 and designed by a team of PWD architects, including Howard Ashley, Hisham Albakri and Baharuddin Kassim. This modernist construction was a complete break from the inherited British Indo-Islamic architecture in the city. From the main entrance, one sees the front elevation as a flat horizontal façade, on slender stilts, that is both open and partly screened. The mosque's open planning, in which interior and exterior spaces flow unobstructedly around the grand prayer hall, may be the most congenial place for visitors to conjure up the sense of lightness

“The Islamic Arts Museum is a good example of the contemporary plural aesthetic that has subdued the purism of the white cube architectural style and happily accommodates both traditional building art and industrial glass, steel and concrete slabs.”



The Islamic Arts Museum is the most architecturally up-to-date construct in Kuala Lumpur's historical mile.

and openness associated with a religious environment.

Sandwiched between the veranda and the grand prayer hall are two long, rectangular reflective pools with turquoise colour tiles. This water element adds to the overall coolness and calmness of the place. In one of the pools sits a 245ft high square-shaped minaret, with an internal lift. This vertical structure, besides being used as a tower to call worshippers to prayer, also acts as a symbolic link to the divine and the afterlife. The main dome, over the central prayer hall, is a geometric open umbrella pleated roof form. The colour of this elegant roof was, previously, finished with gold-coloured mosaic but, after some recent renovation work, it is now two different shades of blue.

This blue hue of the National Mosque's roof line is echoed by the generally blue frame of the main entrance of the Islamic Arts Museum, built in 1998 and located across the road at the back of the mosque. This is the latest and, perhaps, the most architecturally up-to-date construct in this square mile. Designed by Roberto Monsani (famous for his cube system furniture) and supported by local architectural firm, Kumpulan Senireka Sdn Bhd, the building's overall geometric form looks like a blown up version of the Italian architect's interlocking cube storage furniture. Perhaps these interlocking white boxes are a perfect analogy for the function of this building, the biggest repository of Islamic art and cultural artifacts in South-East Asia.

In the main entrance, the first big opened box frame has a traditional Middle Eastern touch. The two front square columns and the three sides of the beam of the entrance are wrapped with floral and textural ornamentation made with colourful mosaic tiles. This painstaking work was done by a group of Iranian artisans, who also went on to decorate all the four highly ornamented domes at various levels and locations in the building.

The Islamic Arts Museum is a good example of the contemporary plural aesthetic that has subdued the purism of the white cube architectural style and happily accommodates both traditional building art and industrial glass, steel and concrete slabs. Looking through the many layers of glass walls and getting a view of the exquisitely ornamented ancient dome in turquoise, red, green, pink, white and gold, set against the blue tropical sky line is a moment to cherish – we do, after all, live in a colourful and plural world.

This majestic square mile, with its collection of architectural heritage and garden, contains within it important bits and pieces of political and cultural history from all over the world, making this city landscape an enjoyable and memorable experience, where visitors can also trace their own roots, regardless where they come from. ■



**THE MAJESTIC HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR**

Fully restored to its former glory, this elegant property which dates back to the 1930s, is an Art Deco monument that blends history with world-class hospitality. Dining options include Hainanese favourites at the Colonial Café or an interactive dining experience at Contango, while the rooms are a blend of contemporary style and Old World elegance.

# Market In The Clouds

Browse and shop in Cameron Highlands' many farm-fresh specialties at the weekly night market in Brinchang.

Text **Vivian Chong** Photography **Yong Keen Keong**

The *pasar malam* (night market) has long been a ubiquitous feature of Malaysian life, favoured for its wide variety of goods at reasonable prices and undeniably festive atmosphere. These open-air bazaars are typically crammed with makeshift stalls parked under large, colourful umbrellas, where vendors peddle myriad goods – freshly cooked food, farm-fresh produce, apparel, fashion accessories, sundries, kitchen tools, household essentials....the list is as endless as the number of stalls.

There is one in practically every neighbourhood across the country, usually held once a week and opened from early evenings till late. The crowds are always good, so a fair amount of elbow jostling is to be expected. Coupled with the heat from hot food stalls – woks bubbling with oil, frying pans sizzling on stove tops, pots filled with simmering liquids – a visit to any *pasar malam* is sure to make you work up a good sweat.

At the Brinchang night market in Cameron Highlands, however, a different atmosphere prevails. Set along both sides of the main road near the police station, it opens from around 3pm every Friday and Saturday, until late. Come early and you can see the stalls setting up, and take first pick of the farm-to-market produce. Head here after night falls, when the temperature dips further and the air is shrouded in a thin layer of mist, and you can enjoy a leisurely walkabout in crisp mountain air.

The usual *pasar malam* options are available but Brinchang's version is also a treasure trove of locally grown, harvested or produced delights – many of which are unique to Cameron Highlands, which is what makes it such a popular attraction. Here are some of the most interesting buys.

## Fresh Strawberries

With a mean annual temperature of around 18°C – and hardly rising above the mid 20s – Cameron Highlands' cool climate is ideal for growing strawberries. At Cameron Highlands Resort, fresh strawberries are served in buffet spreads, as conserve with scones and creams, and there's also the Fresh Strawberry Escapade top-to-toe treatment at the Spa Village. In the nearby strawberry farms, visitors are welcome to pick their own to take home or relax at the on-site cafés while tucking into strawberries in many forms. At the markets, fresh strawberries are among the top-selling items, going for about RM15 per kilogram.



## Berry Inspiration

The market vendors of Cameron Highlands are so proud of their strawberries that they don't stop at selling the fruit, but also countless merchandise inspired by the fleshy berry: plush toys in varying sizes and colour – red, pink and, for some reason, purple too – clothing, magnets, stationery, bags, keychains, bookmarks and even socks and gloves. Not that we'd recommend it, but it is possible to put together an entire outfit featuring or inspired by strawberries. Something to consider for Halloween, perhaps?

## Lofty Gems

Unlike regular sweet corn, the Cameron Highlands' variety looks like a mosaic puzzle of white, almost opaque, pale yellow- and cream-coloured kernels. Called pearl or honey corn, this local

*Clockwise from top: Juicy strawberries are a must-buy when visiting Cameron Highlands; natural sweet treats like honey sticks are also popular, particularly amongst children; pasar malam in Malaysia has an undeniably festive atmosphere.*



## Market Survey

*Other bazaars and retail stops worth stopping by in Cameron Highlands:*

### Multi Crops Central Market/Arked Peladang Cameron Highlands

This is a one-stop shop where you can find all the local specialties and popular souvenirs. In between shopping, relax in the outdoor park or have a bite at the cafe.

**Where:** About 1km from Brinchang (9am to 6pm daily)

### Kea Farm

Made up of stalls located along the side of the main road, this is the most popular stop for visitors to Cameron Highlands and the cause of traffic congestion on weekends. Fresh vegetables, fruits and flowers are among the bestselling items.

**Where:** About 3km from Brinchang (8am till early evening)

### Raju's Hill Strawberry Farm

Pick your own strawberries from among the neat rows growing in the greenhouses. They also sell a variety of strawberry products, including an in-house range of jams, beverages and creamy cakes.

**Where:** 42nd Mile, Kea Farm (8.30am to 6pm daily)

specialty does live up to both monikers in appearance and taste. It can be eaten fresh, without imparting a raw aftertaste, and has a lovely crisp texture. You can also boil or steam it if you prefer softer kernels. A must-buy for most visitors, the corn is usually sold in piles of 10 for RM10.

## By A Whisker

With thick stalks sprouting tender shoots and tendrils, they look like a cross between *kangkung* (morning glory) and *pucuk paku* (ferns), and taste that way, too. These *loong sou* (dragon's whiskers) are unique to Cameron Highlands and parts of Sabah in East Malaysia, and are usually grown along the edges of other crops to keep weeds at bay. A bunch of this apple green-coloured vegetable sells for just RM2, but you don't get much out of it as only the shoots and tender parts of the stalks are eaten; the tendrils are said to be quite chewy and fibrous, and, so, less pleasant to munch on. The recommended style of cooking is to stir-fry with a spicy-pungent blend of *sambal belacan*, just as one would *kangkung* or *pucuk paku*. What you get is appetising, crunchy greens that go well with steamed white rice.

## Fruit Fusion

What do you get when you infuse the guava with the flavours of other fruits? To find out, look for stalls selling vacuum-sealed plastic bags filled with bright green and dark pink oval-shaped



fruits. These peeled guavas are pickled with the juices of green apples and strawberries, respectively, to give them a sweet-sour-salty taste and an extra crunchy texture. They can keep for up to a month if refrigerated.

## Made

## With Love

If you're up for some food adventures, start with the highlands' unusual fruit offerings. Some of the farms here grow local varieties of kiwis, blueberries and apples. As they are not as sweet as the imported variants, enterprising food producers here have come up with a way to make them enjoyable: as the fillings for handmade dark chocolates. There's also the unusual love fruit, which resembles plum tomatoes in shape and colour, though less intense. Sold fresh and by the packet, it has been described as tasting like a cross between kiwis and strawberries.

## Spikes and the Likes

Prickly, spiky, sometimes a little fuzzy and, when grown in tiny pots, are actually quite pretty. We're talking about cacti, which, like strawberries, are found in abundance here and sell well at the market. They sport various shapes and discerning features: bulbous with soft thorns, long stems crowned by vibrant pin cushion-like 'flowers', in clusters of small spheres or short rounded fingers. It's interesting to note that the size of the plants follow that of the pots in which they are grown. Hardy plants that they are, the cactus only needs to be watered once a week. At the night market, the smallest variant retails at RM10 for seven or eight pots.

## Enduring Beauties

At a glance, there's nothing special about the newspaper-wrapped bouquets, but take a closer look. Resembling small shiny daisies, but in shades of browns, yellows and oranges, Cameron Highlands' famous dried flowers look quite unreal. These are chrysanthemums that have been dried using a special technique that leave the petals with a soft sheen and a golden palette. These dried blooms can last for up to two years, as long as they don't come in contact with water.

## Hot Food

Besides fresh produce, the market also hosts a number of stalls selling freshly prepared hot food. Snack on deep-fried seafood, steamed or grilled sweet corn, or fried carrot cake. The latter is a popular Chinese street food of steamed radish cake that's cut into cubes and then wok-fried with bean sprouts, pickled radish, eggs, thick soya sauce and, if you want a bit of kick, chilli paste. Aromatic and comforting, it's just the thing to have at the end of a market walkabout while being enveloped in the refreshing night chill. ■



### CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT

This unique hill resort combines all the splendour, romance and nostalgia of the area's grand colonial heritage with its luxurious rooms and award-winning Spa Village. Cameron Highlands Resort remains the best place to experience it all, from verdant hills, tea plantations, rose gardens and strawberry patches.

*Clockwise, from top left: Cacti is a spiky souvenir popular amongst visitors; munch on famous Cameron Pearl corn cobs as you trawl the stalls; street cuisine is also plentiful – perfect for those who like to snack and shop; fresh flowers are a beautiful bargain to snap up at the Brinchang night market.*

# When Gods and Ancestors Return

The twin festivals of Galungan and Kuningan, celebrating the return of the island's gods and ancestors, are the most extravagant and melodramatic of Bali's religious ceremonies. *YTL Life* explores the colours, finery and offerings that reflect these festivals.

Text Simon Pridmore

If you want to see Bali and the Balinese dressed up in all their finery, with thousands of temples swathed in brilliant colours, or hear the music of *gamelan* orchestras carried on the wind wherever you go while strolling down village streets bristling with tall, graceful, curved bamboo and palm leaf sculptures that hang suspended over the roadways, then visit the island when the locals are celebrating the twin festivals of Galungan and Kuningan.

All the decorations, dressing-up, celebrations and festivities are not for Bali's tourists; in fact, they are not for visitors from this world at all. They are for the gods and the ancestors of the Balinese, whose spirits return to their former homes during this time. Galungan always starts on a Wednesday, while Kuningan, the final day of celebration when the Gods return, takes place on the Saturday 10 days later.

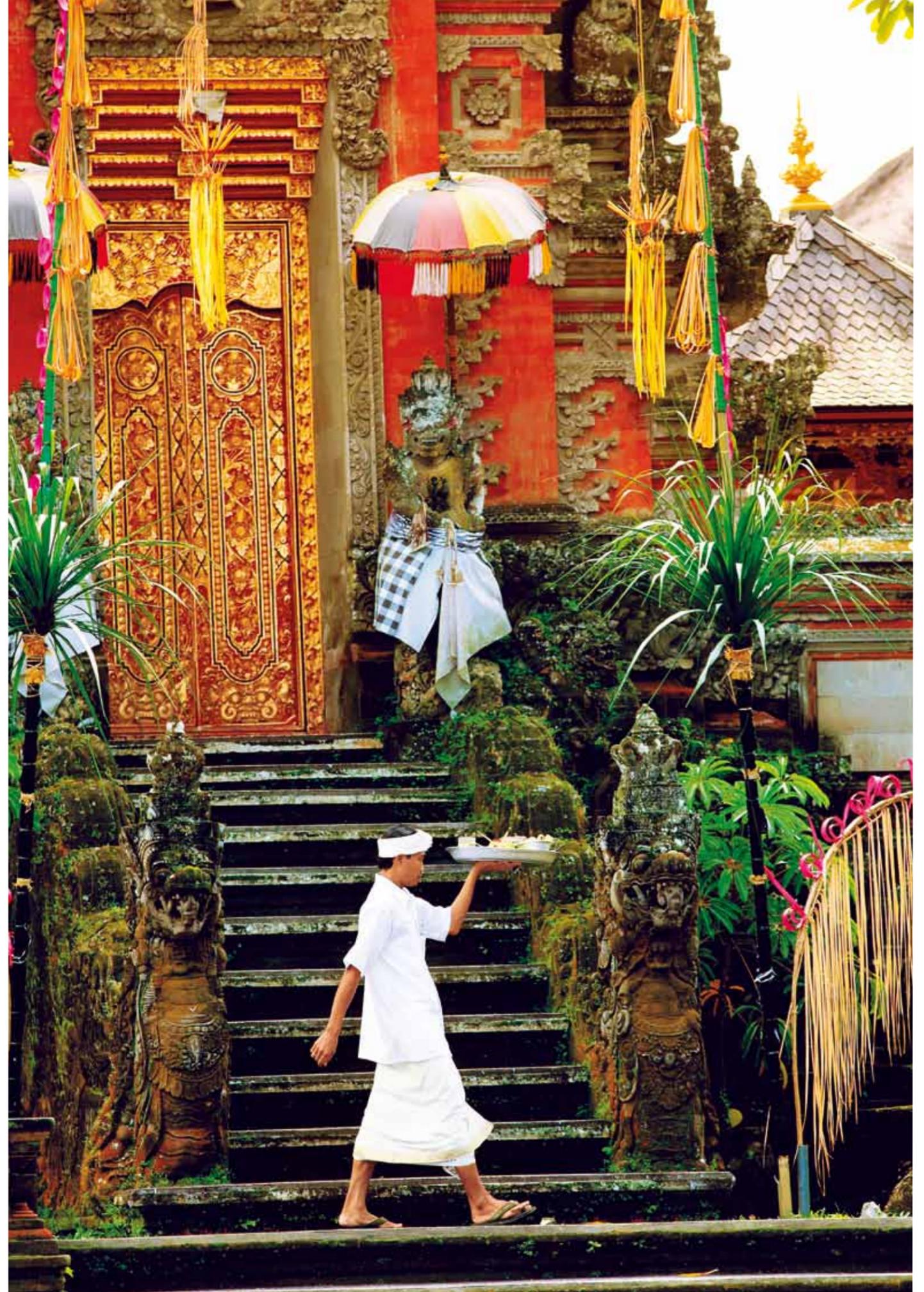
The whole period is an extraordinarily spiritual time and it comes around every 210 days. So, in some years, the festivals are held twice – this year, having already been observed in March, Galungan and Kuningan are being celebrated again from 23 October to 2 November.

## Combining Religions

Today, Bali is famed as a tiny Hindu enclave nestled within a large, mostly Muslim, country; this was not always the case and these two festivals have their genesis in a time long before the arrival of Buddhism and Hinduism to the islands of what is now Indonesia.

The religion of the original people of Bali, the Bali Aga, was centred on both animism and ancestor worship. Animism is the belief that elements of the natural environment, such as animals, plants, rivers, mountains, wind and water, have

*Famed as a tiny Hindu enclave in a large, mostly Muslim country, Bali is exceedingly rich in colour, pomp and pageantry.*





Hindu temples were built on the sites of Bali Aga shrines, the prime example being Pura Besakih, the mother temple on the slopes of Mount Agung. The animist Gods of the Bali Aga, such as Earth, Water, Fire and Fertility, came to be viewed as different manifestations of the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

### Ten Days

The two festivals celebrate the victory of *dharma* (good) over *adharma* (evil), so they mark a very positive time. Families come together, something that is even more important today when so many young people leave the villages to find work in urban areas and tourist resorts. The ancestors are welcomed back with prayers, offerings, food, music and dancing, and a huge amount of work goes into making sure they are treated well so that they will continue to act benevolently.

If a family neglects to treat the ancestors with courtesy, then bad things will happen.

For visitors to Bali, the most obvious indicators that they have come to the island during Galungan and Kuningan are the *penjor*, elaborately decorated bamboo poles that line the roads of every village. There is one outside almost every home on the street, towering above the entrance to the compound as a majestic symbol of Mount Agung, the highest point on Bali and the dwelling place of Gods and ancestors. The *penjor* are adorned with rice stalks, palm fronds and flowers, representing the immense natural fecundity that sustains the island's people, and strips of yellow and white cloth, showing their religious significance. The natural curve of the bamboo causes the poles to droop over the road, which is extended by a tasselled palm leaf creation that hangs from the end

spirits that can be benevolent or harmful to humans. Ancestor worship involves deification of a family's forbears as spirits who can either protect or bring disaster to the family, depending on the level of respect or neglect accorded to them. The maintenance of a strong connection between the living and the dead is the key to continued prosperity.

*The twin festivals of Galungan and Kuningan celebrate the victory of dharma (good) over adharma (evil) and is a time of prayers, coming together and religious festivities and ceremonies.*

The Bali Aga revered the founders of their villages and believed that, when they died, the souls of their ancestors rose up to dwell on mountain peaks. Therefore, mountains became places of worship. When Hinduism arrived on the island and began supplanting the ancient religion, the Hindu form of worshipping dead kings and the belief that mountains represented the realm of the Gods made a good fit with what had gone before.





During Galungan And Kuningan, watch out for the elaborate decorations and attention to detail, like towering, elaborately-featured penjor and traditional offerings of banten.

of each, waving languidly in the breeze as if bestowing blessings over the heads of passersby.

A small triangular bamboo cage is attached to the pole at head height. This is designed to act as a temporary throne for the returning Gods and offerings are placed there throughout the festival. The closest parallel to the *penjor* in Western culture are Christmas trees, with their combination of both meaningful and whimsical decorations.

### Getting Ready

If you are on the island in the days leading up to the festival, you will notice other signs that something special is about to happen. Everywhere, you will

“The maintenance of a strong connection between the living and the dead is the key to continued prosperity.”

see motorcycles carrying folk dressed in brilliant white to and from the temples. The women will be dressed in their best delicate *kebaya* blouse, while the men will be wearing the distinctive *udeng* headdresses. In homes all over Bali, people will be cooking, shopping, preparing offerings called *banten* from coconut leaves and flower petals, making

cakes, getting the sacrificial pigs and chickens ready, or simply meditating on what is to come.

The first day of Galungan is a day of prayer and family reunion. The men get up before dawn to kill the pig that has been selected to be the main ingredient for the family feast. It is roasted over

a spit and the meat is used for dishes such as *lawar*, a delicacy of pork and pig's blood combined with chilli, *nangka* (jackfruit) and a host of herbs and spices.

If you are staying in a hotel or villa, you may find it a little more thinly staffed than usual as everyone makes the long trek home. Although Bali is a small island, it can take people up to four hours to travel back to their native villages, so many take the day off.

Day two is another very social occasion, when families typically visit friends and neighbours. Then, events turn a little low key for a week, until the day of Kuningan, where the feasting and temple offerings are on a similar scale to those of the first day of Galungan. The only difference is that, instead of lasting all day, Kuningan ceremonies take place only in the morning, as the ancestors will depart at midday.

### Get Close

Galungan and Kuningan are the most extravagant and melodramatic of Bali's religious ceremonies, with the possible exception of the evening of chaos and subsequent day of silence that characterise Nyepi, the Balinese New Year. If you are lucky enough to be in Bali when they are on, try to arrange a day out in the countryside and walk through a village or sit at a local *warung* (café) and watch all the activity going on. You may not understand everything that is happening but you will have a lot of fun and you will be experiencing genuine Balinese culture. The ancestors won't mind and neither will their descendants. You will be most welcome! ■

# Feelin' Fresh

Add an extra spring to your step by looking – and smelling – your best with the help of these beauty products.

## Squeaky Clean

Cleanse your skin in style with **La Mer**'s elegantly efficacious cleansers. As we all know, the first step towards a glowing visage is a thorough cleansing ritual that nurtures and balances skin, leaving it cleaned, refreshed and ready for the treatments to follow. Next to godliness? We certainly think so.



## Primer Instinct

Look effortlessly flawless with **M.A.C.**'s new *Prep+Prime BB Beauty Balm*, which enhances skin's natural luminosity while working to even out skin tone, protect it from harsh UV rays and, more importantly, blur imperfections. Now available in four additional shades and in SPF35 cream and go-anywhere SPF30 solid cream compact forms.



For The Well-Scented Gent  
London's finest traditional gentleman's barber and perfumer **Truefitt & Hill** now offers a delicious new scent to savour. Named the *Freshman*, this refreshing *fougere* was based on one of William Francis Truefitt's original formulations and was created with the fashion-conscious Oxbridge undergraduates in mind. With notes of lemon, mint, orange blossom and lily of the valley, be certain it is a fragrance to uplift spirits.



## Cool As A Cucumber

Want eyes that gleam and glow? Well then, check out **Origins**' handy *No Puffery* cooling roll-on for eyes that works to banish bags, reduce puffiness and signs of fatigue by simply using its metal rollerball applicator to deliver a completely revitalising experience. Formulated with Hoelen mushroom and cucumber extracts, it also works to hydrate the skin area around the eyes. To enhance the sensation, forget tea bags and chilled soup spoons. Store your *No Puffery* roll-on in the refrigerator for a cooling treat that your peepers would simply love!

# STRIKE A POSE

Stand out in spectacular style amidst the clean lines and sleek architecture of The Surin, located on Phuket's perfect Pansea Beach.

Photographed by ChinToo Styling Calvin Cheong Hair & Makeup Shawn Goh  
Model Diana Domanicova/Icon Models Location The Surin, Phuket

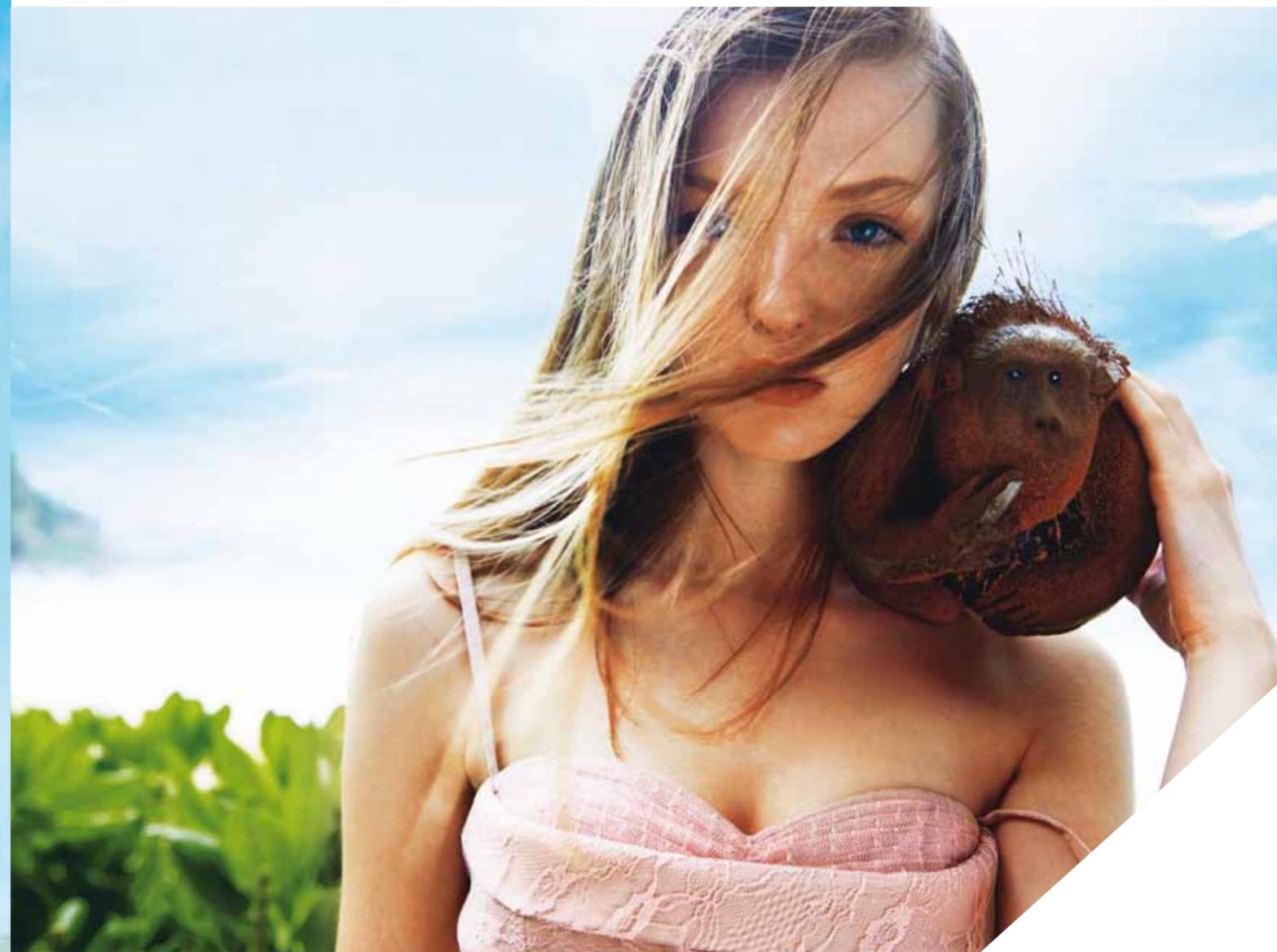
**RED IN  
NATURE**  
Structured wool coat,  
cotton peplum jacket  
and pants by **Kenzo**.  
Leather boots by  
**Salvatore Ferragamo**.



***WATER BABY***

This page: Patchwork mini dress by **M Missoni**.  
Opposite page: Sequined jacket, track pants and lace up platform heels by **Bernard Chandran**.





***IN THE MIND***

This page: Lace dress by **REDValentino**. Opposite page: Zigzag patchwork dress by **M Missoni**.



***PRIVATE  
MOMENT***  
Batik pareo (worn  
as toga dress) by  
Pink Jambu.



**RESORT  
CHIC**

This page: Structured  
bolero jacket by  
**Khoon Hooi**.  
Opposite page: Biker  
dress by **Bernard  
Chandran**.

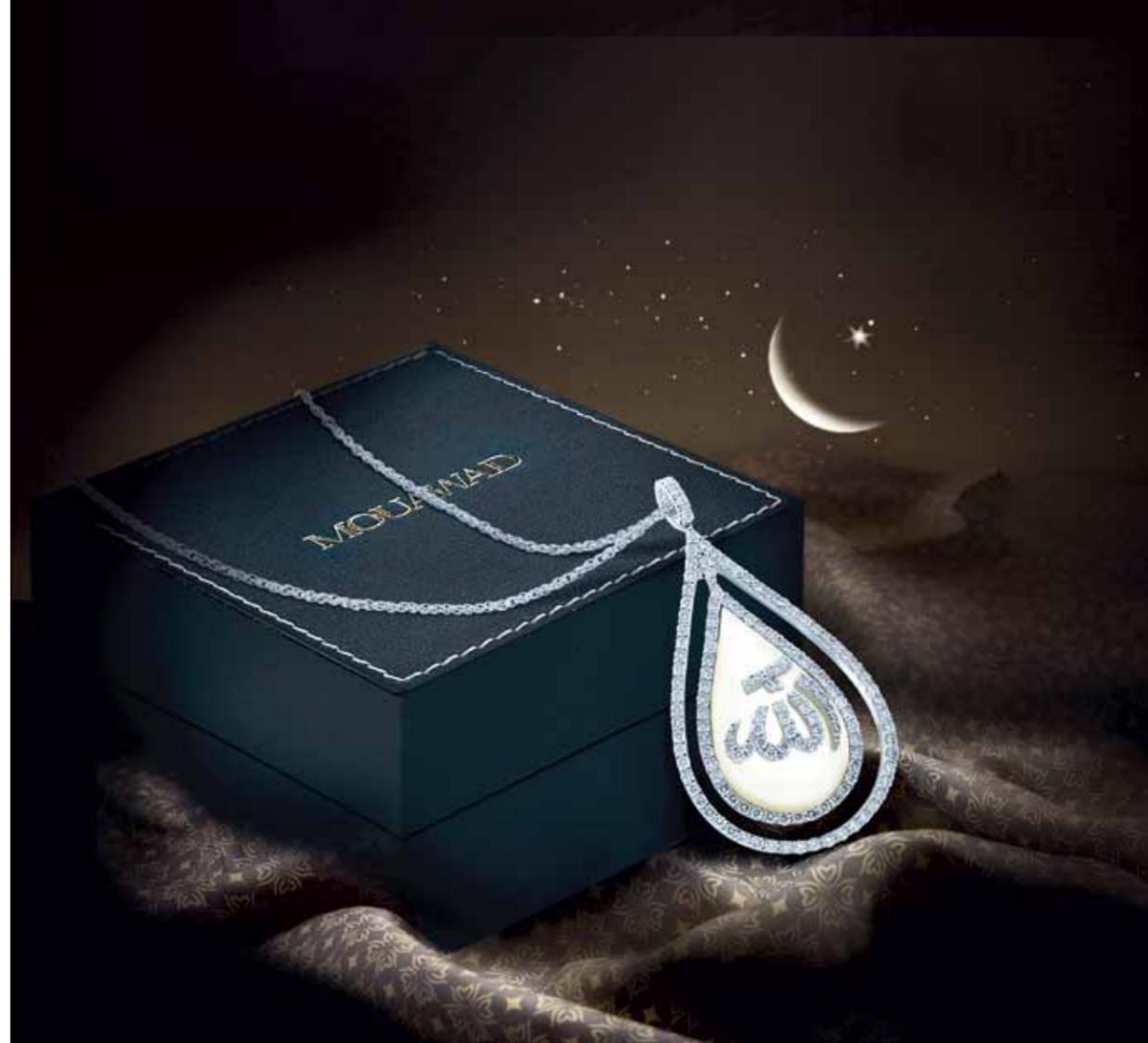




***BY THE SEA***

This page: Mesh blouse by REDValentino.  
Opposite page: Alpaca fur coat, knit turtleneck bralette and mini skirt by Salvatore Ferragamo.





# Shine Bright Like A Diamond

As the year slips into fall, banish the shadows with these gorgeous accessories that will brighten any occasion.

## Beauty Of The East

Stay safe and beautiful with this pendant inspired by the hand of Fatima, a Middle Eastern symbol that commemorates the Prophet's daughter, Fatima Zahra. Also referred to as *hamsa*, it depicts an open right hand, which is believed to protect the wearer against the evil eye. Here, **Mouwad** reinterprets it in its Hilal collection, a celebration of faith – and beauty.



## Colours Of The Season

Autumn is a season of changing hues and what better way to reflect the spirit than by sporting a few of **Tiffany & Co's** remarkably-hued fancy coloured diamond rings all at once? From fancy intense purple pink diamonds to bright and beautiful fancy yellow diamonds, it gives a whole new dimension to the term appreciating the beauty of nature. Truly a sight for sore eyes.



## Too Cool For School

Sydney-based jewellers **Bowerhaus** works magic with gold- and silver-plated hematite for its elegant High Society collection. Said to possess a very strong grounding energy, hematite affords a cool and calming effect to the wearer and is also said to help develop concentration and focus. Of course, it certainly helps that the pieces look incredibly beautiful as well.



## Butterfly Lovers

Trust the legendary Parisian jewellers **Van Cleef & Arpels** to pay tribute to the autumnal atmosphere in its inimitable style with the *Lady Arpels Papillon Orange Solaire*, a treasure of a timepiece adorned with a pair of butterflies bathed in warm golden sunlight. The intricate dial displays luminous *plique-à-jour* enamel work, which shimmers against a mother-of-pearl background and are also adorned with eye-catching marquise-cut diamonds.



*Opposite: An inquisitive pied hornbill strikes a jaunty pose for the camera.*

to the arrival of the book, fresh from the printers! The most challenging aspect was actually nature itself, which affected the photographers far more than me as the writer. Also, wild animals, as you can imagine, do not perform on demand, and sea conditions don't turn favourable just because you have a boat booked for the day and the weather will not automatically clear up the moment you unpack your camera gear. You just have to make the most of the conditions and opportunities given, and learn to ignore this sentence you would invariably hear upon arrival at each location: 'Oh, you should have been here yesterday/last week. The weather/visibility/rare animal sightings were amazing!'

**What were the most rewarding aspects working on a project like this?**

Often the most exciting and rewarding moments are closely linked to how much discomfort you have endured and, once again, the Scubazoo photographers had to spend longer in challenging situations than I. But we feel that trekking all day through pouring rain in the rainforest is immediately forgotten when the sun suddenly appears and you find yourself face-to-face with a highly-aggressive (and, may I add, poisonous) pit viper. Standing in the hot sun while being eaten alive by mosquitoes also doesn't seem so bad when an exquisite Asian Fairy Bluebird finally makes an appearance, or hours in a boat on rough seas and bad weather can seem worthwhile once you encounter a friendly nurse shark resting on the sand while diving. Whether sitting in swamps, crawling in mud, hiking through thick forest or diving in rough seas, there is always hope of that amazing encounter with nature and that is what really keeps you going. And, of course, the fact you can return, at the end of the day, to a luxury resort with fine dining!

**Any favourite moments, personally?**

It has to be discovering an entirely new environment around Niseko, in Japan's northern-most island of Hokkaido. It is quite unlike any other place I've visited in Japan and the people I met in this beautiful, largely rural area seemed like pioneers in a new frontier; which isn't all that surprising as the region was first settled only a century ago and it is still under-populated by Japanese

**Tell us a little about the inspiration behind *Natural Wonders*.**

YTL Hotels' collection of hotels and resorts are situated in very unique locations around the world, predominantly in Asia. From a private island off the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia to the northern-most of Japan's prefectures, Hokkaido, each location offers a myriad of highly captivating natural wonders that guests can experience up close. YTL Hotels has previously published beautiful coffee table books on its Spa Village and culinary experiences, and now a book on the nature surrounding its properties is a perfect addition to the collection.

**How long did it take for you and Scubazoo to create this book and what were some of the challenges you and the team faced?**

It took almost exactly a year – from the initial concept discussions

# Green Piece

Celebrated author Wendy Hutton teams up with the creative talents from Scubazoo, the Borneo-based, award-winning film and photography outfit, to create *Natural Wonders*, a newly released coffee table book that celebrates the best of nature focused around YTL Hotels' collection of Asian resorts.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Scubazoo**

standards. Being a food-lover, I was delighted to find the rich soil around Niseko produces excellent fruit and vegetable, while there are also local producers making French-style pastries and ice-creams using fresh cream from local herds of pampered Holstein cows. There's even a famous shop taking water from a local spring to make its 37 different varieties of tofu. I was also intrigued by the vegetation, abundance of hot springs and a whole range of unfamiliar birdlife, and I liked the way you so often met with the unexpected, such as a huge deer crossing the highway en route to the airport, or catching sight of a Hokkaido fox wandering nonchalantly along the roadside in broad daylight.

**Did a particular property stand out in terms of its natural offerings?**

It's difficult to single out a particular resort as each one offers something unique. Because I'm a keen diver, I particularly enjoyed the fact you can explore the underwater world from almost all of YTL's resorts. I loved the beautifully landscaped hot springs at both YTL's Niseko Village resorts and became quite adept at the Japanese bath house ritual. Another outstanding place for me was the mysterious cloud forest on the highest mountain, Gunung Brinchang, in Cameron Highlands, and I thought Gaya Island Resort near Kota Kinabalu seemed to offer just about everything, from the mighty Mount Kinabalu in the skyline, rainforest all around and the reefs in the surrounding South China Sea.

**Which of these resorts would you think you'd want to revisit soonest?**

That's a hard question to answer but I think it would be The Green Leaf Niseko Village... and in winter, rather than late summer, which was when I made my first visit. Niseko has been hailed as one of the world's top ski destinations and experiencing it during winter would certainly be a change for me as I've lived in the tropics most of my life.

**How did your interest in travel writing begin?**

I've always been interested in exploring new places and, even as a child, would wander over the hills and explore the caves not too far from where we lived. I sometimes wished I'd lived in the 19th century and



Each YTL Hotel boasts incredible proximity to marine, animal and bird life.

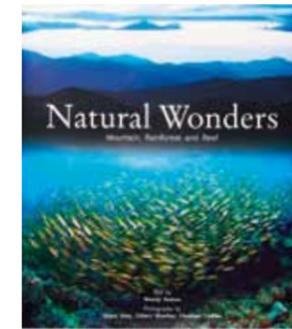


been an explorer/writer like Isabella Bird or Alexandra David-Neel, the first white woman to enter Lhasa in Tibet. When I came to South-East Asia towards the end of the 1960s, there were scarcely any guidebooks covering the region, so, as I travelled about, it seemed like a good idea to share some of my experiences and discoveries with others by writing both articles and books.

**What have been some of your most memorable assignments or projects to date?**

Working on *Natural Wonders* for YTL has to be near the top of that list. The chance to explore the surrounding environment while staying in luxury in nine different YTL properties was like a dream come true. And, I must admit that being required to experience the spa treatments at every resort was a job requirement I could happily live with. I also really loved working as the Singapore-based editor of an inflight magazine for one of the world's top airlines many years back. Can you imagine a job researching and writing about places such as a glacier in the Canadian Rockies, watching a wild game played on horseback in Afghanistan, staying in a remote Borneo longhouse and sipping tea in the bungalow which once belonged to Sir Thomas Lipton in the Sri Lankan tea country?

Clockwise, from below: Proboscis monkeys are known for their exhibitionist nature; Sabah's majestic Mount Kinabalu; playful clownfish nipping in and out of anemone.



Natural Wonders - Mountain, Rainforest and Reef (ital this) is published by Scubazoo Publications. Authored by Wendy Hutton with photography by Jason Isley, Gilbert Woolley and Christian Loader. It is expected to be launched in October 2013. ISBN 978-967-10528-1-5. For more information, visit [www.scubazoo.com](http://www.scubazoo.com)

**You also specialise in writing about Asian cuisine. Being Borneo-based, can you share what are Sabah's most iconic dishes and where we could find them?**

Living in Sabah means having a wide variety of seafood and lots of fresh fruit and vegetable, both lowland tropical produce and temperate-climate food grown on the mountains at about 1,500m. Top of the list for most visitors to Sabah is to sample the seafood in one of the many specialised seafood restaurants in places like Kota Kinabalu, Tawau and Sandakan. You can see everything on offer, much of it still swimming in tanks, select what appeals and have it cooked to suit your taste. As there are more than 35 different ethnic groups in Sabah, one can't talk of a single 'Sabah cuisine'. One of the most popular native dishes is *hinava*: sliced fresh fish marinated in lime juice and mixed with chillies, fresh ginger and shallots, found mainly in hotel buffets or resorts rather than local restaurants. Another popular Sabahan dish is based on a Hakka Chinese recipe and known as Manok Lihing, or chicken in rice wine. Chicken pieces are simmered with a large amount of fresh ginger and rice wine, which is a lot more delicious than it sounds and is available in some Chinese coffee shops and restaurants.

**Did you always want to write? What was your original childhood ambition?**

I don't recall having any ambitions other than to travel, preferably in relatively unknown parts of the world. I grew up in what used to be the last stop before the South Pole for American ice-breakers, Christchurch in New Zealand. It felt so very far away from the rest of the world, which I desperately wanted to explore. My writing developed as a natural extension of that. I still enjoy learning and writing about things which are relatively new to me. I don't think you can ever run out of things to learn.

**What advice would you give young people seeking to walk a similar career path?**

Today's realities are very different to when I started writing. Publishers and book shops are going out of business as the Internet and electronic books change the market. Unless you're very lucky or have a private income, I wouldn't recommend anyone trying to become a full-time travel writer. You could, however, combine it with other more lucrative types of writing, such as advertising or journalism.

**What do you think of all that you've achieved so far?**

I've been very lucky with unexpected opportunities just seeming to fall into place throughout most of my life. Perhaps having no set plan or schedule gives you the freedom to accept these chances when they come your way. ■

# La Femme Nikita

On a brief stopover between Thailand and Muse Pangkor Laut Estates, French actress Anne Parillaud found time to take in the sights and sounds of Kuala Lumpur. She shares her thoughts on her first visit to Malaysia with *YTL Life*.

Text **Flavia Galeotti**



*Celebrated Parisian actress Anne Parillaud experiences all the sights and sounds of Kuala Lumpur, including a short break on idyllic Pangkor Laut island.*



Within the historic walls of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, one can hear the delicate notes of music from the 1930s playing over the soft din of day-to-day modern life – it's a gleaming white pearl from another era, surrounded by the developments of the 21st century, a charming link to the past that does not exist in many places around the city and something that renowned French actress Anne Parillaud finds both unusual and endearing. "It's lovely how it's separated and split into the old and the new," Parillaud says, "In my vision of Malaysia, I wasn't expecting to experience this."

It seems this is the perfect match for the petite Parisienne, who bears a special fondness for the past. "I'm happy to be in the Majestic Wing because I'm European and we have an old culture behind us.

I like old things and old hotels," she says wistfully. She observantly points out the colonial influences of the old architecture, adding enthusiastically: "There is something very British about the old wing, like the butler. service."

Not only is this Parillaud's first visit to a YTL Hotel, but also to Malaysia (and the region) in general. With her two young sons, Lou and Theo, in tow, they departed on a whirlwind holiday, starting, first, in neighbouring Thailand, then on to Kuala Lumpur and, finally, Pangkor Laut. "If it was just me, I would travel to each city in the region. I would go to Shanghai and Singapore, and visit every important skyscraper. But, now that I have a family, holidays are for the children; so, it's more about the beach and discovery. It's a

pleasure to see your children excited about seeing, learning and doing new things," says the city girl at heart.

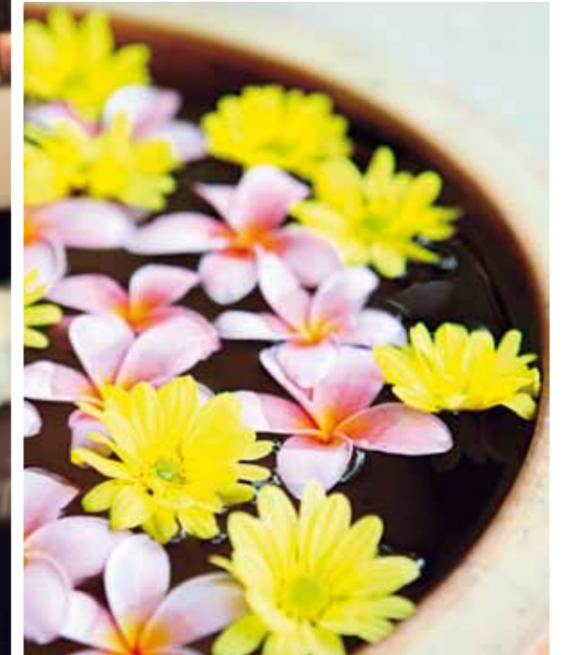
Having spent the morning on a guided tour around Kuala Lumpur, Parillaud and her sons took in the typical sights that any new visitor to the country would – Batu Caves, the Bird Park and the Butterfly Park – but the one thing that captivated her was the iconic Twin Towers. "I absolutely loved the Petronas Towers. I've always loved skyscrapers but I found this totally amazing – the architecture, the technical construction and the overall look. It's very elegant." She continues: "For me, the Petronas Twin Towers are a hundred times more fascinating and beautiful than the Eiffel Tower." Coming from a Parisienne, this is high praise, indeed.

"I was very happy to travel through Kuala Lumpur," she says. "I wasn't expecting to see such a modern city. We have a stupid idea that Asia is chaotic but that's not the case. Well... Thailand was a little like that but definitely not Kuala Lumpur."

As it turns out, Parillaud did not do any research on places to see before coming to Malaysia – she never does, it seems. "I'm really not a tourist in the sense that I refuse to look at guide books. In fact, my children did it for me and decided where to go, so I followed. I'm not the kind of person who researches on the computer and gets books; I'm more about sensation and feeling." She likens the experience to that of going to a museum and seeing a piece of artwork for the



Muse Pangkor Laut Estates' tropical charms proved a hit with Parillaud and her two young sons.



Born in Paris on 6 May 1960, Anne Parillaud had a regular childhood, where she was mostly preoccupied studying ballet. In 1978, she appeared in her first film, *L'hôtel de la plage*, directed by Michel Lang, and had fallen in love with the world of acting. Over the course of the 1980s, Parillaud worked tirelessly and paid her dues in various films, until 1990 brought with it the role that would ultimately make her a household name – Nikita, a convicted felon who is hired to work as an assassin for the French Government. Following this success, she went on to star in movies alongside Leonardo DiCaprio, John Cusack, William Baldwin and Graham Greene, before returning to her home country. Most recently, she has acted in French short films like *Désolée pour hier soir* and *Delicate Gravity*, the latter of which just won the Grand Prix of Palm Springs International Short Films Festival, making it eligible for an Oscar nomination in 2014.

first time. "I don't want to know when it was painted or what the story of the painter is. I want to see what he did and find out if I feel something, and, if I do, then I want to know. And I'm like this with everything: a new city, a place, a hotel, a person... I want to know nothing; I just want to feel. And, then, I learn more."

She did, however, break this rule before her trip to Muse Pangkor Laut Estates. "I saw all the pictures," she confesses, "and I was very excited." But this is no idle holiday for Parillaud – no spas or getting pampered as, she admits, that massages and lingering baths aren't really her 'thing'. Instead, she has chosen to go out and experience the many activities the resort has on offer. "I want to do jungle trekking and kayaking," she says. But she jokingly remains a little wary of any potential wildlife encounters on the trek after her visit to the Butterfly Park. "At the end of the park, there were all of these insects, like spiders and scorpions, and all of them are from Malaysia! I will go on the trek, but I will make sure to be careful of the spiders and everything."

As with all good things, this jaunt through South-East Asia will come to an end, and the family will depart home to the temperate climes of Paris. On her return, Parillaud will continue with her newest project: acting in theatre. "I have been doing it since I was very young and, after I went into movies, I never stopped," she shares. "Suddenly, it came back to me. My fear was stronger than my desire to go back to theatre, but now my desire is stronger than my fear."

It seems that, despite the short stay here, Malaysia (and South-East Asia) has made quite an impact on her, specifically, the strong cultural identity it has been able to maintain, even in the 21st century. "Most capitals around the world are becoming more and more alike, because they all have the same developments and shops, and that is also the case here. But roots here are stronger than anything and they show through despite the globalisation, which I like. There is something very touching about humanity, to see that, no matter what, roots and culture grow stronger." ❖





Dust storm. Rajasthan, India.

His name is inextricably linked to his images, particularly that of a young Afghan girl, a refugee, taken in 1984. And what made it become one of the world's most recognisable photographs was Steve McCurry's innate ability to encapsulate all that conflict wrecks, from land to the human soul, into a single moment, an image immortalised in time. But, beyond the haunted eyes of the Afghan girl, McCurry is also one of the world's most renowned documentary photographers, specialising in covering international and civil conflict as well as an articulate social commentator.

**When did you realise photography was your calling?**

I studied cinematography and film history in college and took some courses in fine art photography. As time went by, I became more interested in still photography and realised that was what I wanted to do. After school, I worked as a photographer with a newspaper and then left in order to freelance in South Asia. Photography has an immediacy that is satisfying – I can walk out of the door shooting images wherever I happen to be.

**You mentioned your photographic philosophy is to celebrate people, places and culture as well as to tell stories. Could you elaborate a little?**

The most important thing for me is the human aspect of the picture... to try and convey some sort of empathy with the subject and, secondly, in the composition and the form of how that picture is put together. I like the photo to be able to tell a story of what it's like to be that person; to have some sort of insight into the human condition of the subject. That, really, is the most interesting part of the work, as opposed to something that is just composition, form and colour. I like colour photography but, when the picture's just about colour, it doesn't go far enough.

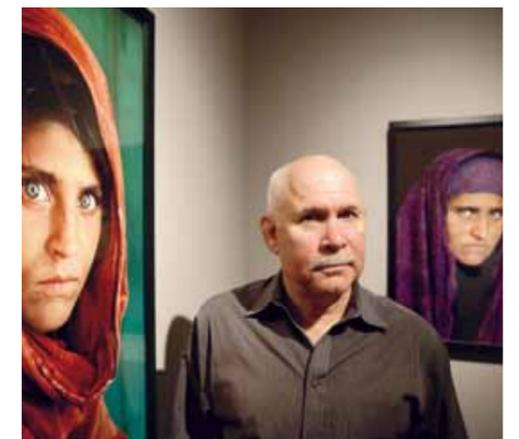
**Any particularly significant moments in your career you'd like to share?**

Working in Kuwait, in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, was a surreal and unforgettable experience. The Iraqi army had retreated, leaving utter devastation in its wake. Hundreds of oil fields were burning, turning the daytime sky black as night. Camels were wandering around looking for food and water, and the bodies of dead soldiers were scattered around the landscape. The scale of destruction was difficult to process.

# Master of Light

One of the great photographers of the 20th century, Steve McCurry speaks to *YTL Life* on the inspirations behind his métier during his recent stay at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Steve McCurry**



Steve McCurry poses next to his photos of Sharbat Gula, immortalised as the 'Afghan Girl', at the opening of the 'Overwhelmed by Life' exhibition of his work at the Museum for Art and Trade in Hamburg, Germany.



*Shaolin monks in training,  
Zhengzhou, China.*

“The most important thing for me is the human aspect of the picture... to try and convey some sort of empathy with the subject.”



*Villagers participating  
in the Holi Festival,  
Rajasthan, India.*



*Flower seller at Dal Lake,  
Srinagar, Jammu and  
Kashmir, India.*



Monk at the Jokhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet.



Jodhpur, India.

**Tell us more about your experiences shooting in conflict zones.**

Photographers, as a rule, want to be close to danger because that's where the pictures are. One of the most harrowing experiences took place in Afghanistan. I was in a hotel in Kabul when someone hammered on my door at 0200hrs, shouting 'Control! Control! Open up!' I looked at the bedroom window and saw the blade of a bayonet cutting through the screen. I knew I was the only guest there that night. Afghanistan was a war zone then and I thought how my dead body wouldn't even make a ripple out there.

**What are your favourite subjects, though?**

Most of my photos are grounded in people. I look for the unguarded moment and try to always convey what it'd be like to be that person.

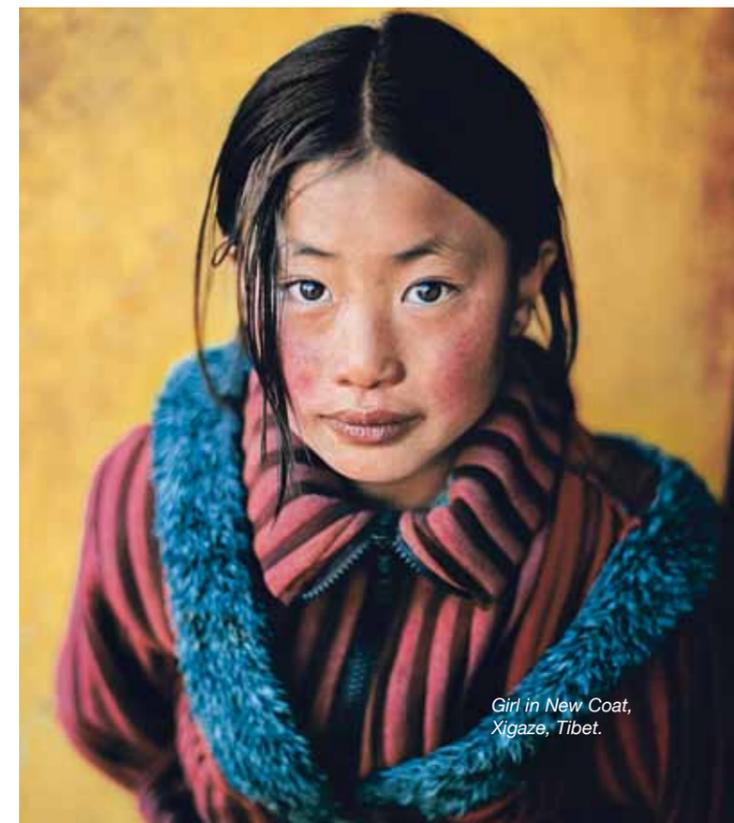
**Is there any photographer whose work you particularly admire?**

I think Henri Cartier-Bresson's pictures give a wonderful insight into a person's personality. His pictures are journalistic but they transcend journalism for me and work on a lot of different levels. They are timeless.

**Many young people aspire to a career like yours. What advice would you give them?**

Photograph things that interest you. Photography, like any other profession or passion – be it architecture, medicine, music or literature – requires discipline, determination and practice. 📷

“Photography has an immediacy that is satisfying – I can walk out of the door shooting images wherever I happen to be.”



Girl in New Coat, Xigaze, Tibet.



# A Joy Forever

Beauty, it is said, is in the eyes of the beholder. Behold, then, this season's ultimate looks to desire and treasure.

## Crowning Glory

With the symbol of the royal crown being a key motif in **Khoon Hooi's** Autumn/Winter 2013 collection, expect to feel positively regal in his pieces. Richness and glamour underscore the entire collection, with the designer's heavy use of jacquard and brocade adding further elements of sumptuousness. From a mannish cobalt blue top with fur sleeves and matching dove gray silk taffeta pants, to an oversized cable sweater paired with a brocade skirt, mix and match pieces to let your own style and personality shine through this season.



## Bag Du Jour

**Aigner's** head designer Christian Beck has created yet another carry-all to covet. The *Cybill* bag, with its classic trapezoid shape and sophisticated design, is crafted out of high-quality leather and comes in a range of captivating colours. If you're looking for something to have and to hold this season, the *Cybill* could very well fit the bill.



## Hats Off!

Whether you're planning your head gear for the Melbourne Cup or way ahead for Royal Ascot, look East for inspiration as celebrated Malaysian milliner **Bremen Wong** unveils his Evolving the Path collection. So, from sleek, smart toppers to all-out flights of fantasy, ensure your ensemble stands head and shoulders above the crowd. Literally.



## Now, Voyager

No brand epitomises the spirit of travel better than **Louis Vuitton**. Enjoy your year-end holidays in truly jet-set style with these wonderful *Porte-documents Voyage* pieces in Taurillon leather, Damier canvas and Damier Infini leather.

# Soul Support

Just as the body needs rest and nourishment, so too does the inner being. Rejuvenate your mind, body and soul this November at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's special Karmic Yoga Retreat, conducted by world-renowned life coach, healer and spiritual consultant, Diana Manilova.

We all too often forget our inner man. The modern world we live in teaches us only to live life in the fast lane, exalt instant gratification and eschew tranquility for the frenetic pace of what society deems a productive, successful lifestyle. While climbing the top rungs of the corporate world might seem a worthy pursuit, prolonged neglect of our mind and soul can lead to burnout, chronic health issues and the basic but profound element of a lack of inner peace. Address any concerns you might have right now by making time to support your mind, body and soul, and reacquainting yourself with what truly inspires you and makes you happy.

This November, the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is offering a special Karmic Yoga Retreat led by world-renowned Russian-born clairvoyant and author Diana Manilova. Initiated by Mongolian shamans in Lake Baikal, Manilova is also a certified healer, life coach and spiritual consultant, and will conduct daily Soul Workshops, offering guests a chance to drop barriers and express emotions in a loving and non-judgmental environment while discovering and experiencing the healing benefits of laughter. This special retreat, part of the resort's celebrated Bali Oracle Retreat programme, offers a unique window into which one may retreat, for a time,

to a safe cocoon, where you are invited, encouraged and aided to rediscover and realise your true inner potential and life purpose without everyday distractions. Under the nurturing guidance of Manilova, who brings her extensive experience of working with and teaching thousands of individuals, as well as a team of dedicated facilitators, rediscover your inner self while exploring the true purpose of your life.

There will also be various meditation and healing practices conducted throughout the duration of your retreat, including one-on-one sessions with facilitators, group sharing and the teaching of key tools to help you maintain balance and harmony, like visual meditation techniques and positive feedback practices. You will also be taught how to restore energy levels, find real life balance and also to know your soul through *mandalas* (sacred artworks), which work by opening your own stores of creative energy while releasing negative emotions. A healthy body also equals a healthy mind, so expect daily body and movement workshops, incorporating yoga, bodywork and aquatics, as well as massage therapy and daily guided meditation, all of which, combined, will move you through a greater spectrum of physical and mental awareness.

Simply being in a place of peace will also undoubtedly aid you in your journey. Being in nature is also exceedingly curative and, nestled between volcanic black sand beaches and the healing sea, the magical Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali serves as the perfect haven in which you may retreat, temporarily, from the frenetic world, to discover your true inner beauty, Balinese-style. You will also enjoy healthful, nutritious meals, juices and herbal teas, prepared daily by executive chef Martin Büchele, throughout the duration of your retreat. Austrian-born Büchele may come from an epicurean background but, with his initiation into several Buddhist practices, brings a unique culinary outlook to the resort's menu, consciously united with his own journey in the Buddhist way of life. You will also discover that, in Bali, you are never quite alone. The island's village culture and lifestyle ensures an inclusive, nurturing environment where guests are looked after like family. Regardless of whether you participate in the full retreat or just for a few days, one thing is certain. You will return to your life recharged, renewed, refreshed, bringing with you a wealth of new experiences, insights and awareness... and that is a blessing and luxury all of us can appreciate. ▀

*Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali's Karmic Yoga Retreat takes place from 1 to 11 November 2013, with mini retreats scheduled from 1 to 6 and 6 to 11 November.*



*Rediscover and realise your true inner potential and life purpose at this November's Karmic Yoga Retreat, held at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali.*

# Serenity In Shaoxing

Rich in history, legend and culture, one of Zhejiang Province's oldest cities is also home to a most modern destination spa – Spa Village Shaoxing.

Text Diana Khoo



Left: YTL Hotels' Spa Village Shaoxing may be found within Dayu Kaiyuan Resort's serene setting; Above: Modernity and tradition meet at Spa Village Shaoxing.

It is no surprise that Shaoxing, with its wealth of history, legends and culture, has become a most popular destination in China for the culturally-inclined. Said to have been founded during the time of the Yue Kingdom, some 4,000 years ago, Shaoxing also served as its capital. One of the city's greatest heroes later became one of the legendary founders of the Xia Dynasty. The Great Yu, also known as 'Dayu', was particularly revered as a 'tamer of floods' and, today, at the foothills of Kuaiji Mountain, one may visit the mausoleum dedicated in his honour. For those wishing to delve deeper into the lore and legends of Shaoxing, the boutique Dayu Kaiyuan hotel is, without doubt, the best place to stay in the vicinity, where one may also glimpse the great statue of Dayu, erected at the peak of Kuaijishan, from the hotel grounds, or enjoy convenient accessibility to the area's other places of interest, including the famous Shen Gardens or, for the politically-keen, the Zhou En-Lai Museum. For those who prefer attractions of a more indulgent nature, the pretty resort also boasts of its very own Spa Village, inspired and managed by the world-famous Spa Village by Malaysia's YTL Hotels and whose success has seen the brand making sybaritic inroads into idyllic locations all over the world.

Located on the banks of the Dayu River, Spa Village Shaoxing may be found within serene Dayu Kaiyuan's cluster of around a hundred or so Jiangnan-style dwellings. Designed to resemble a traditional Chinese village, Dayu Kaiyuan is built in the Ming and Qing styles, and provides a thoroughly-enchanting backdrop for Spa Village Shaoxing. Incredibly scenic, one may see a traditional *wu peng* boat, unique to the area and crafted out of wood and bamboo, quietly gliding by on a waterway or, perhaps, rest for a moment under a beautiful pavilion on the grounds. Guests walk along cobblestone streets, across little stone arch bridges and along riverside paths lined with weeping willows and rustic vegetable patches, to reach Spa Village Shaoxing, which occupies four of the old stone houses, three of which have been converted into private treatment rooms, all done up in a smart neo-Chinese style. Here, guests are welcomed with cups of hot osmanthus flower tea before each spa journey commences. Face and body treatments are all performed in the upper level of the spa suites, while the ground floor is the vanity area and where the foot bath, a pre-spa ritual that serves as both treat and primer, is conducted. Once the precious soles of your feet have undergone *mo sha* (Chinese

“Spa Village Shaoxing may be found within Dayu Kaiyuan’s serene cluster of around a hundred or so Jiangnan-style dwellings.”

for ‘exfoliating scrub’) with a mixture of Himalayan salts, hot water and scattered rose petals, your therapist leads you upstairs where the journey to bliss will finally begin.

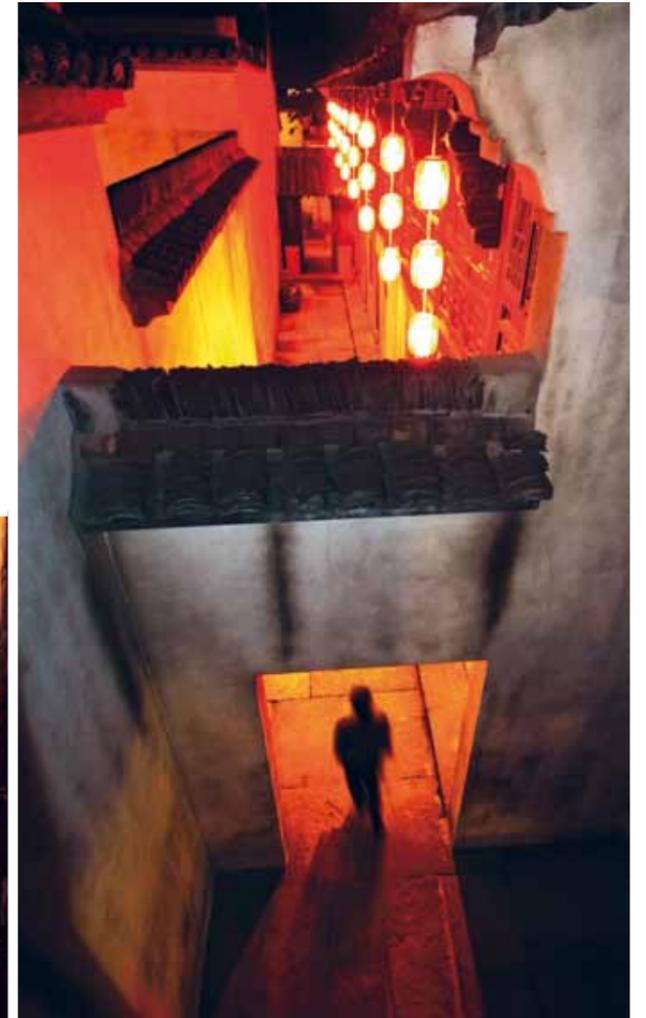
I was initially grumbling a little inside my heart as my weary knees trudged up the steep staircase but any festering discontent melted away as Tina, my appointed therapist, deftly worked on me with, first, an invigoratingly energising scrub, employing a mixture of Himalayan salts and a base oil, followed by a luxurious full-body iġ seaweed masque. The highlight of this Bio-Rhythm treatment for me, though, was the soothing head and face *marma*-point massage. A therapy which stems from the Indian life science of Ayurveda, *marma*, which means ‘hidden’ or ‘secret’ in Sanskrit, focuses on going beyond the physical to treat the body on a level where true healing takes place; in other words, a massage of the mind, body and spirit. It is also believed that marma points are the intersections where *prana* (life force) flows and I truly felt lighter and in a greater state of bliss and calm once Tina’s fingers were done working their magic. A series of warm little poultices were then placed on various points along my back, in a Kundalini ritual designed to balance and relax the nervous system and *chakras*, and the perfect finale to an amazing wellness experience.

There are several other treatments to try at Spa Village Shaoxing, including Spa Village Pangkor Laut’s famous Campur-Campur treatment, which combines the best of Malay and Thai massage techniques. Many might not as yet regard Shaoxing as a spa and wellness destination, but the treatments at Spa Village Shaoxing would certainly change your mind.



After all, this city is reputed to be the birthplace of Xi Shi, one of ancient China’s four legendary beauties, the other three being Wang Zhaojun, Diaochan and Yang Guifei. And who knows? After a few days or so luxuriating in Dayu Kaiyuan’s serenity, coupled with the efficacy of Spa Village Shaoxing’s repertoire of treatments, you might just evoke Xi Shi’s ethereal visage, which gave birth to the traditional Chinese compliment of Xi Shi *chen yu* (or ‘Xi Shi sinks fish’) as such was her extreme beauty that, once, while leaning over to look at fish in a pond, it dazzled them so that the hapless fish forgot to swim and, instead, sank from the surface. So, if you fancy a shot at being immortalised as a national beauty, you now know where to go. ■

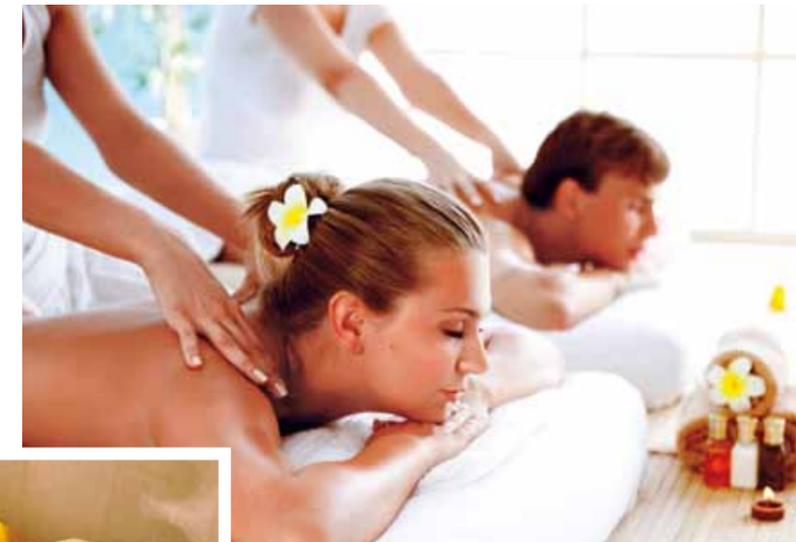
*Spa Village Shaoxing is located at Dayu Kaiyuan, 1988, South Second Ring Road, Shaoxing, 312000, People’s Republic of China. For reservations, tel: +0575 8858 4118 or visit [www.roonspavillage.com](http://www.roonspavillage.com)*



*Above: Traditional living takes on stylish new meaning at Spa Village Shaoxing;  
Left: Experience all the magic and healing of traditional Asian therapies at China’s Spa Village Shaoxing.*



Escape from the frenetic pace of big city life by retreating to the Balinese haven of rest and rejuvenation that is Donna Spa.



the next step – a session of therapeutic massage. After a quick rinse in a flower bath, your therapist will offer you a selection of natural oils, made using fruit like green apple or banana, and proceed to work on all your accumulated kinks and knots with deft fingerwork, strong sweeping strokes and acupressure. For those who've never experience the rejuvenating magic of Balinese massage, do know that Donna Spa's is as good as they come. All its therapists are Balinese-born and trained and are experts, blessed with both a restorative touch and a natural intuition for healing via the art of touch. It's all too easy to fall into a deep slumber mid-massage as the treatment is incredibly relaxing. Revive yourself, once it comes to an end, with cups of hot ginger tea as well as a selection of small cakes, brought to you by Donna Spa's attentive staff.

Life in a bustling city, with its fast pace and overall kerfuffle, can get to you. Make time to renew yourself while spending quality time with your loved one through Donna Spa's special couple's spa journeys. Now is a good time as any to start. ■

*Donna Spa is located on the Pamper Floor of Starhill Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Reservations are recommended. Call +603 2141 8999 or visit [www.donnaspa.net](http://www.donnaspa.net). Opening hours are 10am to midnight daily.*

# Spa for Two

Although a spa is usually seen as a means of rejuvenating yourself, it's also a chance to share some luxuriating time with a loved one.

Text **KC Loo** Photography **Yong Keen Keong**

For couples looking for some quality time together while soaking up the frenetic buzz of cosmopolitan Kuala Lumpur, one of the best options would be to retreat to the serene cocoon afforded by a luxurious city spa. Among the most popular (and well-placed) would be Donna Spa, tucked away on the upper levels of Starhill Gallery, one of the premier shopping address in Kuala Lumpur and home to the best names in retail. Designed to resemble an authentic Balinese spa, allow yourself to be soothed by the resort-inspired décor and little decorative touches, like ornate tiered Balinese umbrellas, teak opium tables, soft *gamelan* music and sprawling daybeds that

simply beckon you to relax and recline. Water features carved out of sandstone provide a natural melody while the scent of aromatherapy oils can be detected in the air.

Come early to allow yourself to relax prior to undergoing the spa journey of your choice. The manager on duty is helpful in explaining the various treatments available and will also be able to recommend treatments to soothe particular ailments or physical niggles. For those wishing to spa *à deux*, the couple's treatment is a good way to soothe the day's stress away. Begin with an invigorating steam bath,

followed by your choice of a warm or cool soak in a Jacuzzi. For those looking to totally relax, nothing beats a warm soak in swirling waters complete with jet streams which work to massage the back and upper body.

Make your way, then, to the treatment room, which is always comfortably temperature-controlled as your assigned therapist proceeds to knead and press you with warmed poultices, designed to soothe tired muscles and prepare the body for the therapies to follow. An exfoliating full-body scrub with scented rice is a wonderful way to slough off while prepping the skin for



Clockwise, from top left: John Yap is a repository of cocktail lore; The Martinez is a welcome entry in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's cocktail menu; Code 55 and Two Bulat, the hotel's signature cocktail.



# Highball Tales

There is a certain ineluctable pleasure in surveying a bar full of drink and ingredients and wondering what concoction they might yield when combined. At The Smoke House in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, bartender John Yap plays a happy guide to the delights of cocktails.

Text **Christy Yoong** Photography **Ting Yang Shan**

The story, inevitably, begins with, "A woman walks into the bar one day..." Although it wouldn't sound out of place in the opening of a Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler hard-boiler, this particular incident did actually take place in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur. In this case, however, it ended neither with the gumshoe haplessly falling for the dame nor shootouts with villainous characters. Its happy consequence, nonetheless, has pride of place in this grande dame of a hotel's cocktail menu.

Cocktails occupy a peculiar place in a bar. Neither a pull or a shot, it can be

simple (the classic martini, for example, is simply gin and vermouth and garnished with an olive or lemon twist) or elaborate (the Ramos Gin Fizz is a mix of gin, lemon juice, lime juice, egg white, sugar, cream, orange flower water and soda water – all shaken together, according to the original recipe, for an arm-aching 12 minutes). Many are also interpretations or elaborations of other cocktails – the White Lady (gin, Cointreau and fresh lemon juice) is, essentially, a take on the older Sidecar (cognac, Cointreau and fresh lemon juice) that which, later, birthed the Tom Collins (gin, fresh lemon juice, sugar and soda water). Foremost,

perhaps, is the sometimes unfathomable alchemy in how different brews and ingredients dovetail into such perfect highball pleasures.

Regardless of the mysteries, ingredients or antecedents, one of the great pleasures of cocktails, apart from the imbibing, of course, is the stories – legends, in some cases – that are behind them. And, if you happen to be in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, take a stroll down to its Smoke House and seek out the barman, John Yap, who'll be more than happy to serve up some of the most delicious cocktails in Kuala Lumpur along with the stories that come with them, all drawn up from his 15 years of bartending.

"Cocktails can be quite fun," says Yap, who is affectionately known as Johnnie, as he slices, dices, mixes and shakes one concoction after another. "Some of them, like the martini, for example, are not so much about the taste, but more about positioning yourself at the right mental level and helping your get into the mood, feel more relaxed or better."

While the alcohol in cocktails does serve up a heady brew, Yap says that a bar works only if the right elements are in place. "A good bartender is, essentially, a good service person. You're standing behind the counter and, often, people ask you or talk to you anything – football scores, politics and even about relationships," Yap says with a smile. "Colin Field, who runs the Bar Hemingway in the Ritz Paris, which is the pinnacle of the bartending profession,

"As a bartender, you always hope to leave your mark and one way of doing that is by creating a cocktail."

said that, as a bartender, he's had to read about stock markets and even antique furniture!"

While all these, sometimes, esoteric knowledge is handy, Yap insists that an in-depth understanding of the product that separates the true bartender from the occasional mixologist. "People come to a bar for various reasons, but a good bartender needs to be knowledgeable about the drinks behind him as that will help create the right atmosphere," he says. It can be demanding but Yap has had nothing but pleasure in the job. "One of the world's most famous bartenders is Bruce Willis, who's said that he has two of the best jobs in the world – acting and bartending," he laughs.

As he surveys the bustling Smoke House, rife with cheerful patrons and happy conversation, Yap muses: "As a bartender, you always hope to leave your mark and one way of doing that is by creating a cocktail. Maybe nobody will remember your name in the end, just



like the bartender who created the Jungle Bird in 1970s Kuala Lumpur, but a good cocktail will always outlive its creator."

"Bartenders come and go, but a cocktail can last forever," he says with a final smile as he goes to work on recreating another liquid and alcoholic tale. ■



**THE TANQUERAY BLUE**

*Tanqueray 10 Gin, lemon juice, sugar syrup, cranberry juice & blue ginger infusion*

Created by John Yap himself, The Tanqueray Blue is based on an infusion of the aromatic local blue ginger. It is, according to him, a reflection of Malaysia while the presence of diced mango creates an entirely new dimension to this refreshing cocktail.

**JUNGLE BIRD**

*Campari, rum, lime, sugar & pineapple juice*

Urban legend credits its birth in 1978 in the Aviary Bar of the old Kuala Lumpur Hilton on Jalan Sultan Ismail by an unknown bartender in the 1970s. The Jungle Bird cocktail remains a mysterious-looking tippie but is a sublime drink. As tropical as a cocktail can be, it is frothy, with a slightly bitter finish that ends with a surprising finish.

**THE MARTINEZ**

*Sweet vermouth, Plymouth gin, maraschino, Angostura Bitters & twist of lemon*

The antecedent of the martini and the precursor of the Manhattan

(whiskey, sweet vermouth and bitters), The Martinez, like the Jungle Bird, has seen a revival in recent days. It is sweet, botanical (thanks to the gin) and certainly packs a punch. It is a classic that certainly deserves its place on the cocktail menu.

**CODE 55 AND TWO BULAT**

*Shandy, whisky & gin*

The story, as related by the hotel's captain, Tan Meng Tan, began with a lady who marched into the dining hall, up to a table where a man, a regular guest, was sharing a meal with a young woman. As the lady sat there, angrily, Tan asked if she wanted a drink, to which she replied, unhesitatingly: "Code 55 and two bulat." The captain was stumped, as he knew of no cocktail by that name, and it was only later that he realised that she was actually girding for battle and had asked for a Colt 55 handgun and two bullets. Luckily, no blood was shed that day and, in honour of this story, one of the many legends attached to this storied hotel, this refreshing and unique drink takes pride of place in its cocktail menu.

*From left: John Yap's Tanqueray Blue, infused with blue ginger; Jungle Bird, created in Kuala Lumpur in the 1970s; gin pahit, the de rigueur drink of the colonials; Code 55 and Two Bulat, a happy result of a mistranslation.*



# Oh, For A Cuppa!

There is nothing as soothingly civilised as the ritual of taking afternoon tea.

Text **Diana Khoo**

It is no secret that the origins of the very-civilised act of taking afternoon tea has long been credited to Anna, the 7th Duchess of Bedford, who thought to stave off pre-dinner hunger pangs by having a tray of tea, buttered bread and delicate cakes served to her in the comfort of her drawing room a few hours prior. Given the inviting manner in which one may revive his or her constitution mid-afternoon, mooted no less than by Her Grace, it didn't take long for the idea to catch on. There are few rules to the art of afternoon tea, although sticklers for tradition do insist upon a few necessary elements, particularly a good selection of fresh-cut finger sandwiches, followed by scones served with jam and cream, cakes and hot savouries. Given that afternoon tea remains a favourite among ladies of the upper class, it is, likewise, imperative that the ritual maintains degrees of elegance and finesse. Tea must, of course, be poured from fine teapots (ornate silver is preferred), while the tea service should be made from delicate bone china. A jug of milk and slices of lemon should also be provided for. All nibbles should be presented on tiered stands, if possible, and in dainty enough portions to allow conversation to be carried on while eating. Aside from that, the only other thing you'd need to ensure the success of your afternoon tea session is scintillating news and conversation – always the greatest appetite-whetter!



*The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's afternoon tea is as majestic as they come. Enjoy it in the beautiful orchid conservatory for a tea-time treat to remember.*

## The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur

**Setting:** Enjoying a second lease on life since it was built in the 1930s and, for the longest time, billed as one of South-East Asia's grandest hotels, The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur lives up to its name in full. Naturally, taking afternoon tea amidst the Art Deco interiors of Malaysia's grande dame hotel is hard to beat. Set in the historical Majestic Wing of the elegant building, enjoy a spot of afternoon revival in classic colonial style as white-jacketed wait staff pours cups of hot tea and serve you an elegant assortment of sweet and savoury fancies. There are selections of sweets, scones (naturally) and, of course, cut sandwiches of boiled beef as well as more interesting fillings like *foie gras* and *hummus*. The chicken *tikka vol-au-vent* is particularly tasty and those with a sweet tooth would enjoy the forest berry tarts, éclairs and rich slices of fruit cake.

**Sip:** Cameronian Gold Blend tea is the standard pour while a selection of 50 fine Ronnefeldt teas are available at a surcharge of RM30++ per pot. We can't get enough of Ronnefeldt's fine Pai Mu Tan Silver Typ tea as well as its Assamese Irish Whiskey-Cream. For traditionalists, there's Classic Orange Pekoe and Tarry Lapsang. If you are caffeinated enough, herbal infusions include roibosh and lemon, Moroccan mint, long-cut lemongrass and verbena. Coffee drinkers may, likewise, ask for java to be served instead.

**Pricing:** Served from 3pm to 6pm daily, afternoon tea at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is priced at RM48++ per person. You may also choose to take tea in the hotel's wonderful orchid conservatory, quite possibly, the loveliest setting in which to enjoy an elegant afternoon, although there is a two-month waiting list, on average. The conservatory seats a maximum of 14 and is priced at RM88++ per person. **To Book:** +603 2785 8000.

## Cameron Highlands Resort

**Setting:** Misty mountains, wild jungle the colour of emeralds and tsavorites, hidden waterfalls and undulating tea plantations set the mood for afternoon tea in the highlands. If you're looking for a hot drink accompanied by something savoury, there's no better place to do tea than at the Cameron Highland Resort's elegant Jim Thompson Tea Room. Served daily from 3pm to 6pm, indulge in a selection of tuna, smoked salmon, egg and cress and cream cheese and cucumber sandwiches as well as an assortment of cakes and pastries, while breathing in the fresh highland air. A friendly attendant will also shortly bring along a plate of freshly-baked scones to be enjoyed with homemade strawberry jam (strawberries grow abundantly in the highlands and are a favourite purchase among holidaymakers) and Devonshire clotted cream.

**Sip:** Cameron Highlands is the heart of BOH Plantations, Malaysia's most famous tea label, which owns over 8,000ac of tea plantations here – in Habu, Fairlie and Sungei Palas, where there is also a lovely visitor's centre in which visitors may learn more about the art behind a cuppa by going on a complimentary educational talk and tour. Naturally, this is the sip to savour. Choose from BOH's fine selection of Cameronian teas offered at the hotel, including its signature Gold Blend or its famously robust and full-bodied Bukit Cheeding No 53, from the tea garden of the same name.

**Pricing:** Afternoon tea at the Jim Thompson Tea Room is priced at RM35++ per person or RM60++ per couple. **To Book:** +605 491 1100.

## The Majestic Malacca

**Setting:** Built in 1929, The Majestic Malacca began life as the residence of Leong Long Man, a rubber tycoon who left China to seek his fortune in colonial Malaya. Now, transformed into an elegant historical hotel, it is the ideal base from which to explore all that history-soaked Malacca has to offer, from antiques shopping along Jonker Street to visiting different temples of faith along Harmony Street (also known as Jalan Tukang Emas), particularly the Kampung Kling mosque, the Cheng Hoon Teng temple and the Sri Poyatha Moorthi temple. Exploring the nooks and crannies of this UNESCO World Heritage Site can be hot work, so we'd recommend you retreat to the cool interiors of The Majestic Malacca for a refreshing spot of afternoon tea before heading out again once the day cools down a little. Here, amidst the teal-coloured louvered shutters and eye-pleasing geometrics of the original 1920s English ceramic tile flooring, lean back on a cosy sofa or rattan lounge to enjoy an assortment of pastries and traditional Nyonya sweet cakes known as *kuih-muih*. There are also freshly-baked scones to enjoy with homemade strawberry jam and clotted cream.

**Sip:** Choose from fine teas by Malaysia's renowned BOH Plantations, including its aromatic and delicate Cameronian Gold Blend, or fruitier blends infused with flavours of mango, citrusy lemon with mandarin, Earl Grey with tangerine, vanilla or even caffeine-free lime and ginger.

**Pricing:** Afternoon Tea is served daily, from 3pm to 6pm, at The Lounge at The Mansion and is priced at RM35++ per person or RM60++ for two. There is an additional charge of RM10 for coffee or tea refills. **To Book:** +606 289 8000.



## Starhill Tea Salon

**Setting:** Inspired by the fascinating culture of tea, the Starhill Tea Salon in Kuala Lumpur's Starhill Gallery is a temple dedicated to the art of enjoying this rich brew. Whether your tastes run more to Asian white and green teas or the smoky darkness of a matured black tea, you'll find the salon's selection to be extensive and well-curated. Here, the afternoon tea menu offers both English and Oriental options. So, if you're looking for something different from the usual fruit cake and scones, opt for the latter so you may experiment pairing your Pai Mu Tan or special Genmaicha with fluffy yam puffs, assorted dim sum, steamed *char siu* and custard buns as well as a selection of sushi and *maki* rolls, all elegantly presented on tiered stands.

**Sip:** The list is varied and interesting, offering an international selection of teas, from Fujian white teas to matured Yunnan teas like Emperor and Imperial Pu-Erh as well as Ayurvedic teas. The Starhill Tea Salon also has a good drinks list if you're planning to extend your tea session into the 'happy hour'. Try the iced coffees, spiked with Bailey's, Kahlua or Tia Maria, or perhaps a Lynchberg Lemonade, made with Jack Daniel's, Triple Sec, fresh lime juice and 7-Up. For a caffeine jolt, order the Turkish coffee.

**Pricing:** Served from 3pm to 5pm daily, the English or Oriental Afternoon Teas are priced at RM70++ per person. **To Book:** +603 2719 8550.

## The Surin

**Setting:** Pansea Beach is, without doubt, one of Phuket's prettiest and more private beaches. Located on the Thai island's west coast, its crescent-shaped sands welcome guests of The Surin as well as the neighbouring Amanpuri resort daily for sun-worshipping

*Clockwise, from top left: Scones, sandwiches and strawberries are staple at the Cameron Highlands Resort's Jim Thompson Tea Room; Luxuriate over tea like a grand Nyonya at The Majestic Malacca; Find serenity in the city over a cuppa at the Starhill Tea Salon.*



“It is no secret that the origins of the very-civilised act of taking afternoon tea has long been credited to Anna, the 7th Duchess of Bedford.”

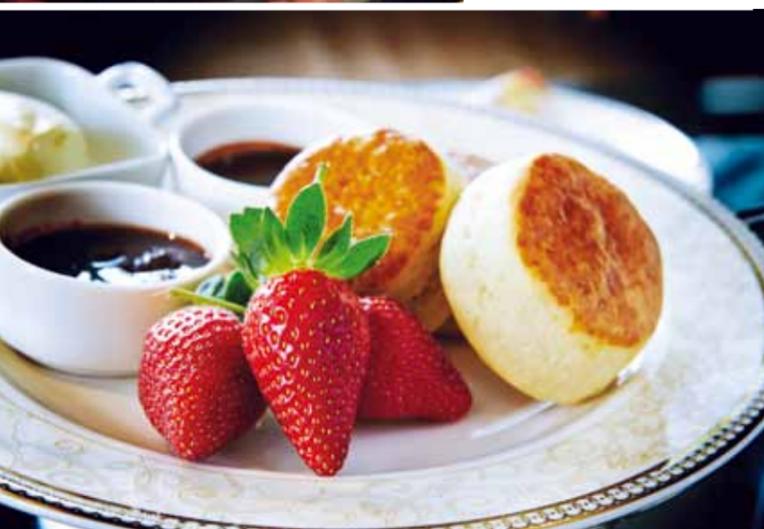
and a host of beach-based activities. In this island paradise setting, enjoy afternoon tea every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by The Surin’s dramatic black-tiled swimming pool with the hotel’s compliments. The spread might change ever so often but there’ll usually be a good selection of luscious tropical fruit like watermelon, pineapple, pomelo and mango, as well as freshly-baked cakes from the kitchen and a local Thai snack prepared on the spot. If you’re lucky, it’ll be *khanom krok* – a popular Thai street food snack that’s essentially tiny pancakes cooked on a cast-iron griddle made using flour, coconut milk and various toppings, like scallions, taro cubes and carrots. *Khanom* in Thai means ‘sweet’ while *krok* is griddle. Be warned – it is deliciously addictive!

**Sip:** It can get hot and sticky by the seaside, so cool down your afternoon with sips of ginger iced tea. If you’re a stickler for tradition, there’s coffee and tea as well.

**Pricing:** The poolside tea at The Surin is served with the hotel’s compliments. Free scuba diving trials are also offered, courtesy of H2O Sports, the hotel’s water sports operator, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays as well. Try to combine tea and a spot of underwater fun for an unforgettable holiday afternoon.



Clockwise, from top: The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur’s afternoon tea is a truly ritzy repast; Stunning tea-inspired decor at the Starhill Tea Salon; Hot buttered scones with jam is a must at any tea table; Making *khanom krok* - a great Thai teatime favourite.



### The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur

**Setting:** The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur’s famous traditional English afternoon tea experience at its Lobby Lounge will transport you, almost, to the elegant confines of a tea room in London. You could forget, for a minute, you are in the heart of Kuala Lumpur’s famous Golden Triangle shopping and entertainment district. A harpist is on hand to entertain from Tuesdays to Saturdays and, amidst her soothing strums, nibble on dainty sandwiches, savouries like scrumptious chicken pies and Quiche Lorraine, as well *de rigueur* favourites like hot buttered scones served with clotted cream and assorted jams and preserves. Select your sweets from the *trolley de gourmandises*, which carries a varying assortment of freshly-prepared cakes, pastries, tarts and other sugary delights like double chocolate cupcakes, blueberry financiers, pralines, truffles, blackcurrant and violet éclairs and raspberry Bretons.

**Sip:** A wait staff will bring over the tea trolley, well-stocked with fine Ronnefeldt teas, when you are ready. There’s relaxing camomile as well as Assamese Mokalbarie, Darjeeling Jungpana and flowery Earl Grey to accompany your spread. For a more decadent twist to traditional afternoon tea, order a glass (or bottle) of Laurent-Perrier. After all, nothing picks up the midday malaise quite the way bubbles can.

**Pricing:** Traditional afternoon tea is priced at RM78++ per person, RM158++ with a glass of champagne, or RM498++ inclusive of a bottle of Laurent-Perrier. Served daily, except Sundays, from 3pm to 5pm. **To Book:** +603 2142 8000. ■

Above: Teatime treats at The Surin include ginger iced tea and fruit by the poolside.

# All Set!

Fancy gourmet meals that won't break the bank? Consider The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's cost-conscious set menus in its elegant Colonial Café that are fabulous value-for-money yet full on flavour and style.

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

The historic heart of old Kuala Lumpur might be, sometimes, overlooked in favour of the more glamorous, glitzy and bustling KLCC and Bukit Bintang areas, but there's certainly no shortage of soul... or sumptuousness, as evidenced by the elegant Colonial Café. Located in the historical wing of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, sitting in the café immediately conjures up visions of bygone days – of planters knocking back gin *pahits* and *stengahs* and ladies, pretty in their floral dresses and softwave bobs, attending a curry *tiffin* lunch or *thé dansant*. Not that you are dreaming, mind you. The ambience at the Colonial Café is as real as it comes. Warm timber, starched white tablecloths, eye-catching orchid arrangements and framed black and white portraits of old Malaya give the dining room a stately feel while evoking a great sense of nostalgia. Mid-afternoon also sees the grand piano's ivories tickled by maestro Ooi Eow Jin and, once dusk falls, Malaysia's most celebrated musical family, the Solianos, share their inimitable brand of music with guests. The initial thought that such a privileged interlude back in time might cost you a pretty penny (and, indeed, it might as signature dishes like old-fashioned faggots and Hainanese chicken rice balls are not bargainous), but the café's newly introduced set menus are certain to have you smiling as you settle the bill.

Pop by for lunch or dinner and nibble on a soft buttered roll as you peruse the appointed choices of the day. The chefs have created an interesting medley of dishes that are modern yet reflecting all the gloriousness of the colonial era's guide to eating well. There are, for example, classic favourites guaranteed to assuage homesickness felt by expatriates, like fish and chips with mushy peas and hot treacle pudding, as well as more interesting spins as seen in the chicken *tikka* Caesar salad and roast cod with Brie mash. The three-course menu is priced at just RM90++ for both lunch and dinner, inclusive of tea or coffee, while the four-course is RM120++. Lunching here is a particular delight as natural sunlight floods the dining area but it is night time that offers a more dramatic



life cuisine //

experience. With live jazz music courtesy of a quartet of Solianos, the rattle 'n' hum of exotic-sounding cocktails like *Malayan Colada* and *Jungle Bird* being shaken and stirred by suave Bogart-esque barman Johnny Yap and dining in soft light reflected off the rather-marvellous chandelier under an imposing gold-leafed dome, you just might think you've fallen into a W Somerset Maugham story. And, once the meal's done and your white-jacketed waiter brings you the bill, be pleasantly surprised at the night's tally – an assuredly modest total which the novelist himself would approve of – and leaving you with enough spare change to cap the night with a couple more gin *pahits*. Back to the good ol' days? Oh, yes, indeed. ■

*Penny wise, pound wiser with the Colonial Café's newly-introduced crunch conscious set menus.*

## OUR DAILY BREAD

Your weekly guide to eating well at the Colonial Café. Choose from three or four courses at just RM90++ and RM120++, respectively, including tea or coffee.



**Monday:** Baked Cornish-style crab cakes on smoked tomato chutney and truffled eggs with chive-lime dressing; creamy pumpkin and coriander broth with lamb shoulder *confit*; traditional Beef Wellington with cauliflower cheese, courgettes Provençale and *noisette* potatoes; summer pudding served with seasonal berry compote and vanilla cream.

**Tuesday:** Avocado and crab with refreshing mango salsa and Japanese pickled cucumber with *miso*-style dressing; creamed white asparagus and escargot ravioli; pepper-crusted roast rack of Romney Marsh lamb with braised Savoy cabbage, *boulangère* potatoes and light rosemary jus; English summer trifle with honeycomb crust.

**Wednesday:** Whole baked frilled mushroom on arugula with creamy egg dressing; cream of sweet roast tomato basil *sabayon*; roast Atlantic codfish with parsley sauce and Brie mash; rice pudding with caramelised fresh raspberries.

**Thursday:** Homemade corned beef hash topped with fried egg, Madeira jus and deep-fried garlic; traditional French onion soup topped with baked Gruyere cheese; salmon *en croûte* filled with scallop, lobster mousse and spinach served with *nouvelle* potatoes and tarragon butter sauce; apple crumble served with fresh double cream;

**Friday:** Caesar salad chicken *tikka* Marikina; creamy corn, clam and mussel chowder; prime rib of Angus beef crusted with rock salt and black pepper with Yorkshire pudding, sprouts and neeps 'n' tatties; hot treacle pudding.

**Saturday:** Appetiser of beef ragout and white bean *cassoulet*; homemade lobster bisque; classic fish and chips with homemade fries, mushy peas and pickled onions; warm bread and butter pudding with hazelnut ice cream.

**Sunday:** Home-smoked salmon, greens and Indian chutney on wholegrain toast; classic cream of chicken and mushrooms; blackened whole roast crusted veal rack with braised red cabbage, sage derby *gratin* bone marrow reduction and asparagus tips; treacle tart.

# Winter's Coming

Akira Saito, Executive Chef of The Green Leaf Hotel & Spa in Niseko in Japan, a YTL Hotel, shares with us four of his favourite dishes, ideal for staying warm and keeping the oncoming cold season at bay in deliciously traditional Japanese-style.

Text **Diana Khoo** Translation **Noriko Sasaki** Photography **Yong Keen Keong**

Having worked as a chef for close to three decades, it's no wonder that Akira Saito, the Executive Chef of The Green Leaf Hotel & Spa, is enjoying his career up north. In wintry Niseko, acknowledged as the snowiest resort in the world, he enjoys working with some of the best produce in the world. Hokkaido is famed for its fresh, world-class foodstuff, while its sub-arctic seas yield some of the finest seafood to be found. "Hokkaido has long enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for its cuisine and produce. But what I personally think is exceptional is the seafood. It's really from sea to table and it's hard to find more delicious fish and shellfish, particularly *hotate* (scallops) and *uni* (sea urchin), than what you can get here."

Growing up surrounded by food (Chef Saito's parents used to run a takeaway catering business – "I was surrounded by *bento* boxes," he jokes) has helped cultivate a sense of curiosity about cooking and the kitchen in the young Akira, which, inevitably, led to his career as a chef. "I also trained in French culinary techniques," he shares. And, indeed, one of his greatest food memories was when he was just starting out. "I was working in a restaurant and my master chef decided to treat me to a meal. We went to Kiyomi Mikuni's in Tokyo and it proved to be such an eye-opening experience, trying the French-influenced cuisine of this great chef's restaurant. I still remember it to this day."

Chef Akira Saito presides over The Green Leaf's popular Goshiki Restaurant.



## Chef Saito At A Glance

**POB:**

Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan.

**DOB:**

In the 40th year of the Showa reign (1965).

**Favourite Ingredients:**

"As long as it's the freshest, I will like it."

**Favourite Kitchen Tool:**

"My knife!"

**Favourite Dish:**

"*Kaisendon*, a seafood rice bowl, is a popular thing to eat here as the ingredients are just so fresh. Smoked fish is also very nice and the best way to preserve it for the winter. Hokkaido has a rich culture of smoking and preserving foods."

**Off-Duty Eats:**

"I live alone so I like going out to different restaurants to explore new tastes and dishes."

**Niseko Eating Tips:**

"All the restaurants around here are usually very good as the produce is faultless. Good produce usually means good food. The Green Leaf Hotel has Goshiki and The Crab Shack, both of which are very good. If you want to explore a little further, try Torimatsu in Kutchan, a town very close to the hotel. The *yakitori* (food grilled on skewers) is very famous and even Anthony Bourdain has managed to find his way there."





## Tonjiru (Meat & Seafood Miso Soup)

**Serves 5-6**

*Tonjiru* is a particularly popular winter dish as it's a hot soup loaded with *miso*, meat and vegetables. It's flavoured with ginger and garlic, and is a lovely, delicious way to keep warm. Many Japanese families have just the soup alone to make a meal, although, if you want it to be more filling, you can have it with a portion of steamed rice.

### Ingredients

- 70g *Daikon* (Japanese radish), chopped into 5mm fan shapes
- 70g Carrot, chopped into 5mm fan shapes
- 70g *Satoimo* (Japanese yam; can be replaced with potatoes), cut into small cubes
- 70g *Gobou* (burdock), shaved into 2cm slices. Soak in water with a few dashes of vinegar
- 50g Onions, chopped into small cubes
- 40g Scallions, slice half and save the other half (brunoise) for garnishing
- 150g Pork sirloin, chopped into small bite sizes

- 130g Miso
- 5g Powdered bonito stock
- 1litre Bonito and *konbu* (kelp) stock
- Freshly grated ginger and garlic (approximately 5g each)
- Vegetable oil

### Method

1. Heat a pan with low heat then pour in vegetable oil. Add ginger and garlic until aroma is released.
2. Add meat and cook on medium heat. When its colour begins changing, add vegetables and stir until vegetables are half cooked.
3. Pour bonito and *konbu* stock and half portion of *miso*. Let it boil until vegetables are tender.
4. When vegetables are done, add remainder *miso*, powdered bonito and mix well.
5. Serve in a ball topped with chopped scallions and, if you like, Japanese *shichimi* chilli.



## Scallop & Snow Crab Rice

**Serves 5-6**

Scallop and *zuwaigani* (snow crab) rice is an all-season one-pot meal. It's actually incredibly easy to make and is flavoured with just *dashi* and *shoyu* (soy sauce).

### Ingredients A

- 900g Japanese sticky rice
- 5 Baby scallop
- 40g Snow crab meat
- 700cc Water
- 100cc Bonito and *konbu* (kelp) stock
- 20cc Mirin
- 15cc Saké
- 18cc Vegetable oil

### Method

1. Rinse rice. Mix water, bonito and *konbu* stock, *mirin*, *saké* and vegetable oil.
2. Pour rice into rice cooker and place scallops and snow crab on the top.
3. Pour stock mixture and cook.



## Salmon Chan Chan Yaki

**Serves 5-6**

### Ingredients A

- 600g Filet of Hokkaido salmon, deboned
- 100g Cabbage, chopped into 5x5cm squares (bite size)
- 200g Bean sprouts
- 40g Carrot in 5mm slices
- 60g Onions, cut into half and 1cm slices
- 40g Paprika, in 1cm slices
- 30g Bell pepper in 1cm slices
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 200g *Saikyo miso* (yellow coloured sweet *miso*) \*
- 36cc Saké \*
- 36cc Mirin \*
- 10g Sugar \*
- 2 Egg yolks \*

Red chilli to taste\*  
Scallion for garnishing

### Method

1. Mix \* until texture is smooth to make Chan Chan *miso* sauce.
2. Place salmon filet on centre of heated table top cooking pan, surrounded by the vegetables. (If a table top cooking pan is not available, a regular pan on the stove top is fine.)
3. Pour Chan Chan *miso* sauce over the fish and cook on medium heat.
4. When salmon and vegetables are medium rare, break the fish and mix with the sauce and vegetable.
5. Cook until done.

## Baked Kabocha Pumpkin Pudding

**Serves 5-6**

### Ingredients A

- 330g Pumpkin, mashed
- 5 Eggs
- 600cc Milk
- 60cc Heavy cream
- 170g Sugar
- A few dashes of vanilla oil
- Soft sugar for caramelising

### Method

1. Mix pumpkin and heavy cream into a ball.
2. Mix eggs and sugar into a separate ball.
3. Boil milk in a pan.
4. Blend both balls until smooth. Add boiled milk and mix. Pour the mixture in oven-proof soufflé cups.
5. Place cups into a tray filled with water and steam in a 165°C oven for 20 minutes.
6. Cool the pudding. Sprinkle soft sugar over the tops and caramelize with burner. ▣



# Island Life

There's nowhere quite like Borneo for a paradise-like setting of jungle, mountain and sea all together. YTL Hotels' Gaya Island Resort, just a short speedboat ride away from Sabah's capital of Kota Kinabalu, is the ideal base from which to explore all that the Land Below the Wind has to offer.

**Jeff Mong**, the General Manager who spearheaded the opening of Gaya Island Resort, shares his passion for island life.

## Sun Salutation

Nothing beats starting the day with a light breakfast in the privacy of your villa accompanied by fresh orange juice, which is delivered to your room right after morning call, followed by a **sunrise power walk**. Everyone gathers at the poolside for some light stretching exercise before power walking around the resort and then flopping down on a patch of perfect beach to watch the sun come up. You can't help but be grateful for such an experience!



Learning to dance the traditional **Sumazau** is a must while in Sabah and, at Gaya Island Resort, we organise lessons twice a week on a patch of garden by the poolside. It's a lovely traditional Sabahan dance and, yes, I've tried it myself several times. Look it up on YouTube if you want an idea of how it goes.

Have an **Urutan Pribumi** (indigenous massage) at the lovely **Spa Village Gaya Island**, set amidst lush mangroves. This treatment is unique to the resort and uses the resort's signature blend of Island Spice aroma oil. After the session, you'd feel improvements in circulation, mobility and flexibility.



Our Kinabalu Villas offer what I think are the best views in the entire resort. With a vista that stretches right across the South China Sea in front of you and, if you're lucky with the weather, the silhouette of Mount Kinabalu, nothing beats a leisurely day relaxing on the Kinabalu Villa's lovely balcony... accompanied by a good book, of course! Gaya Island Resort also offers private dining experiences right within the luxury of your own villa, with a specially-set table, chilled champagne and your meal of choice. A meal to remember, for sure!

Water babies would do well to book a snorkelling session with Scott Mayback, our resident marine biologist, for an underwater tour of our house reef. Spend the day in the sea swimming with colourful marine fish and then getting a whole load of information from Scott. Nothing could be better!



Turtles frequently get hit by boats so, at our newly-opened Marine Centre on Gaya Island, which pledges to rescue and rehabilitate these injured turtles before releasing them back into the wild, it offers guests an amazing chance to see the unique work we do - this is the first of its kind in Borneo, by the way. Don't miss paying it a visit during your stay.

If you're interested in achieving a Zen state of mind and performing your *asanas* with ease, enjoy a session or two of yoga on our yoga deck, which is set amidst natural mangroves. Truly an experience! Just remember to pack along your yoga attire. Gaya Island Resort also hosts guest artists from time to time, each bringing with them their own unique healing skills and mindful touches.

Surrounded by nature, simply strolling around the resort is pleasurable in itself as there's always the chance encounter with a wild proboscis monkey! Take our nature walks, offered complimentary twice daily and guided by Justin Juhun, our resident naturalist, for your chance at a sighting of these playful, exhibitionist simians. For nature-lovers, there are also other things to spot, including flying lizards, hornbills and the Borneo angle-head or dragon lizards.



Gaya Island Resort's **Stardust Voyage** is the loveliest sunset cruise aboard our 64ft super yacht. It starts off with a cruise to nowhere, while the captain looks for a nice spot to anchor for a bit. Dinner will then be served by your private hostess and chef. The F&B manager and chef can also tailor-make the menu to your preference as the voyage is all about offering guests a bespoke luxury experience. After dinner, everyone moves up to the upper deck for dessert and coffee before the yacht slowly sails its way back to **Malohom Bay**. Nothing beats this ultimate romantic experience on the high seas, particularly if you're at Gaya Island Resort with your partner.



No island escapade is quite complete without a beachside seafood feast. And, at Gaya Island Resort, I am pleased to say few things can equal our **Bajau Laut Beach Barbeque**. Inspired by the local sea-faring Bajau tribe, sit down to a fresh seafood dinner prepared *à la minute* and enjoy it under the stars and lulled by sea breeze. If you're lucky, you might be able to spot shooting stars as well.

If you're looking to experience a more private side of Gaya Island, visit **Tavajun Bay**, which offers great privacy and has the softest white sand and gin-clear waters. It is accessible by a short boat ride or a more serious session of jungle-trekking. I'd recommend the latter as, the minute you reach the bay, all you need to do is jump into the sea to cool off, while our staff ready up a chilled coconut from the restaurant there to quench your thirst. *Okay bah kalau kau!* 🍹



Jeff Mong was the General Manager and part of the opening team for Gaya Island Resort.



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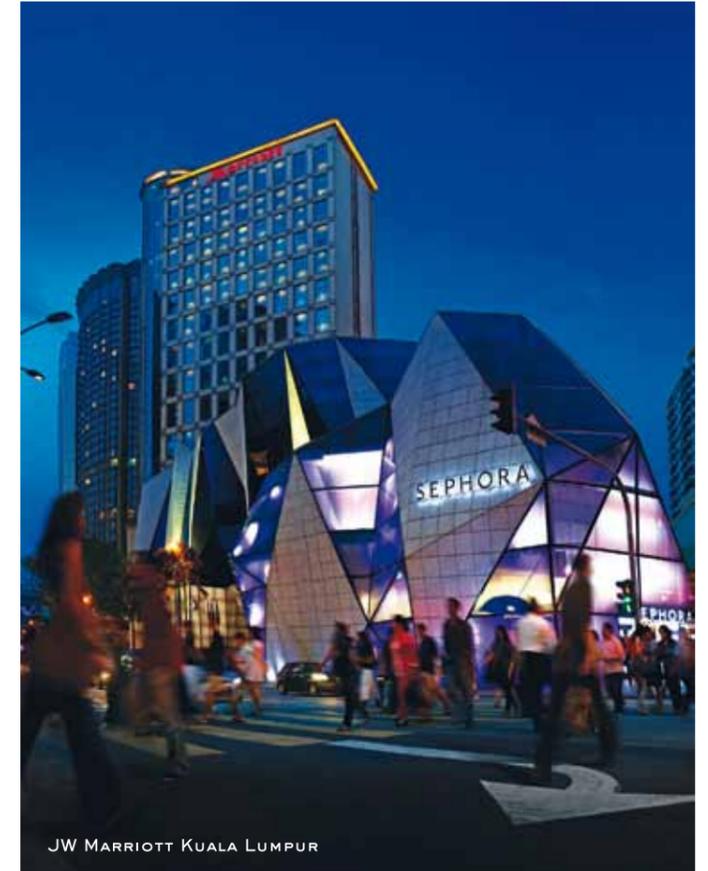
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SET WITHIN THE TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN MARINE PARK, GAYA ISLAND RESORT IS A GEM LOCATED JUST OFF KOTA KINABALU, SABAH. GOLDEN SAND BEACHES AND CRYSTAL CLEAR WATERS THAT TEEM WITH MARINE LIFE BECKON, WHILE THE SPA VILLAGE OFFERS GUESTS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF BORNEO-INSPIRED HEALING AND WELLNESS TRADITIONS.  
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REGARDED AS THE CRADLE OF MALAYSIAN HISTORY, EXPLORING MALACCA IS LIKE STEPPING BACK IN TIME, WHEN THE PORT-CITY USED TO WELCOME SPICE TRADERS, SULTANS AND WARRIORS FROM BYGONE DAYS. SOAK UP ALL THE MAGIC AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA, ONE OF THE CITY'S FINEST HOTELS WHOSE STRUCTURE DATES BACK TO THE 1920s AND WHOSE INTERIORS ARE A REFLECTION OF THE CITY'S FINE PAST. WWW.MAJESTICMALACCA.COM

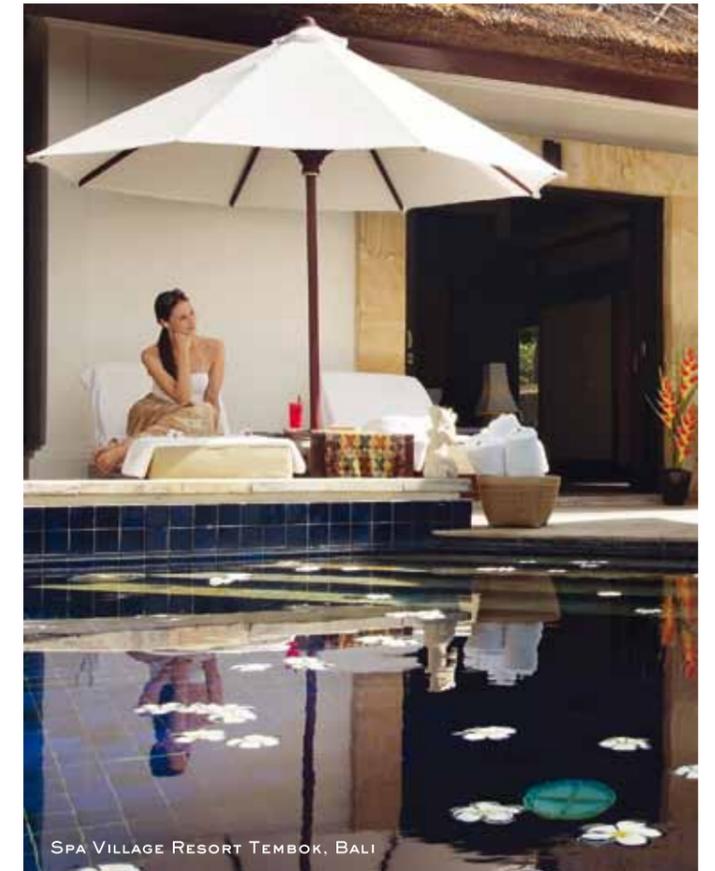
ITS NAME ALREADY CONJURES UP IMAGES OF OLD WORLD ELEGANCE AND OPULENCE. LOCATED IN KUALA LUMPUR'S DOWNTOWN GOLDEN TRIANGLE BUSINESS DISTRICT, THIS LUXURY HOTEL IS CONVENIENTLY LOCATED TO UPSCALE SHOPPING, DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT. IT ALSO BOASTS OF ITS OWN AWARD-WINNING SPA WHILE GOURMETS WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED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

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LOCATED IN THE HEART OF NISEKO VILLAGE IN HOKKAIDO, JAPAN, THIS PREMIUM CONTEMPORARY RESORT OFFERS GUESTS A SEAMLESS EXPERIENCE OF STAY, SNOW AND SKI. GOSHIKI OFFERS A WIDE RANGE OF FLAVOURS TO SUIT EVERY PALATE WHILE APRÈS-SKI DRINKS ARE BEST ENJOYED AT THE CONTEMPORARY TOMIOKA WHITE LOUNGE.  
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[WWW.THESURINPHUKET.COM](http://WWW.THESURINPHUKET.COM)

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[WWW.SPAVILLAGERESORT.COM/TEMBOKBALI](http://WWW.SPAVILLAGERESORT.COM/TEMBOKBALI)



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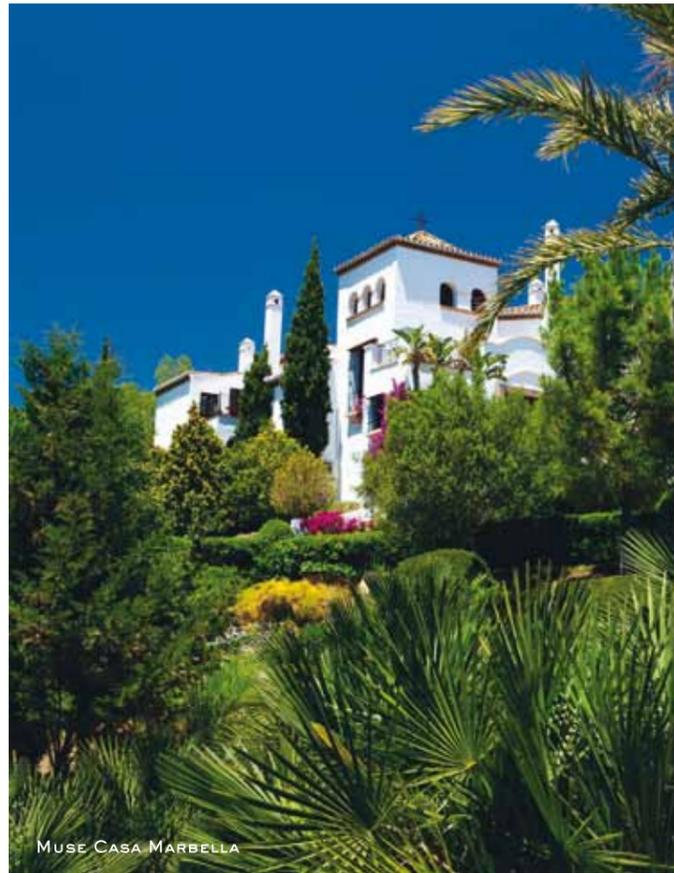
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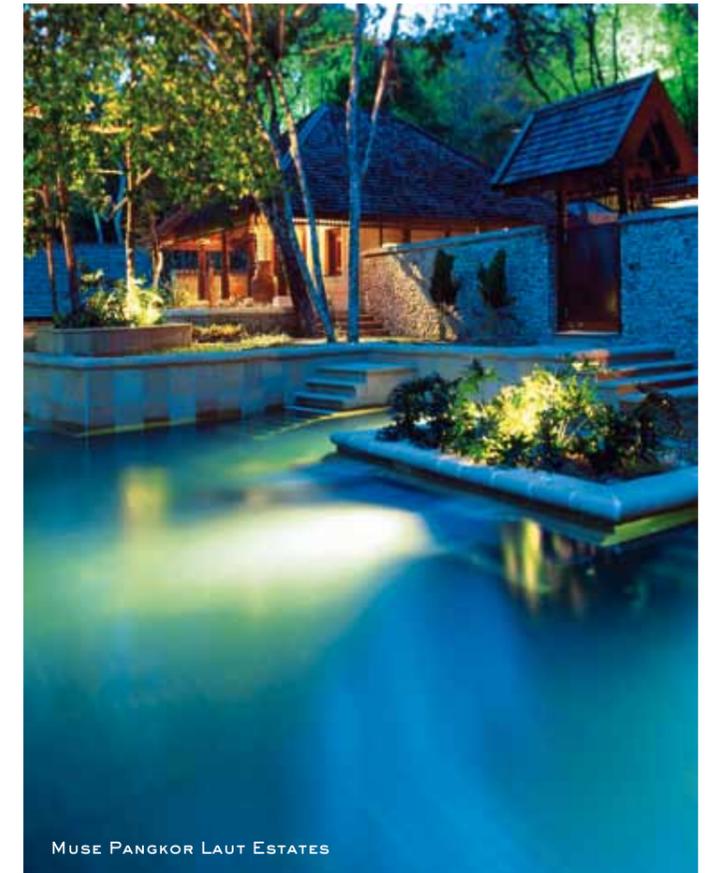
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# The Good Life

In America and across the world, crooner Tony Bennett has thrilled and soothed spirits for an astounding seven decades. Starting out in the late 1940s, Bennett is still cutting records – his latest being *As Time Goes By: Great American Songbook Classics*– that showcase his unmistakable talent. On a recent stop for his first-ever performance in Kuala Lumpur, he talks to *YTL Life* about life on the road, painting and leaving his heart in San Francisco.

**The first ever record I bought** was by Enrico Caruso. I grew up during the Depression in Astoria, Queens, and you had to make very good choices when buying records; it had to be something the whole family would love and be of very high quality. This has become the premise for my entire recording career – I like to perform for all demographics and I strive to choose the best popular songs to present to an audience.

**When I was a young singer**, I had a wonderful voice teacher named Mimi Spear, who had her studio on 52nd Street in Manhattan, where all the jazz clubs at the time used to be located. She encouraged me to listen to jazz musicians and use their styles as vocal inspiration. I loved the way Art Tatum played jazz piano – he made every song a very dramatic presentation that built to a big finish at the end, and I was influenced by his style of piano playing when I first started out.

**One of my favourite tour moments** was in Glastonbury. It had been raining for days and everything had turned to mud. At this big outdoor music festival, I was the only performer wearing a suit and tie, and they set out bales of hay for me to get on stage, so, while

the entire audience and crew was covered in mud, I was on stage in a perfectly clean suit and tie! They never got over that!

**A perfect day** for me is spent painting nature – it never disappoints. When I am in front of a canvas, four hours can go by and it seems like it was only four minutes. I love the fact that I can paint and sing – it keeps me constantly in a creative zone without getting burned out.

**To escape**, my wife and I like to vacation in Tuscany – it is absolutely beautiful and I spend all day painting the Italian countryside. It's difficult to get better than that. That is also why I always travel with my beautiful wife Susan, my dog Happy and my paint supplies.

**My signature song**, *I Left My Heart in San Francisco*, is one I get commissioned to sing all over the world. We celebrated the 50th anniversary of my recording of the song last year and the city of San Francisco did a beautiful event at City Hall, with a children's choir singing the song and the mayor proclaiming it Tony Bennett Day. That meant a lot to me. Of all my songs, this is the one that made me an international citizen. 🎵

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