

# Y T L L U X U R Y

L I T T E R

## PUTTING ON THE GLITZ

GLORIOUS SERVICE & FASHION AT THE PENTHOUSE AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, KUALA LUMPUR

## B IS FOR BESPOKE

UNIQUE TAILOR-MADE EXPERIENCES TO SUIT EVERY OCCASION

## ENGLISH LUXURY

GENTRY DOES IT AT THE ELEGANT BRAY HOUSE IN BERKSHIRE, ENGLAND





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### COVER

Photography **Christopher A.** @ Talent Cafe  
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Hair & Makeup **Taisu**

Shot on location at **The Residences Penthouse at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur**

Model wears dress from **Printed shift with sleeves, Gucci**

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### Excuse our Error, Please

We would like to extend an apology to Madam Leong Siu Ying, daughter of the ex-owner of Majestic Malacca, and who was the subject of the feature article 'Past & Present' in the 3rd Issue of YTL Life. On page 56 of the article, we had captioned the bottom left photograph "Madam Leong and her husband" when the man in the photo is actually Alex Leong, her half-brother. Our mistake is inexcusable, but we hope Madam Leong will accept our sincerest apologies on the matter.

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T H E Y T L L U X U R Y M A G A Z I N E  
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This past year has been a momentous one, marked with historic events that are set to positively define and enlighten our future.

Moving forward, we find a world with a beating heart, poised for positive change in so many aspects, whether politically, environmentally or financially. We are sitting up, slowing down and taking

notice, focusing more on the things we do, think and say, on the effect they have externally and on what we gain from each encounter. Within each experience we search for a human connection to be savoured, one that enriches our lives.

Asia is set to become a vibrant hotbed for setting new luxury trends encompassing everything from travel experiences and lifestyle events to the acquisition of properties and even luxury timepieces. A testament to this was the recent 'A Journey Through Time II', a propitious connoisseurs' festival and one of Asia's most fabulous watch and jewellery showcases at the Starhill Gallery. This year's programme included the inaugural Forbes Asia Luxury Forum 'The Art of Time' with Christopher Forbes and a panel of illustrious industry experts from all over the globe, to generate thought-leadership on the business of fine watchmaking and appreciation for the

artistry of high-end watches and the art of collecting. The festival was a spectacular success, which also saw the opening of two world's first boutiques at Starhill Gallery - Maurice Lacroix and Bedat & Co, a milestone in haute horology. They join a stellar collection of other world's first standalone boutiques and flagship stores at the iconic retail landmark.

As travel patterns and needs evolve, people are beginning to seek more than just an experience of sheer opulence, they yearn for experiences that are unique, personalised and emotionally fulfilling.

In this issue, we celebrate a year of YTL Life by revealing a special feature on magnificent bespoke travel experiences, each one crafted to suit each guest's personality and need, providing an insight into the art of anticipation and elegant, intuitive execution that are the pillars of Asian hospitality.

We rediscover romance in the majestic peaks of the Cameron Highlands and indulge in adventure, sailing the high seas at the award-winning Pangkor Laut Resort. We also share therapeutic remedies at Spa Village, each designed to help one rejuvenate after the year-end revelry.

I hope you will enjoy this issue of YTL Life as we delve into outstanding luxury experiences that enhance the spirit and touch the heart, experiences that we have enjoyed crafting, just for you.

Last year's 2nd edition of A Journey Through Time has firmly established the event as the premier luxury watch and jewellery fair in the region







**GOOD REEF!** The luxury private island paradise of Pangkor Laut Resort has begun a new chapter in eco-conservation with a reef clean-up and reef ecosystem education programme. Joining forces with Reef Check Malaysia, the inaugural event was held in October last year over three days. Kicking off the event was a half-day programme introducing 25 school children from Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Pangkor on Pangkor island to the idea of the fragility of the coral reef ecosystem and a trip to the popular snorkelling sites near Pulau Giam for a hands-on show on what to do and what not to do while snorkelling. The evening session saw over 50 of the resort's personnel from various departments attending a Reef Check presentation on identifying other projects that will help conserve the marine ecosystem resources around the island. The actual reef clean-up took place on the second day where both professional divers and selected members of the public teamed up to remove trash and debris around Coral, Royal and Emerald Bay. The event was a complete success and a timely one, with 2008 being International Year of the Reef.



**THE GREAT MALAYSIAN SAIL** Pangkor Laut Resort announced its initial collaboration with the Royal Selangor Yacht Club in the 19th Raja Muda Selangor International Regatta. 2008 was the first year that saw the Perpetual Challenge Trophy presented to the winners of the Premier Cruising Class Challenge by Resort manager Jeff Mong at a gala dinner celebrating the completion of the Port Klang-Pangkor leg of the regatta. The week-long race which continued from Pangkor to Penang before culminating in Langkawi is an annual sailing event that has been growing from year to year and attracts intrepid mariners from all over the world. The event is billed as one of Asia's most challenging

due to unpredictable weather conditions and sailors having to sail the seas overnight. Last year's event saw 400 participants from over 40 countries sailing yachts of different sizes and categories. This is one of the main steps in Pangkor Laut Resort establishing itself as a prime stopover for luxury seafaring activities in Malaysia.



**AND THE WINNER IS...** Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali joined the ranks of its other award-winning YTL Hotels sister outlets when it recently scooped AsiaSpa magazine's 'New Spa of the Year' award. Sponsored by and held at the Grand Hyatt Hong Kong in The Salon, the fourth edition of the AsiaSpa Awards was a glittering affair with champagne and canapés, a glamorous Baccarat fashion show and entertainment by jazz trio Innovation. The awards celebrate the best and most innovative spa around the region in 26 categories as voted by a panel of 29 independent judges. Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is YTL Hotels' first luxury spa resort. The 31-room spa resort celebrates the gentle spirituality of Bali and its rich culture as it unveils traditional healing lores as old as the land itself. Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, Spa Village Tanjong Jara and Spa Village Pangkor Laut have all been recipients of numerous awards over the years on both the regional and international front. Most prestigious was Spa Village Pangkor Laut taking Condé Nast's Traveller UK Reader's Awards Number One in the World award and being named the Best Overseas Destination Spa. Other Spa Village destinations are at Cameron Highlands Resort and The Majestic Malacca.

# CANVAS CELEBRATIONS



Opera Performance

The entire month of October 2008 saw Starhill Gallery live up to its reputation (and tagline) as "The Gallery of Rich Experiences". As one of the city's premier luxury shopping destinations, the shopping experience at Starhill Gallery centres on the five pillars of high-fashion, horology, beauty, food and, of course, art. And art was in all its glory during the month-long 'The Starhill Gallery Art Festival 2008' which presented a smorgasbord of art spread out across six of its galleries. Themed 'Urban ArtBeat', the festival's highlights include the exquisite and unique collections of Chinese artists Zhang Wei Ping and He Jia Lin, the former a professor at the National Art Academy in China. On the homefront, in collaboration with the National Art Gallery, works by pioneering local artists Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal, Dato' Chuah Thean Teng and Abdul Latiff Mohidin were on show, with Limited Edition Golden Jubilee stamps featuring the trio being sold. The centrepiece of the Festival was 'The Big 6', where six local artists - Edi.A, Eston Tan, House of Suzie Wong, Li Mu, Tew Nai Tong and Yusri Sulaiman - created six giant art pieces in commemoration of the event. The paintings, entitled 'Joy of Living', 'Impression - Berita Kepada Kawan', 'City's Rhapsody I & II', 'Earth Foundation - Invisible, Who Cares?', and 'Tigers Descending the Mountain' respectively wowed those who viewed them with their simple but amazing expressionism.



Tan Sri Dato' Seri (Dr.) Yeoh Tiong Lay poses with Chinese artists He Jia Lin & Zhang Wei Ping



Artist and curator Yusof Ghani receiving a token of appreciation



(L-R) Charles Chan, Leong Lai Sim, Norin Samad, Kenneth Quek



Ruth Yeoh, Dato' Yeoh Soo Min & Tan Chien Wee



Constance Lau & Tim Haslett



# A CONNOISSEURS' FESTIVAL



(From left) Cynthia Lawrence, Sting, Russell Watson and Tan Sri Francis Yeoh



Signing Ceremony between YB Dato' Sri Azalina Dato' Othman Said & Tan Sri Dato' (Dr.) Francis Yeoh

THE SECOND EDITION OF 'A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME', Asia's largest luxury watch and jewellery showcase, took centrestage at Kuala Lumpur's Starhill Gallery from December 4-11, 2008. This year's event, which follows last year's successful debut, was an even grander and more star-studded affair. 'A Journey Through Time II' saw numerous international celebrities grace the occasion, with multiple Grammy winner Sting in attendance during one of the nights, personally invited by the managing director of YTL Corporation Tan Sri Dato' (Dr.) Francis Yeoh.

Highlights this year included the presence of The Swiss Museum of Horological Art, which gave visitors a comprehensive look at the history of Swiss watchmaking; its achievements that helped shaped the industry, as well as the

latest cutting-edge technology which will enable us a glimpse of the watchmaking of tomorrow. This privilege was made possible with the collaboration with the members of Académie des Horlogers Créateurs Indépendants (AHCI) of Switzerland, represented by Mr Svend Andersen, Mr Paul Gerber, Mr Thomas Prescher, Mr Andreas Strehler and Mr John Ermel.

Also taking an active part in this year's event were brands like Van Cleef & Arpels, Mouwad. Boucheron, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Richard Mille, Maurice Lacroix and Romain Jerome. Van Cleef unveiled its one-piece only Limited Edition 'Midnight in Kuala Lumpur' watch, with a dial featuring the map of the stars as positioned in the KL sky. Mouwad showcased the US\$4.5 million Fantasy Bra, the the USD\$1.7 million heart shape purse used by Nicole Kidman in the music video Something Stupid and a replica of 'The Star of Stanley Ho'; Jaeger-LeCoultre brought in its multiple award winner Duomètre à Chronographe, while Richard Mille debuted the RM020 Tourbillon Pocket Watch, with a baseplate made of carbon nanofibre originally utilised in U.S Air force jets, a tourbillon escapement driven by a double winding barrel that supplies circa 10 days of power reserve.

Other highlights included the opening of the world's first Bedat & Co boutique as well as a showcase of the world's most expensive book ever, the Michaelangelo. La Dotta Mano (Michelangelo: The Wise Hand), a 21-kg, RM500,000 tome depicting pictures of Michelangelo's famous sculptures, with a front cover carved in white marble featuring an exact replica of the Madonna della Scala (Madonna of the Steps). The book is a volume of works by the Renaissance master

which includes detachable reproductions of drawings by Michelangelo on handmade folios created according to centuries-old traditions, original photographs by Italian photographer Aurelio Amendola and writings by several Italian scholars, including Giorgio Vasari, Antonio Paolucci and Pina Ragonieri.

Among the performers were local talents Datuk Siti Nurhaliza and Ning Baizura, while Russell Watson and world renowned flautist Andrea Griminelli, who teamed up with tenor Cynthia Lawrence and Saimir Pirgu, also put in some stunning performances. 'A Journey Through Time II' drew a crowd of 35,000 over the course of 11 days and included KL's well-heeled society, socialites, celebrities and many foreign visitors too.



Datuk Siti Nurhaliza



Ex-Miss Malaysia Deborah Henry (2nd L) and Harper's Bazaar editor Natasha Kraal and two gentlemen at the Jaeger-LeCoultre Night



Jacob Yeoh, Stephanie Chai, Russell Watson and Reena Tan



Thomas Prescher, Jean François Meyer, Russell Watson and Svend Andersen



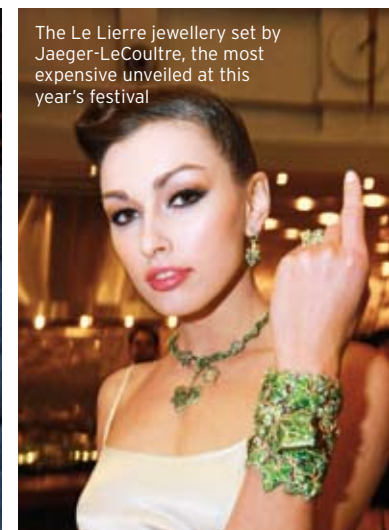
A model parades the nominated watches for the prestigious Starhill Gallery Watch of the Year Awards



The La Dotta Mano revealed at A Journey Through Time 2008



Tan Sri Dato' (Dr.) Francis Yeoh and Mr. Christopher Forbes

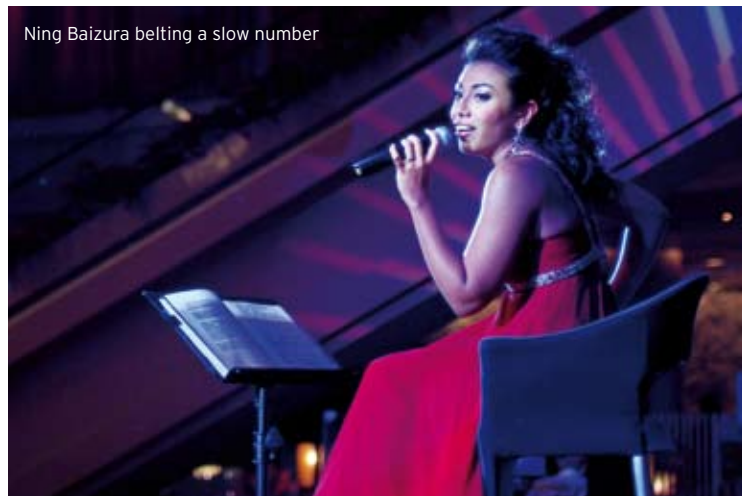


The Le Lierre jewellery set by Jaeger-LeCoultre, the most expensive unveiled at this year's festival





Model wearing Van Cleef & Arpels High Jewellery and timepiece



Ning Baizura belting a slow number



World renowned flutist  
Andrea Griminelli



Performance by Hands and Nyoba Kan on the grand opening night - Tourism Night

Dewitt WX-1 Wins the Starhill Gallery Innovative Design Watch Award



The Best of the Best at A Journey Through Time II



# THE MAGNIFICENCE OF SEVEN

THE SPA VILLAGE, TANJONG JARA'S SIGNATURE MALAY-INSPIRED, SEVEN-DAY 'SYURGA TUJUH' TREATMENT IS SOMETHING EVERYONE SHOULD EXPERIENCE AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR LIVES BY ANIS RAMLI

YEARS AGO, when early civilisation in Terengganu sprouted through clusters of fishing villages along the coast and while the heartland remained covered in thick forest, folks living along the coastal area of Peninsular Malaysia's east coast would travel from one village to another by the only mode of transport available: the sampan (traditional boats). Many were fisherman who made their living from the sea's bounty. Yet there were others who travelled along the coast from village to village in search of a place to call home.

Whenever they reached a potential new village - or kampung - two questions were asked: one, if there was an imam (a religious leader) in the village and, two, a bomoh (a traditional healer). For the Malay Muslim community, an imam was deemed important to the village nucleus as the authority over religious matters and as leader to the congregation. On the other hand, a bomoh would safeguard the villagers' health, helping to heal the sick and act as midwife during childbirth. The traveller would only settle in the new village and make it his home when these two criterion were met.

The synergistic relationship between the importance of the spiritual health and mental well-being very much make up the essence of the Malay Muslim

community till today. It encompasses the four domains of life: self, community, environment and God. In whatever they do, the actions of the Malay Muslim are geared towards attaining this balance that ultimately enhances quality of life.

It is this principle of well-being and all-over body equilibrium that lies at the heart of Spa Village, Tanjong Jara. Overlooking a crescent beach and snuggled between two traditional Malay fishing villages, the spa embraces the long traditions and practices embodied by this particular path of wellness and rejuvenation. There's a taste of Malay in all of its treatments, and the spa personnel are more than obliging to help you tailor one best suited to your needs. But if you're particularly interested to experience a programme that can raise all of your consciousness levels, then perhaps the signature treatment - Syurga Tujuh - or Seven Steps to Heaven, is one that you should make sure to experience at least once in your lifetime.

Unlike many retreats that often suggest the pursuit of well-being as one that is complicated, Syurga Tujuh conceptualises a programme that underlines how the basics can provide the ultimate balance we seek. Across seven glorious days, guests are treated to a range of therapeutic massages and therapies





designed to provide peace and balance inherent to the resort's Sucimurni concept - wholesome living through purity of spirit, health and well-being.

Each body treatment works in harmony to stimulate the feeding and caring of muscles and minds. Beginning with the warming and stimulating Jari-Jemari (Hand and Foot Soak) that focuses on the hands and feet, the programme works its way up, concentrating on major body parts such as the stomach, chest, shoulder and back, and the face before finally nurturing the crown in Ikal-ikal (Hair and Scalp Treatment). In short, Syurga Tujuh leaves no body part unattended to.

While the programme drawn up by the spa pretty much details the purpose and focus of each treatment, more often they go beyond the primary focus with trickle-down benefits. For instance, the second day's body treatment involves a choice of either Rendam-rendam (Sitz Bath) or a traditional Malay massage. Both are designed to stimulate the stomach's and lower body's core area.

The sitz bath is a healing technique that incorporates the curative properties of herbs to increase circulation in the pelvic and urethral area. Herbs known for their natural antiseptic, astringent, emollient and hemostatic properties, such as in Rendam-rendam's

other upside to the treatment is that your skin feels wonderfully clean and deliciously scented from the fragrance of the floral oil.

Perhaps the most relaxing of the therapies in the seven day protocol is the Asam Roselle (Roselle Body Treatment) administered on the fifth day. While its primary focus is on the shoulder and back, the 100-minute therapy - a combination of whole body massage and body scrub - works like a soothing sedative.

The Roselle (Hibiscus sabdariffa L.) is a robust, many-branched shrub-like annual that is an important cash crop and grows widely in Terengganu. The locals use the fleshy bright red calyx to make juices. Rich in vitamin C, beta carotene, vitamins B1, B2 and B6 - all of which are potent anti-ageing nutrients your skin will lap up - this is the same calyx that is used in the oil that envelops the body during the massage, and which gives the accompanying scrub its distinctive blush pink colour. My therapist Mira deftly manipulated all my hunger-for-attention muscles, paying extra attention to my shoulders and back, while intoxicating me with the exotic fragrance of the roselle oil mixed with ginger, nutmeg, galangal and karoteno oil.

True to the essence of Malay healing, the body is exfoliated only after the rub down as was the practice

## ACROSS SEVEN GLORIOUS DAYS, GUESTS ARE TREATED TO THERAPIES DESIGNED AROUND THE RESORT'S SUCIMURNI CONCEPT

piper betel and black seed, are often used. Sleep comes easily to me after the soak. Similarly, the traditional Malay massage with its long, kneading strokes that uses thumb and palm pressure will work wonders on the joints. On a deeper level, the massage also helps facilitate the flow of blood and lymphatic fluids, encouraging the body to detox. The unique pressure applied to the body's various points help alleviate localised congestion and inflammations.

The chest area is given focus on the fourth day. Guests undergo the Ukup Wangi (Scented Body Steaming) that begins with a pre-treatment of warm oil being rubbed onto the body before you are zipped up (from the neck down) in a steaming bag for 50 minutes. The steam provides an excellent treatment for the respiratory system, and works wonders if you have chest congestion, laryngitis or sinusitis. The

of past generations who believed that the scrub helps slough off toxins that have been coaxed out and up to the skin's surface from the massage. Once you wash off the scrub, you will marvel at how incredibly smooth and silky your skin feels.

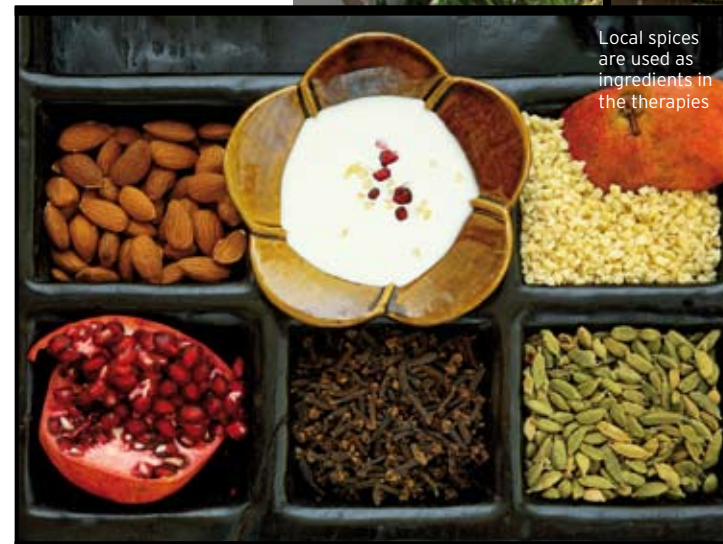
Resort activity is also an aspect of the programme. Each day begins with a daily Malay-style exercise called 'Indera Deria' designed to complement the day's body focus. From the deer pose that elevates chronic lower back pain to the dragon pose that helps build self confidence and strengthen the muscular system, these sessions play an integral part to nourish the mind, body and spirit. While it is relatively easy to make reference to the similarities between these poses and that of yoga's asanas, the Malay exercise draws its inspiration from the elements of the Muslim salat, the compulsory five times daily prayer with its



The Ikal-Ikal



A general view of the Tanjong Jara Spa Village



Local spices are used as ingredients in the therapies



A yoga session with the in-house yoga master



The Jari-Jemari



One of the spa treatment rooms





River boat excursion



The Asam Roselle body treatment



Tanjong Jara Resort rests in idyllic Terengganu



Tea drinking is part of the post-treatment



The programme includes trips to visit the local boatmakers

prescribed movements, and the Malay martial art of silat.

All these techniques combined propelled me to have better clarity of mind while helping me build my body's endurance, strength and balance through holding the various poses. It's an excellent way to begin your day and by the end of the week, I was bathed with renewed energy, eager to tackle the challenges of work back home.

I was also encouraged to get physical with the resort's other activities on every day of the week. More than just playing the typical tourist, I found each excursion or leisure pursuit only helped to strengthen my sense of awareness and inspired renewed energy. The outing to the Dungun night market on my third day was especially eventful. No stranger to night markets, this one in particular stood out among my many other excursions as I had all my five senses engaged.

The steamed corn purchased from the vendor tasted sweeter than usual; the luscious fragrance of the local mangoes was a heady assault on my senses. Even the short sojourn to the legendary boat makers of Pulau Duyung the following day proved memorable. Instead of the dusty and arid workshop that would have been my first impression, I instead remembered it for the organic bouquet that permeated from the fresh cengal wood and of the sweet taste of the salty air that enveloped the area.

One of the most gracious aspects of the intense programme is the turndown service. Every night, following the day's ritual, a spa personnel will

discreetly draw you a variant of luxurious baths. Baths in the Malay culture are as intrinsic as its healing therapies to address everything from tired muscles to aching limbs and perfuming the body. All of the bath menus explore the richness of Malay herbs, spices and flowers. My personal favourite is the Mandian Raut Pesona. Although designed for beauty, this milk-enhanced bath is rich with other goodies such as the anti-oxidant properties of pomegranate, the nourishing elements of ground almonds and the moisturising benefits of honey. It's further spiced with a heady mixture of clove, cardamom and vetiver, making this exotic bath a real warm treat for the senses.

Elsewhere, the Mandian Bening Kalbu prepared for me on the fifth day, is designed to hydrate and calm the body. It uses yoghurt as a skin smoother, pegaga (gotu kola) to cool the skin and enhance cell repair while the addition of salt helps relax the muscles. This was great as quiet 'me time'.

There is something remarkably organic and sublime to the Spa Village Tanjong Jara Syurga Tujuh experience. Midway through the programme, I was convinced that this is exactly how life should be lived no matter where you are. If there's one indelible lesson to be learnt from the experience, it is to remind myself of how doing the basics can build up to better things. ■

*Syurğa Tujuh can be undertaken over three to seven days. For shorter durations, synergistic combinations will be designed to ensure guests continue to experience the programme in its totality. Spa Village Tanjong Jara, +603-2783 1000 or email [travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my](mailto:travelcentre@ytlhotels.com.my); [www.tanjongjararesort.com](http://www.tanjongjararesort.com)*



# SOMETHING TO BRAY ABOUT

THE NEW BRAY HOUSE IN THE SOUTHERN COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE IN ENGLAND IS A QUINTESSENTIAL ENGLISH HOME-STAY EXPERIENCE BUT WITH A SMALL DASH OF HISTORY, A GOOD DOSE OF HIGH-DESIGN AND A HEFTY HELPING OF LUXURY THROWN INTO THE EQUATION

STORY AND PHOTOS BY HELEN OON





# T

he Royal County of Berkshire in the south of England is one of the oldest counties in the country. It is a beautiful part of England steeped in history and natural beauty. It boasts many heritage stately homes and castles of which the most renowned is Windsor Castle, the official residence of Her Majesty the Queen. Aside from these magnificent buildings, Berkshire is blessed with stunning scenery of beautiful woodlands and a picturesque riverscape along the rivers Thames and Kennet which flow through the county. The heart and soul of old England still lingers on in quaint villages harking back to days of yore, though there aren't so many horse carriages to be seen anymore.

Bray, near Windsor, is an idyllic old English village, abundant in character and charm. A typical narrow street runs through the village, flanked by two period houses, and old traditional pubs with beamed

ceilings and fireplaces. A parish church - St. Michael - which dates back to 1293 completes the picture. This humble village is considered to be the culinary centre of the world with many famous restaurants, two of which are the most internationally renowned, The Fat Duck and the Waterside Inn, which boast three Michelin stars each. What with its sheen of affluence and list of high accolades, it is no wonder Bray is home to ultra desirable residences of many famous British celebrities.

Along the village main street stands Bray House, YTL's latest addition to their luxury heritage properties portfolio, which includes Cameron Highlands Resort, Majestic Malacca and Tanjong Jara Resort. Bray House started life as a stable to a manor house built in the late 17th century, akin to a garage in a modern house today. The old stable went through many incarnations throughout the centuries, first as a cobbler's workshop, then an antique shop and later was converted into a three-bedroom cottage. When YTL Hotels took over, it was in a pretty run-down



A view of the back garden



A view of the dining area from the living room





The master bathroom

state but the character and history made it an attractive challenge. A year on, the once shabby cottage has been transformed into a beautiful home. Its eclectic mix of interiors balance a period look with contemporary touches and all the necessary mod-cons with elegance and quality resonating throughout. The skill of local craftsmen was enlisted to create an upscale boutique look. Each room is thematically designed starting from a traditional look in the sitting room, travelling through time to the 1920s art deco period in the lounge and emerging into the modern era in the kitchen.

The main part of the house is on an open-plan mode, a spacious sitting room that merges into a formal dining room in a cosy corner. The original timber beams, prevalent in the architectural style of that period, are beautifully restored throughout the house. A large comfy fawn-coloured sofa dominates the whole sitting room complemented by a long timber coffee table to create a period look. The room is punctuated by splashes of colours from the numerous cushions on the sofa and accentuated by a stylish red high-back chair by the entrance.

The dining room, painted in glorious cherry red with matching red drapes, is made glamorous by a set of eight chic dining chairs upholstered in dark damask clustered round a black glass dining table. A red chandelier adds a final touch of sophistication to the dining area.

A surprise twist is that the lounge has been decked out in an art deco style to give a dash of classicism to the house. An atmospheric room with bottle-green carpeting and matching silk wallpaper, it features a fireplace and a bar, which once belonged to a ship. A fancy art deco mirror hanging behind the bar, complemented by two stunning columns of classic floor lamps on either side of the bar, forms the focal point of the room. But the dark-green velvet Jaba couch with polished aluminium claw feet designed by the famous furniture designer, Mark Brazier-Jones, steals the show and makes for a conversation piece, adding a touch of mischief to the room. Renowned as the purveyor of cutting-edge designer collectors' items that grace the homes of many rock royalties, movie stars



The Red bedroom bathroom



The fully functional modern kitchen



A cosy corner in the living room



The Red bedroom



The lounge at Bray House



and the rich and famous, his creations are displayed at the Louvre in Paris and at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The lounge leads to the über-cool kitchen-cum-informal-dining-room, graced by another art piece dining table by Brazier-Jones.

The beautifully designed commodious kitchen is a chef's dream with the trappings of a professional kitchen. Indeed, it was designed by a professional chef called Kevin Snook who used to serve up culinary delights for celebrities and the well-heeled in the glamorous Caribbean island of Mustique, a favourite haunt of the rich and famous. Ingeniously designed with the stove facing the dining area, a chef can socialise with the guests while displaying his culinary prowess. The delightful dining area has a glass wall that overlooks the small courtyard garden creating an illusion of 'indoor-outdoor' look, bringing the garden into the dining room. The courtyard and water feature created from a natural spring found in the garden is designed by Paul Dyer, an award-winning garden designer.

Each of the three bedrooms upstairs has a different theme. The open-plan master bedroom featuring a bathroom equipped with a free-standing bathtub and a walk-through shower with large ceiling showerhead, complete with heated floor, bears the hallmark of a contemporary design. The smaller guest room by the landing is a symphony in white with soft white drapes hanging over a four-poster bed frame, exuding a romantic and peaceful Zen-like ambience. The third guest room is a feast of Tuscany red dominated by a huge black four-poster bed - daring and passionate with a hint of gothic .

For a taste of the life of the English gentry, Bray House beckons forth. ■

#### YE OLDE FACT FILE

Bray House is essentially a private residence offering a luxury escape with bespoke service and accommodation comparable to an upscale boutique hotel but with an intimate atmosphere of a home. Breakfast is included in the rate and a butler service and private chef can be requested at extra cost. Concierge service includes restaurant reservation and excursions to nearby Windsor, including a private tour of the famous Eton College at Henley-on-Thames. River cruises, golf, horse-riding and other country pursuits can also be arranged. *For reservations and further detail, contact Denise Ellis at Bray Cottages, +44 1628 771171; or email [info@braycottages.com](mailto:info@braycottages.com)*

The stunning red dining room



An Art Deco feature



One of the art pieces that decorate the walls of Bray House





# FASHION HIGH ON LOVE

*The hills of Cameron Highlands are alive with the sounds, sights, smells, taste and the touch of romance and one of the best places to enjoy it is at the atmospheric, colonial-styled Cameron Highlands Resort*

PHOTOGRAPHY ERIC CHOW@BLINK STUDIO STYLING STEVEN SUNNY MAKE UP SIEW CHENG

HAIR PING MODELS RENATA & WEDER, FACES MODELS TEXT EUGENE NG

On her: Dress **Louis Vuitton**, charms bracelet **Mont Blanc**;  
On him: Dark grey long sleeve shirt **Zegna**, New generation jacket (Miller) and Alaska jeans **Hugo Boss**





On her: Yellow gold neckless 'claire de lune' Mont Blanc; On him: Rubber ring PVD Mont Blanc

**Couple's Therapy** Cameron Highlands Resort houses the world-renowned Spa Village. And at this particular Spa Village, you can enjoy therapies inspired and based on indigenous healing traditions of the region and using local produce. There are therapies using roses, mint, tea and strawberries, all famous produce of Cameron Highlands. But for a heightened state of romance, enjoy the His (Tok Batin Mystical Treatment) and Hers (The Jungle Secrets of Anti-Aging) treatments, inspired by the Semai, an indigenous Pahang hill tribe whose knowledge of medicinal treatments have been acquired over millenia.



On her: Bettina blouse  
**Hugo Boss**, blue shorts,  
 white belt and red  
 platform shoes **Fendi**,  
 watch **Louis Vuitton**,  
 charms bracelet **Mont  
 Blanc**; On him: Navy blue  
 shirt **Zegna**, rubber set  
 necklace, bracelet and  
 ring **Mont Blanc**, watch  
**Louis Vuitton**, Alaska  
 jeans **Hugo Boss**



**Lazy Afternoons** One of Cameron Highlands Resort signature experiences is its traditional English afternoon tea, with English scones, homemade strawberry preserve, a cup of premier BOH tea and a platter of finger sandwiches, pastries and cakes. This can be enjoyed at the Resort's Jim Thompson Tea Room, named after the famous American responsible for the revival of the Thai silk industry and whose legend lives on in this region after his mysterious disappearance in the misty hills of Camerons on Easter Sunday, 1967. If you prefer a more unique experience, the resort can also arrange for a private picnic to be enjoyed at the stunning tea gardens at the nearby BOH Plantation.

**Sweet Luxury** The strawberry is one of Camerons' claim to fame; not many would have imagined that such a luscious cold-weather fruit would be able to grow in tropical Malaysia. And for that, we owe a debt to our colonial past, as missing the comforts of home, the British thought it would be an excellent idea to grow strawberries and tea in these highlands. You can visit the many different strawberry farms dotted around the area, or you can simply enjoy them by feeding each other this most tantalising of fruits at the Cameron Highlands Resort, where it is served with a choice of fresh cream, custard and chocolate dips.



On her: Chinese  
 printed cardigan  
**Shanghai Tang**,  
 watch **Louis Vuitton**,  
 charms bracelet **Mont  
 Blanc**; On him: Black  
 long sleeve t-shirt  
 and short sleeve  
 shirt **Zegna**, watch  
**Louis Vuitton**, rubber  
 bracelet **Mont Blanc**





***The Heat of the Moment*** One of the best ways to end a romantic day in the Highlands is to indulge in yet another signature (and romantic) experience at the Cameron Highlands Resort. Every day, you can participate in its signature fireplace lighting tradition, and then snuggle up with your loved one as you enjoy a cosy cuddle-up in the cool evening and reminisce on a day spent enjoying the charm and beauty that is Cameron Highlands.



On him: Short sleeve shirt  
**Zegna**, rubber ring and bracelet  
**Mont Blanc**





# WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

AT THE LUXURY PRIVATE ISLAND  
DESTINATION OF PANGKOR LAUT  
RESORT, THERE IS A HOST OF  
EXCLUSIVE AND WONDERFULLY UNIQUE  
EXPERIENCES TO BE ENJOYED IN AND  
AROUND ITS EMERALD GREEN WATERS

BY MAGDALENE TAN



THE HOUR LONG FERRY JOURNEY THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MALACCA TO THE PRIVATE ISLAND OF PANGKOR LAUT will whet your appetite for all things tropical, beachy, sun-kissed and holiday-dreamy. As the unmistakable panorama of sea villas on stilts come into view, you smile, knowing that you will soon be arriving at one of the world's most exclusive and luxurious resorts.

This ancient island spread over 300 acres consists of white sand beaches, lush rainforest (said to be about 2 million years old) and an abundance of flora and fauna. For the rambler and nature lover in you, the Jungle Walk will give you an opportunity to explore the unspoilt forest under expert guidance from the resident naturalist. But if things are heating up on land, go cool yourself off with some oceanic activities: there's plenty of those to do at this glorious island.

**MANNA FROM THE DEEP** According to true epicureans all over the world, there's nothing like the satisfaction of catching your own meal. And you can

marine environs so that the reefs may continue to be enjoyed by all its visitors.

**SAILING THE SEAS, SCOFFING ITS BOUNTY**

As it is an island, there is obviously a wide range of ways that guests at Pangkor Laut Resort can get to enjoy the water. For a memorable evening, another of the resort's signature experience is the sunset cruise aboard its teakwood Oriental junk, an intimate expedition ideally enjoyed with a loved one.

Throughout the hour you are served a free-flowing selection of soft drinks, juices, wines and beer. And as the cool evening breeze blows gently against you, the junk anchors at the resort's stunning Emerald Bay which is located on the west side of the island. Whilst you enjoy the romance of the junk and the setting sun, you hear the sounds of the island's native wildlife emanating from the dense vegetation. Over a chat and some canapés, you look out westward to an unobscured view of the sultry coloured sky where the sun is melting into the horizon. Very dreamy indeed.

## AS THE COOL EVENING BREEZE BLOWS GENTLY AND THE SUN SETS, THE JUNK ANCHORS AT THE RESORT'S STUNNING EMERALD BAY

put that theory to test at Pangkor Laut Resort if you set out on a 12-foot motor boat and let yourself be whisked away for a spot of good old fishing.

As you bait your line with fresh squid and drop it into the calm waters, you'll notice the quiet of your surroundings, the soft rocking of the boat, and you will feel like you have truly gone back to basics. While there is a wealth of fish (grouper and snapper in particular) in these seas, fishing still remains a game of patience. The resort will provide a beautiful pre-packed lunch picnic basket full of goodies for you to enjoy on a soft, sandy beach... so don't worry, you will get to eat even if you don't snag that catch!

Then it's mask out, fins on and jump in! The best thing about being out at sea is the chance to be in it. Explore the underwater world to the sound of your slow and steady breath; with a vast coral reef and plethora of marine life in all shapes, sizes and colours, snorkelling around the islands is pure wonderment. An important aside here: in a responsible bid to conserve the marine ecosystems around both the Pangkor islands, Pangkor Laut has collaborated with Reef Check Malaysia for reef clean-ups within their

During the daytime, you can treat yourself to something extra special: sailing on the resort's 34-foot sailing yacht, 'The Impian', a genuinely exhilarating and rather glamorous method of seafaring. To set sail, the yacht's crew will cut the outboard motor, start untying and adjusting the rigging and with a sudden loud flap, you look up and the towering front sail is spread out in all its glory. At once you are transformed from passenger to sailor when you realise nothing but the wind is carrying you. The only sounds you hear are the yacht against the ocean and the cool, strong wind in your hair as you pick up speed and cut through the emerald green waters. And when the wind finally drops (or even if it doesn't), the yacht is anchored and you are able to do a spot of fishing and snorkelling.

One of the best parts of this already exciting adventure has to be lunch, where the resort, in a bid to live up to its reputation, truly pulls out all the stops in elevating the idea of pampering its guests. First, you hop onto a small motorised dinghy to be whisked away from the yacht to a deserted beach. It's all very James Bond and all very brilliant! The reason for this is that you are about to enjoy your very own private

Sailing aboard the Impian is a genuinely exhilarating experience



WILD LIFE PHOTO MAGDALENE TAN

Pangkor Laut Resort is teeming with wildlife

For a more energetic water activity, kayaking is a great way to see the island from the sea





Barbeque on a private island is a dining experience like no other



Table just for two on an island just for two

barbeque! As you alight from the dinghy, you will see a table already set on the warm sands in front of an arrangement of thick towels, shaded by a large beach umbrella. And patiently awaiting your arrival are the chef and the butler.

Once you settle down with a chilled drink and a cool towel, the feast begins. This is not just your average barbeque but a delicious gourmet meal set in equally delectable surroundings and comprising of fresh, crisp salad, succulent steak grilled to perfection, mouth-watering lamb chops, fragrant tandoori chicken on sticks, juicy sausages, delicious king prawns and flavoursome grilled fish with sides of sweet corn and baked potato. That was quite a mouthful on its own.

Then, just when you think you can eat no more, you are served a platter of seven kinds of fruit for dessert to help with your digestion. Even with a makeshift kitchen and dining area, there is absolutely nothing makeshift about the service, the food or the experience. Kudos to the resort for creating such an amazing experience.

**AQUA ADRENALINE** Even when you are being spoilt senseless, something usually has to give, and if you feel that you need to get into some more energetic activities, there's plenty of that too. For the moderate 'athlete', a good choice would be a leisurely paddle on a kayak around the tranquil waters of the island. As you do that, you can soak in the stunning land and seascapes that greet you at every turn.

If you are lucky (and sharp) enough, you can even spot Water Monitor Lizards basking on warm rocks and, as you row further, you may spot Sea Eagles soaring high above in hypnotic circles, or maybe even come across a family of crab-eating Macaque monkeys actually eating crabs. If you are the competitive type, you may well choose to see how fast you can circumnavigate the island! The choice is completely yours.

And if you still haven't had enough of the deep blue, then a dinner reservation at the resort's Fisherman's Cove is in order. The cosy fine dining restaurant adjacent to the Spa Village is where you can savour the delectable bounty of the sea in its freshest form. The catch of the day is displayed on a bed of ice so that you may pick the fish of your choice and have it cooked to your liking.

Calm emerald green waters surround the island of Pangkor Laut Resort and it is in these waters that some fabulous experiences are simply waiting to be discovered. Just remember to pack the sunscreen. ■

PHOTOS MAGDALENE TAN

# B IS FOR BESPOKE

*Whether it is for a corporate, family or even a special occasion, YTL Hotels' exclusive range of resort and city hotels, is in the business of providing unique tailor-made experiences like no other*

PHOTO GETTY IMAGES



# BALINESE WEDDING BLISS

THE SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK BALI IS THE PERFECT DESTINATION FOR VACATIONING HONEYMOONERS

BY LENA NG PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAGDALENE TAN

AS WITH ANY NEWLY-MARRIED COUPLE, there is always that one pertinent question that needs to be answered after vows have been made, the bride kissed and the rice thrown. That question isn't "So who's going to do the dishes and make the bed from now on?" or "Who will be wearing the pants in this relationship?" That pressing question is, "So where are we going on our honeymoon, darling?"

After the stress of the wedding preparation, any smart groom should be able to intuitively know that his new bride will desire not just a romantic holiday destination, but also a vacation to recover and rejuvenate from all that pre-wedding running around.

The Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali, located at the foothills of Gunung Agung on the north coast of Bali, is one setting that is simply perfect for such a getaway. A truly wonderful resort destination that focuses on Balinese-inspired spa treatments, the Resort is primed to offer vacationing honeymooners a memorable bespoke experience like no other. For starters, couples can choose to stay at one of its two beautiful private villas, each complete with its own swimming pool and ocean-facing front.

As a "spa resort", the environment is one which reflects the inner calm and serenity of Balinese culture. On any given day, most guests relax and simply enjoy the beautiful, meditative atmosphere after a relaxing spa lounging around in the comfortable cotton shirt and 'fisherman pants' provided by the resort. Such is life at the Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali.

Your experience at the resort starts from the moment you arrive as guests are welcome with refreshing juices and a foot-bath to ease any signs of weariness from all that travelling. If you wish, you and your new spouse can choose to engage in one

of the resort's signature spa experiences. Called the 'Discovery Path', there is a choice between 'Balance', 'Creativity' or 'Vigour', with each following a unique set of activities and spa treatments to achieve the desired result.

But even if you don't choose a Path, you can simply choose to experience any one of the resort's spa therapies. The perfect choice for any new couple would be the Penganten Melukat, which includes a body scrub, floral bath and then a deeply relaxing Balinese massage. In Balinese tradition, these treatments would be performed on both bride and groom while they are housebound for three days before the wedding. Other unique treatments that any bride would love include the Papaya Enzyme Wrap, using the pulp of locally grown fruit, or a coconut oil and hibiscus hair treatment.

By itself, Bali is a truly romantic place and it is in the evenings at the resort when this notion

comes alive. The resort can arrange for a couple to have dinner at any location, from the luxurious guest suites to the deck overlooking the ocean, or even on the black volcanic sand beach, by the light of candles and stars. Accompanying the fine-dining experience, softly playing gamelan is enhanced by the sound of the waves lapping against the shore.

After-dinner activities can include another romantic interlude walking by the beach, or you can choose to indulge in another of the Resort's signature experiences, Star Gazing, which happens while you float on a water bed in the swimming pool. Due to the Resort's location, there are always plenty of stars out and it is truly a wonderful, lulling experience that makes for a perfect end to any day.

Restorative, romantic, refreshing: what better way to start a new life together. ■





# HOME AWAY FROM HOME

WITH TOP-NOTCH SERVICE, THE LUXURIOUS BOUTIQUE HOTEL MAJESTIC MALACCA IS ALSO IDEAL FOR FAMILIES... EVEN WITH A LITTLE BABY IN TOW

BY THE FAMILY PLATT PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHOEN LEE



UPON DECIDING TO VENTURE BEYOND THE STUFFY CONFINES OF THE CAPITAL FOR A SHORT FAMILY BREAK, we decided (with parents and brother from the UK in tow) to plump for a short hop down south to the historical city of Malacca. The Majestic Malacca was an obvious choice for accommodation, with this boutique hotel already garnering a good reputation despite being in operation for less than a year.

This burgeoning reputation was apparent from the moment we pulled into the hotel's grand courtyard where we were met by several members of staff eager to outdo each other in offering a warm welcome. It was impossible not to be smitten by the classic colonial lines of the original private mansion and stunning restored floor tiles that now formed

(for the new baby) and an extra bed in each room had already been settled so it was overall, a simply perfect welcome.

An interesting feature of the rooms we stayed in was the open concept linking the bathroom to the bedroom via two sets of sliding doors. When closed, the doors successfully partitioned the room but they could be opened to allow easy access and, say if you're a football fanatic, an unrestricted view from the tub of the modern flat-panel TV with the corresponding full range of satellite channels.

But as lovely as the rooms were, you don't just stay holed up in your hotel while in Malacca and The Majestic Malacca is well positioned for any curious tourist looking

to do a spot of exploring. It faces the Malacca River and is within walking distance of the historical Jonker Street and the surrounding areas. In fact, the hotel has a resident historian who will bring hotel guests on four different walks exploring different aspects of this city's rich and multi-faceted history.

The highlight of our stay at the Majestic Malacca had to be the service. Each of the hotel staff was genuinely warm and helpful whenever any requests were made.



the reception and communal areas of this newly rejuvenated hotel.

This ambience was greatly enhanced by the tasteful and appropriate décor and furnishings, not to mention the 1930s musical accompaniment wafting through the lobby. The addition of coconut candies and sugar biscuits in old style glass apothecary shop jars certainly went down well with both the kids and adults alike. Registration and check-in was accomplished with minimum fuss - bags, cases, and all the usual accompanying paraphernalia were whisked away in seconds.

The actual guestrooms, whilst being newly constructed, continue in the same vein as the reception area, successfully blending into the style of the original building. Your sense of being pampered is enhanced by the luxurious outfitting and attention to detail applied to each room. Our request for a cot

Even the children got on with them! They had excellent recommendations for us to sample some local Nyonya cuisine and places to see, and during our two breakfast and one dinner at the hotel's first floor dining room, the service was impeccable. Sincere and not too overly eager, this is what good service is all about.

Oh, and breakfast at the Majestic is a sumptuous affair with cereals, breads and pastries, fruit and yogurts through to a selection from the hot dishes available (the smoked salmon and brie omelette comes highly recommended). For dinner, there is a Western menu with an Asian twist. The homemade tomato soup deserves special mention as well as the red snapper and filet mignon.

It is said that the essence of a great hotel is its ability to make its guests feel as though they are staying in their own homes. If that were the case, then the Majestic Malacca certainly fits into that category. ■





# BUSINESS AND PLEASURE

PRIVATE DINING AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, KUALA LUMPUR, AND THE RESIDENCES ELEVATE THE DINING EXPERIENCE TO A NEW LEVEL

BY LENA NG PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHOEN LEE

AS FAR AS ENTERTAINING THAT ALL IMPORTANT BUSINESS CLIENT GOES, there is no more important KL address than a restaurant located in the heart of Bukit Bintang, the pulse of the city also known as the Golden Triangle. KL abounds with numerous award-winning fine dining restaurants such as Shook! and Feast Village in Starhill Gallery or Li Yen at the Ritz-Carlton, all known for their exquisite setting and refined menus. But these days, the fine dining experience now goes beyond such basic requirements.

For the ultimate in luxury dining, any occasion is best enjoyed in the presence of a select few. But this doesn't mean that this has to be done in the comfort of one's own home; rather, think out of the box and you will then be able to comprehend that a deluxe suite in a 5-star hotel can be a unique setting for an important evening of entertaining.

In fact, this is exactly what The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, and its service apartment arm, The Residences, are now offering to its select clientele. The customisation of your occasion begins with the menu selection from a range of cuisines, or indeed just about anything the guest can desire. Executive Chef Kevin Cape is on hand to recommend a selection of the finest dishes in order to best enhance and balance the meal. And for those who really want to be spoiled for choice, the entire Feast Village menu is available to select from.

No private dining event is complete without a setting to match the food. Special bouquets, custom table settings and decorations are provided to enhance the ambience of the suite. Other special features at the table are the personalised menus and monogrammed napkins created for the event, to commemorate your occasion.

Then there is the impeccable service, for which The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur and Residences are well known. Discrete but attentive service is guaranteed throughout the meal with a butler on hand to assist with your selection of fine wines or any other special request. In fact, depending on the venue chosen for your event, you can have the meal prepared right in front of you by a team of professional chefs.

This bespoke 5-star dining experience is therefore totally unique and crafted personally by a team of chefs. Chef Cape has even been known to personally prepare the meal to a guest's dietary or specific requirements. With any luck, a guest might pick up a few culinary pointers!

Groups of all sizes can be catered for: the guest suites at the Residences can accommodate dining groups of up to six people while the exclusive Penthouse can host larger parties. The private dining experience offers a level of exclusive luxury far above the busy streets of Kuala Lumpur, but that doesn't mean the party is removed from the excitement. Live entertainment, from a soloist to a full instrumental band, can be included as part of the evening.

The ultimate luxury in today's hectic world perhaps is not only time, but also exclusivity. As part of a refined experience, private dining is more than just 5-star food and service. The best luxury of all might be that which you can share only with those you want to, and at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, that's assured. ■





# AT YOUR SERVICE

IMPECCABLE SERVICE MEETS GLORIOUS FASHION AT THE PENTHOUSE AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, KUALA LUMPUR

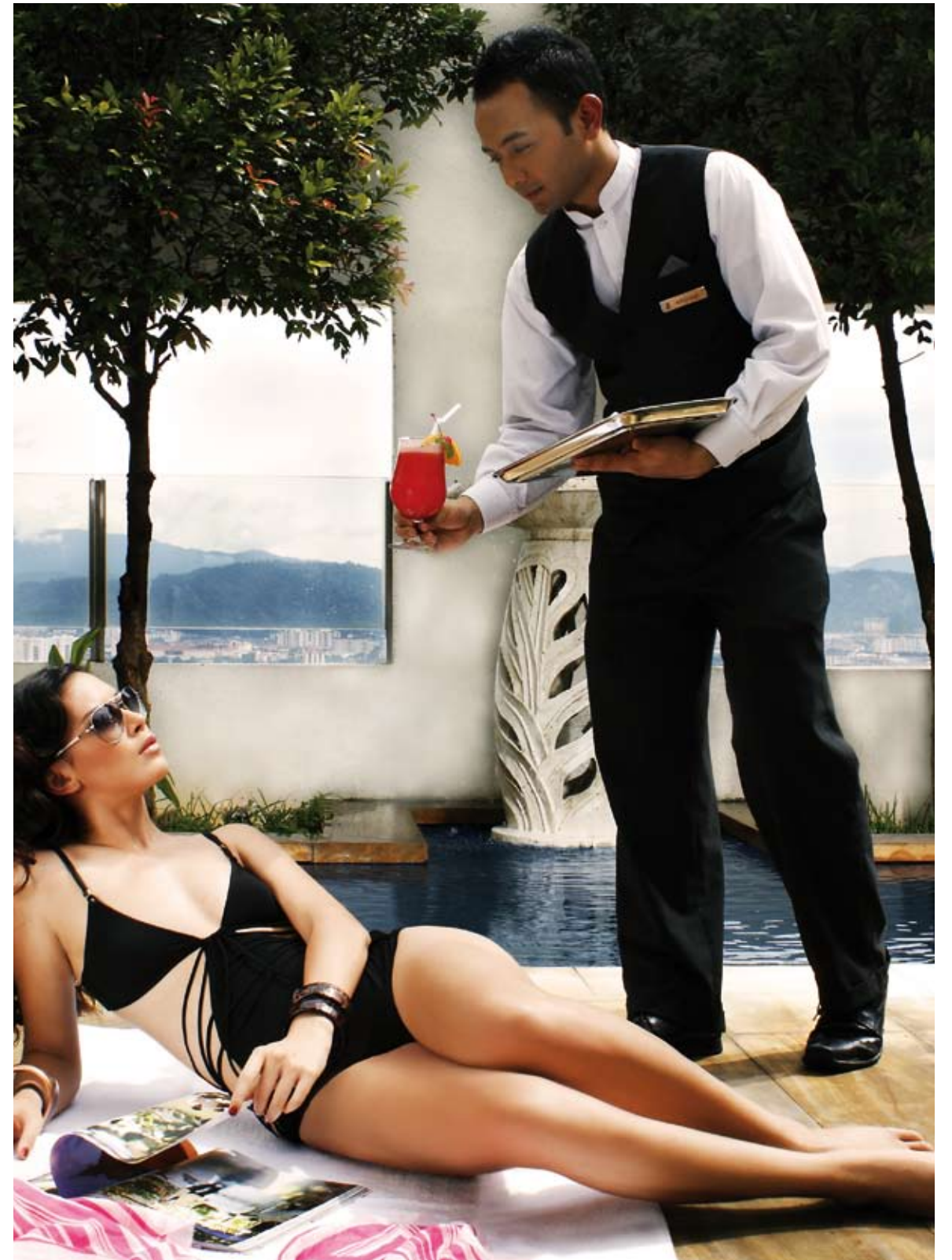
PHOTOGRAPHY CHRISTOPHER A.  
@ TALENT CAFE  
STYLING AZIZ HAIR & MAKE-UP TAISU  
MODEL HANNAH LO @ TALENT CAFE  
SHOT ON LOCATION AT  
THE PENTHOUSE AT  
THE RITZ-CARLTON, KUALA LUMPUR

Retro-print halter dress, Maizen  
Maison; Timepiece,  
Louis Vuitton.





Silk crepe halter-neck jumpsuit, strappy heels, turquoise bracelet and sunglasses, **Louis Vuitton**; Dior 61 Shopper in purple python, **Christian Dior**; Necklace, stylist's own.



Black swimsuit with slender straps, sunglasses and printed scarf, **Louis Vuitton**; Croc print bangles, stylist's own.





Sheer kaftan, **Melinda Looi**; Sunglasses and wedges, **Louis Vuitton**; Rope belt with metal beads, **Gucci**.



Printed dress with empire waist, **Maizen Maison**; Necklace and bracelets, stylist's own.





Floral-print smock, **Love on Earth**; Dior 61 Shopper with metallic embellishment, **Christian Dior**; Sunglasses, **Louis Vuitton**.



Neon-orange neoprene oversized tote, satin shoes with see-through wedges, and sporty top, all from **Louis Vuitton**.



Tunic dress with floral applique, Melinda Looi. Necklace, Love on Earth.



Black long-sleeved front-tie blouse, nautical-striped pants, rope belt, wedges and Hysteria clutch in tortoise-shell patent leather, all from Gucci.





# RUGGED TO RICHES

THE GREAT AMERICAN WEST OFFERS A LOOK THAT IS HEAVY ON COMFORT BUT WHICH IS ALSO, BY WAY OF MARLBORO CLASSICS, SERIOUS ON STYLE

BY ABDUL AZIZ DRAIN IMAGES COURTESY OF MIWAKI SDN BHD

# M

odern style is too often dictated by the high fashion flavours of international runways. Garments are constructed in innovative cuts and fabrics, offering newfangled silhouettes that challenge our conventional

exercise of putting on a simple shirt with the straight-forward pants or skirt. In the world of high fashion, one season will choose to salute broader shoulders, but the next will propagate wider hips. One year will favour the ease of slouchy pants but the following year will put emphasis on slimmer legs.

Though it is all fine and dandy to push the envelope and be creative in the name of fashion, one cannot help but to wonder: is it all practical?

Not every man can pull off skinny jeans or bejewelled sweaters, and not every woman can do justice to tutu skirts or knee-high gladiator sandals. High fashion offerings may be wonderful to marvel at and celebrate on catwalks and red carpets, but in the harsh glare of reality - when one is crunching numbers in the office, taking the dog out for a walk, having a round of drinks with mates in the neighbourhood bar or roughing it out for the weekend to be one with nature - we always go back to basics. All it takes to get us through the day is a nice looking shirt, a flattering pair of jeans and reliable shoes.

This is because fundamentally we want clothes to be comfortable. Nevertheless, comfort shouldn't translate to being frumpy. We still want to look good - for ourselves as well as for other people. Image is everything so the kind of clothes we want to wear on a day-to-day basis has to feel good on our skin yet remain stylish to discerning eyes.

Marlboro Classics is by no means a high fashion brand but it is nonetheless a brand that makes great clothes. Since it was established in the mid-80s, the Marlboro Classics look has been defined by a distinctive mark of comfort and style. Inspired by the ruggedness of the legendary American West, Marlboro Classics offer clothes conceived for men and women who enjoy a certain lifestyle with the freedom to create their own look. It's a look that expresses the brand's core values: Man and Nature, Authenticity and Uniqueness.

Lest you make the assumption that clothes inspired by cowboys hardly make for wardrobe staples let alone stand up to comparison with other designer threads, know for a fact that Marlboro Classics clothes are not only distributed but are also produced by Italian textiles and fashion company, Valentino Fashion Group S.P.A.

The brand even has a store that takes pride of place at the prestigious Parisian address, that is the Avenue des Champs-Élysées.

In 2007 alone, Marlboro Classics reported an annual turnover of approximately 173 million Euros, reflecting a continued success for over two decades. One can say that the brand owes its success to its unique outlook. From the outset, the brand has assured customers that their clothes will always stay true to the soul of Marlboro Classics, a soul characterised by ruggedness, natural independence and authenticity. Strengthened by the brand's signature assurance of quality, Marlboro Classics makes use of its know-how, tradition and cutting-edge technology to allow for the materialisation of the brand's core values in a vast collection that, through carefully selected materials and impeccable attention to detail, create unique garments for every occasion.

Like all great brands, Marlboro Classics clothes have a look and feel that are all their own: rugged yet contemporary, casual yet classic. Furthermore, unlike most runway offerings, Marlboro Classics clothing is designed to only get







better with age - the more you wear it, the better it looks.

When the Marlboro Classics men's clothing line took off to resounding success in the 80s, the following decade saw the brand expanding its portfolio to include a range of footwear, introducing a line that included uniquely crafted designs for Western boots as well as sturdy outdoor models and more urban lace-up shoes. Eventually, handcrafted belts, small leather goods and bags were added to the range.

With its continued growth and popularity, it was only natural for the brand to later introduce a women's line in 2001. The same concern for quality and authentic styling went into the development of this line. A constantly evolving collection that interprets trends the Marlboro Classics way, this versatile line includes coats, jackets, dresses, shirts, t-shirts and pullovers that are simple, elegant, and easy to wear both for formal or casual occasions.

Maturing with the times, the Marlboro Classics collections are renewed with each passing season, perfectly adapting to the evolution and way of life of modern men and women. For the Fall/Winter 2008-09 collection for men, Marlboro Classics plays with contrasts. This season sees a renewed sense of elegance, marked by refined and natural fabrics, thin knits with a mix of silk and cashmere or alpaca, complemented by a more stylish straight-cut to the pants. Shirts are fashioned in decidedly minimalist cuts and finishings, overlooking checks for stripes in darker hues.

The rustic-chic style of the collection continues in leather blousons and thick parkas along with pullovers that showcase the natural aspect of heavy wool-knit stitches. The thickness of such skins are softened with the lightness of down jackets and state-of-the-art natural fabrics the likes of cotton and nylon mix. Colours run the gamut from warm orange, red, and saffron to cool turquoise, petrol blue and chocolate.

Then there are the can't-go-wrong "Authentic Denim" jeans and work jackets, a Marlboro Classics staple produced in the best 100% US cotton and showcasing the most up-to-date design. The collection - with its contrasting elements - allows for the reconciliation between aesthetics and functionality, as well as authenticity and modernity. The man that wears them refuses to be a prisoner to fashion, preferring to affirm his style with clothes that makes



him feel at ease and which are in keeping with his mood and occupations.

While the Marlboro Classics man finds appreciation in the thickness of rugged and natural leather, the woman leans towards a finer and more supple skin this season, finding beauty in more tapered shapes and an aged but sophisticated aspect acquired with a shiny surface treatment.

Thus, the Women's Fall/Winter 2008-09 collection features authentic country looks with widespread use of checked motifs on heavy mountain shirts crafted in modern shapes with joyful, natural colours that feature delicate cotton poplins and wool canvas. A touch of the romantic is expressed through printed floral motifs in warm hues of pink, fuchsia and eggplant violet, as well as through ruffled dresses and velvet skirts, patchwork t-shirts and long jackets in hand-knitted style cable stitch wool. For the trip back to the city, silhouettes comprise of peacoat jackets in matte, flannel or tweed pants with a variety of denims, including the streamlined yet comfortable bi-stretch version.

Riding pants are reinterpreted in various models and materials. Femininity is also explored through straight pants in indigo black or charcoal grey denim cottons along with ruffled shirts or jackets.

Today, the Marlboro Classics clothing line is present in 43 markets worldwide, amounting to 2,400 points of sales that include 390-shops-within shops and over 190 exclusive boutiques. Each outlet is designed in keeping with the spirit of the brand, incorporating raw materials the likes of wood, iron, leather and canvas, to produce interiors that are built to last. And as it sets up house among some of the glossiest fashion brands in the world, Marlboro Classics doesn't pretend to be what it's not. The brand oversteps the trappings of high fashion by holding on to its very own confident and sophisticated brand values. Because in the end, it's simply all about comfortable clothes that look good on anyone. ■

*Marlboro Classics opened at F16, Explore Floor, Starhill Gallery, Kuala Lumpur in December 2007.*



# FASHION FORWARD

TAKE A PEEK AT SOME OF THE HOTTEST FASHION BRAND'S CRUISE AND SPRING/SUMMER 09 COLLECTIONS BY CHOO AI LING



## WOMANLY WILES

Continuing her tenure at the house which **VALENTINO** built, Alessandra Facchinetti ably perpetuated the maestro's decidedly feminine style except imagined in a fantasy of ice cream shades. These gentle hues of pearl gray, icy white, and blush pink were interspersed with lashes of ice lolly shades of lime and cherry. Suits were a refined take on the military dress uniform with peplumed backs and rows of tiny covered buttons. Tailored smartness gave way to ruffles which fluttered throughout the collection but which were most spectacularly used in ethereal organza gowns that embraced the bodice before wafting to the floor.



## OH DIOR!

Credit crunch be damned. John Galliano delivered **DIOR**'s vision of the good life with an effervescent, optimistic palette of corals, fuchsias, and limes. Topping off this vivid palette were liberal lashings of embellishment as almost every look was exquisitely adorned with beaded embroidery right down to the swimwear and shoes. Familiar swinging 60s-era silhouettes like printed tunics, capri pants, trapeze shapes, cropped peplum jackets, haute bohemian caftans and peasant blouses dominated the mood and recalled the grand ladies of leisure like Barbara Hutton, Millicent Rogers, and Nan Kempner.





## EXCESS FLUID

One wonders what the rigorously exacting Tomas Maier would wear on holiday.

**BOTTEGA VENETA's** Cruise collection gave an inkling of what he would pack: clothes which were almost trend-proof, elegant and effortless. The lighthearted palette of soft ash, marble, white, and black animated with vivid azure, cobalt, crimson, burnt orange, and apple green found elegant expression in easy and supple fabrics in natural fibres. Pleats acted as organising principle, structural element, and decorative motif: they were the only surface detail on clothes that were otherwise unembellished. No dream of warm weather would be complete without soft, pretty dresses, easy to pull on, easier to wear, and perhaps the single most contemporary way to dress.



## SMOOTH SAILING

Marc Jacobs kept **LOUIS VUITTON's** Resort true to the spirit of the range with simple pared-down shapes and nautical looks. Adding a graceful individuality were the trim, belted coat-dresses, and sharp skirts cut from a brushstroke print fabric commissioned from London-based illustrator Tanya Ling. Marc kept things interesting by revisiting the classic Jackie O suit in white leather with black satin bows styled with sky-high wedges. Rounding off the collection were sexy embellished bathing suits and colourful Grecian draped jersey looks for evening which would look très fabulous poolside.



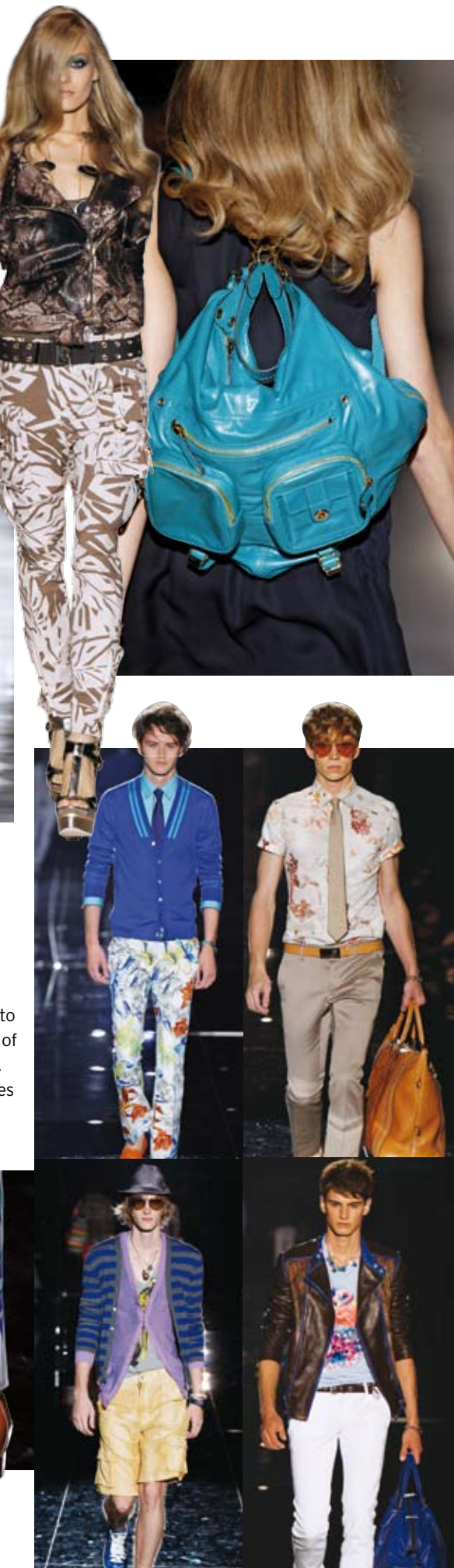
## THE WILD ONES

Frida Giannini's **GUCCI** goddess emerged from the frozen steppes and tribal trappings of last season and transformed into a disco diva reminiscent of Michelle Pfeiffer in 'Scarface' for Spring/Summer. Named Gucci Exotica, this collection boasted vibrant girly pieces which flirted with sexy tomboy ensembles. Beach-babe bikinis, tropical prints, and filmy disco dresses made up the former while the latter included the sharp boyish suit which opened the show and Gucci's signature neat deluxe leather jacket which reappeared this season as python bikers and vests. Completing the heady jungle vibe were safari suits and gold-zippered military-cum-cargo looks which would no doubt pass muster in any real forest.



## TROPICAL COCKTAIL

Heavily influenced by the music she listens to, Frida Giannini discarded Gogol Bordello gypsy excess and embraced the florid devil-may-care style of Brooklyn duo MGMT (who also soundtracked the show). In a collection which celebrated the wild abandon of youth, lean tailoring and the neat leathers were engulfed by a creeping jungle of tropical flora and fauna, embroidered, appliquéd, or airbrushed to extravagant effect. Colours and prints were suitably bold: jeans in dégradé shades of sunset or printed with palm fronds, and shirts decorated with toucans and parrots. For eveningwear, Frida toned it down somewhat with black-and-white jacquard tuxes with tone-on-tone embroidery although the huge amethyst-and-malachite belt buckles they were paired with were an unmistakable nod to MGMT.





# STYLE FILE

## BEAUTIFUL NEW THINGS IN THE STORES

COMPILED BY CHOO AI-LING



**MUSICAL NOTES** The passion and drama of opera inspired Montegrappa to conceptualize the Emozioni in Musica collection. Every year a different masterpiece will be celebrated and the first to have that honour is the most performed opera in the world, La Traviata. Resplendent with sterling, low-relief engraving, and celluloid, the design was inspired by the tragic heroine, Violetta Valery. The top cap is engraved with the camellia on Violetta's bodice while the barrel bears her cameo portrait, even the piston filler fountain pen features an 18k gold nib decorated with the initials 'V.V.' These superbly crafted writing instruments come in a limited edition of 1,912 pens in solid silver. *Montegrappa, Cortina Watch Espace Boutique, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2142 1171 / 1161*



**BLING IT ON** For an extra sparkle, indulge that very special lady in your life with the stunning Roger Dubuis Excalibur in white gold and silver calfskin strap. Complete with a flying tourbillon and set with baguette-cut rubies and diamonds, this exquisite watch alluringly combines classic aesthetics with understated elegance. To add the cherry on top of the sundae, combine the gift with the BeHeart ring whose lyrical lines reinterpret the universal symbol of love in white gold or rose gold with diamond variations. *Roger Dubuis, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2143 1322*



**VICTORY LAP** For the second year running, Audemars Piguet took home two awards at Geneva's Watchmaking Grand Prix. Although chiefly known for its sports chronographs, Audemars Piguet won over the jury this year in the Jewellery Watch category for the Millenary Pianoforte. With its white-gold case featuring 311 brilliant-cut diamonds and diamond-pavé dial, this outstanding watch with its exclusive AP 3120 calibre self-winding movement was initially designed in honour of Quincy Jones. To celebrate the win, Georges-Henri Meylan, CEO of Audemars Piguet announced that the watch manufacturer would be donating several Millenary Pianoforte watches for auction, with the proceeds going to the Quincy Jones Foundation. The other award went to the Jules Audemars Equation of Time skeleton watch in the Complete Calendar category for an outstanding fully engraved, self-winding skeleton timepiece that perfectly captures the sun and moon's celestial choreography.



**HOLDING IT IN** Give only the best to the man you adore, and the best can only be Bottega Veneta. The Intrecciato Nappa Crocodile Duffel with its buttery soft woven leather accented with precious crocodile details is a marvelously smart way for him to carry his belongings on short trips. Alternatively, indulge him with a soft crocodile briefcase in dove gray whose classic clean lines are discreet enough to show off the exquisite crocodile skin to best effect. *Bottega Veneta, Indulge Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2143 7880*



**ACTING THE PART** Montblanc continues their tradition of honouring the life of great writers this year with dramatist and Nobel Prize winner for Literature, George Bernard Shaw. Shaw is the only Nobel Prize winner to win an Oscar for the film-script adaptation of his best known play "Pygmalion" - better known as "My Fair Lady". Aptly enough, the limited writing instrument collection features a dark-green marbled body with gleaming platinised rings reflecting the transformation of Shaw's heroine, Eliza Doolittle from flower girl into a lady. For the first time, Montblanc will accompany this with a collection of note-taking and writing accessories handcrafted from calf leather embossed with the great Irish writer's handwritten quotations. *Montblanc, Cortina Watch Espace Boutique, Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603-2142 1171 / 1161*



**A CALCULATED WRIST** For those who lead a charmed life, Van Cleef & Arpels Charms Timepieces will fit the bill. Despite being encased in 18K gold and a majestic bezel set with several lines of diamonds, this delicate ladies' watch wears its adornment gracefully. The watch's peculiarity is a delightful charm shaped as a diamond-set Alhambra motif dangling from the bezel. The Alhambra motif is a renowned quatrefoil Van Cleef & Arpels design made popular in the 1970s that is supposed to offer the wearer luck and happiness. It is also available with interchangeable coloured straps, in leather or black satin equipped with an 18K gold buckle for versatility. *Van Cleef and Arpels, Indulge Floor, Starhill Gallery; +603 2142 8669*



# THE MAN WHO WEARS TWO WATCHES

YTL LIFE MEETS FRANC VILA, THE MAN BEHIND THE BRAND OF THE SAME NAME AND WHOSE LOVE FOR THE ART OF WATCHMAKING IS REFLECTED IN THE WATCHES HE CREATES BY LAINIE YEOH



Franc Vila

THE MOST STRIKING THING ABOUT FRANC VILA, the man behind the eponymous high-end watch brand, is his passion and love for the art and craft of watchmaking. For example: he refers to Geneva - the world's headquarters of horology - as his "paradise". And then there are his creations, emblematic of the man's charisma: bold and powerful looking mechanical wonders, each with Franc's signature "Esprit Unique" design

- a stylish watch case that is contemporary, yet retains the classic spirit of watch design.

Franc Vila made its debut in 2005 with the minute repeating wristwatch which featured perpetual calendar, moon-phases and a world premiere of a slide mechanism designed inside the case. The watch showcased innovation, and it was also clear that the brains behind it was someone keen - almost to the point of obsession - at pushing beyond boundaries. Since then Franc Vila has developed a reputation for the development of quite a few 'grandes complications', an industry terminology for complicated watch movements designed by reputable watchmakers.

Before we settle down to chat, Mr. Franc Vila checks the time on the two watches he wears and points out that watches are the only status symbols one can take around everywhere. "After all, when we enter a party, our sports car stays outside," he laughs.

**YOU WEAR TWO WATCHES. WHY?** Yes, always. And because I only have two hands. If not, I would wear more.

**YOU COULD WEAR A FEW ON EACH WRIST.** Two for each isn't comfortable. One each is perfect. My watches show Malaysian time, and Geneva time. I could have several times in one GMT watch, but I prefer to match two. I always say a pair of black and white, or red gold and white gold.

**WOULD YOU RECOMMEND OTHERS TO DO THE SAME?** With my watches, they can (laughs).

**YOU'RE INTO PHILOSOPHY, FINE ARTS AND SPORTS CARS. YOU EVEN HAVE SHARES IN A FILM COMPANY. WHY CHOOSE WATCHES AS YOUR CAREER?** I do many things, but have collected watches since I was a child. It's my

true, favourite passion. The day came when I couldn't find the perfect watch for me, and I knew I had to create my own, so I forgot about the other businesses.

**HOW DOES ONE EVEN BEGIN TO CREATE A WATCH?**

I started to study, read hundreds of books, magazines - everything about watches. When I arrived in Geneva, I surrounded myself with a team of professionals. I started with the concept of the watch, and needed people who could do precisely what I wanted. There are always limits, but I am constantly trying to cross them. I always want to do things no one has before. They think I want the impossible, but I say 'I want it like this', and we work together towards a solution.

**WHAT ATTRACTS YOU TO DOING THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN DONE BEFORE?**

It was always this way, since I was a child. I cannot follow others, I have to be my own leader, do the things I want to do. When I love something, I feel the necessity to go beyond the set limits. It's my personality, I cannot do anything against that.

**HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN A TIMEPIECE IS READY?**

That's difficult. I don't have much time now, but when I paint, the most difficult thing is deciding when it's finished. When you apply the last brush stroke, something magic tells you it's done. It's a feeling, an instinct.

**WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOUR DESIGN STYLE GONE THROUGH FROM THE FIRST TIMEPIECE, TO THE MOST RECENT?**

It's an evolution. The first Franc Vila watch was only made for me - wasn't even under the brand. When you compare that design with The SuperLigero, it's more or less the same. Of course, it was not so well-finished, and the last watch was bigger, but the essence and shape remain. One constant is that nothing is decorative in my watches. I believe everything in the watch is either functional, or a tribute to something from traditional watchmaking. You know, I was the first to design the strap to specifically match the watch. I always say luxury is not a detail, it's in the details.

**THERE ARE ONLY AROUND 250 WATCHES FOR YOUR BRAND. WHY THE RESTRAINT?**

I love exclusivity. I'm prepared to make two or three versions of a watch rather

than hundreds. My watches have to be excellent in these four factors: creativity, luxury, innovation and very importantly, exclusivity. Everyone may want it, but not everyone can have it. This is not my fault, quality is always expensive.

**WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE WEAR YOUR WATCHES?**

There are no 'types', only people who appreciate real luxury. They discern between democratic luxury, and high-end luxury. They have a taste for real exclusivity, creativity, and innovation. And in general, they have good taste (laughs).

**CAN YOU PICK A FAVOURITE WATCH FROM YOUR COLLECTION?**

It's very difficult! The Tourbillon! It is the most aesthetic of all the complications in the watch. You can see the heartbeat inside the watch, enjoy it, feel an intense emotion. I also love my chronographs, it conceptually connects us to the romantic notion of men with active lives. ■

*Franc Vila watches can be found exclusively at the Khronos boutique in Starhill Gallery, Jalan Bukit Bintang, KL; +603-2141 9021/102; www.luxuryconcepts.com.my*



## FVA N° 6 TOURBILLON PLANÉTAIRE SKELETON SUPERLIGERO CONCEPT

First introduced in Baselworld 2008, its movement features a debut of "Lightnium", an extremely light alloy of high tensile strength, formerly reserved for aeronautical engineering. Combined with its strong architectural design, this tourbillon is the strongest and sportiest skeleton watch in its category. The back of the movement and the

impressive cage of the tourbillon is constructed in coloured Lightnium. This skeleton watch maintains the characteristic "Esprit Unique" shape which gives all Franc Vila watches their unmistakable identity.

Technically, the movement has five days of reserve power. Earlier referred to by

Franc as the heartbeat of his creation, the flying tourbillon regulates the watch, and is equipped with 'Inertial Moment Control'. This control constantly and precisely regulates the tourbillon. A differential system of planetary gears also effectively reduces by two-thirds the number of turns needed to wind the watch.



# RISING FROM THE RED ASHES

MÜHLE-GLASHÜTTE, A BRAND THAT ROSE FROM THE RUINS OF THE COMMUNIST ERA, IS MAKING ITS PRESENCE FELT THROUGH DISTINCTIVE, CLEAR-CUT WATCH DESIGNS THAT ENTICE CONTEMPORARY CONSUMERS BY KAMAL BAYRAMOV



Thilo Mühle (R) with his father, Hans Jürgen



Terranaut

WATCH AFICIONADOS MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH THE LUXURY WATCH BRAND, MÜHLE-GLASHÜTTE, but few know that Glashütte is also the name of a little town in former East Germany which has not one, but three major watch manufacturers, each with a long history in the watch-making business.

One of these companies, Mühle-Glashütte was initially renowned for its precision measuring instruments for the local clock industry, and then later on for its high-quality nautical instruments.

The company was established in 1869 by Robert Mühle and today, Mühle equips cruise ships such as the AIDA fleet, as well as luxury yachts with chronometers and ship watch motors or nautical instruments. In the first decades of the 20th century, the company expanded into producing instruments for diverse areas, such as cars (tachometers, revolution counters, and automobile clocks), commercial vehicles, and motorcycles.

From 1945 onwards, the Mühles' business ventures were buffeted by history. At the end of the war, the Soviets expropriated and dismantled their company; in 1980, the East German government integrated their business into a nationally owned enterprise; and when the reunification of Germany arrived, the company became a private limited company. Finally, in 1992, Hans-Jürgen (the great-grandson of Robert Mühle, the



Rasmus

original founder of Mühle-Glashütte) struck out on his own to focus on building the family business.

Mühle-Glashütte finally produced its first wristwatch in 1996. Today, wristwatch production has become its core business; the company employs 42 people, annually produces 15,000 high-quality mechanical watches, and it is what the brand is known for amongst consumers.

According to Thilo Mühle, managing director of Mühle-Glashütte, the philosophy behind its watches is simple: form follows function. "Our watches have character and are precision instruments for measuring time. Our strengths and tradition are in building instruments that are reliable, strong and functional. We have seven wristwatch lines, from sportive to elegant and include the business, technical, classic, sport, city and nautical," says Mühle.

Mühle-Glashütte watches are not just stylish but also practical. For instance, life boat crews from the German Society for the Saving of Shipwrecked Sailors (DGzRS) helped in the designing of the S.A.R. Rescue Timer from the nautical line. This watch, which was awarded the Japanese sports watch of the year, reinstates Mühle-Glashütte's nautical pedigree. The Rasmus model, also from the nautical line, was tested under extreme conditions by the national Apnoe diving team.

Says Mühle: "My father, who is 67, and myself, own the company. At 50 years old, I'm the fifth generation and my father is the consultant and chairman of the company. The decision making process is easier and there is no bureaucracy, so this is an asset. We work together with our team which is young and

we want to build up the company in the next five years to be a strong luxury watch maker. We are not at the high-end of the luxury watch market; we want to design watches that can be used in everyday situations."

Thilo is hands on in every aspect of the business down to knowing every member of the staff by name, and greets each staff in the morning. The company produces watches for niche markets and does not plan to go into the mainstream. "We produce 13,000 watches a year and have four lines in our collections: classic, sporty, technical and nautical. Out of the total, special diver watches are limited, while we produce more classic watches," he explains.

"We have a special diver's watch that can withstand a depth up to 1,000m. Another watch is the classic chronograph Tetonia, which is elegant and can be used as a corporate watch." The company is also trying to connect with younger generation by manufacturing watches with a bit of colour. "Germans are known to be conservative buyers, so we produce different watches to suit different regions like Europe, Asia and the US, as consumers have varied preferences.

"We aim to have a new watch produced each year, if possible. Next year, the company will be 140 years old and we will make a special line to celebrate this anniversary. It will be a limited edition watch." Last year's Basel world fair was a new beginning for Mühle-Glashütte. The company spent months preparing for the event, including designing an array of new styles and watches that was launched at the show. Glashütte is proud of their three-quarter plate which is a major step towards producing their own watch movements.

Moving forward, the company aims to continue to pursue its goal of becoming a luxury watch brand, a goal it believes it is well on its way to achieving. ■

*Mühle-Glashütte watches can be found exclusively at the Khronos boutique in Starhill Gallery, Jalan Bukit Bintang, KL: +603-2141 9021/ 102; www.luxuryconcepts.com.my*

## TWO OF THE LATEST OFFERINGS BY MÜHLE-GLASHÜTTE.

**TERRANAUT I CHRONOGRAPH, TERRANAUT II NAVIGATOR WATCH, TERRANAUT III AVIATOR WATCH**

The attractive design of the new Terranaut watches is reminiscent of an aircraft cockpit instruments. The clear-cut watch face reflects this look and makes these timepieces unmistakable. Every Terranaut dial is available in black or olive.

In addition, the Terranaut chronograph comes in grey. The Super-LumiNova coated dials make for easy recognition in the dark. The satin stainless steel casing comes with a scratch-proof, non-reflecting sapphire crystal. Each Terranaut watch is equipped with a unique woodpecker regulation and rotating element developed and patented by Mühle.

**GERMANIKA SERIES**

Mühle-Glashütte unveiled its innovative, successful design line in 2006 with the new Germanika series. This series marries a modern look with traditional watch-making craftsmanship, giving it a unique appearance and feel. The series includes the chronograph Germanika I, the Germanika II with a second time-zone display and the two classics of the 1930s style, Germanika III and Germanika IV in big and medium.



Germanika

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LUXURYCONCEPTS



# FLIGHTS OF FANCY



FOR THE JETSETTER, ONE OF THE TRICKIEST THINGS TO PULL OFF IS TO KEEP LOOKING FABULOUS AT 30,000 FEET. HERE ARE A FEW TIPS BY ANIS RAMLI

RUMOUR HAS IT THAT CELEBRITIES LIKE, say, Kate Hudson, apply Elizabeth Arden's Eight Hour Cream before they board the plane. This skincare classic truly lives up to its name while also being a great multi-tasker: it is suitable as hand cream, lip balm and for soothing chapped skin and elbows. After all, recycled dry cabin air is the skin's number one enemy. And in an age where check-in baggage is limited and onboard liquid allowance has been drastically restricted, anything that allows you to leave behind three other beauty unnecessarys must surely be heaven sent, or at least a fantastic beauty secret.

Flying long haul doesn't mean you have to arrive at your destination with crackled skin, puffy eyes and cracked lips. You just have to have a few tricks up your sleeve. For example, go for a time-release moisturiser before you fly. Clinique recently reformulated its Moisture Surge moisturiser that retains moisture for a good 12 hours. This gel also doubles up as a quick 5-minute mask or, as a layer on top of your moisturiser to create an effortless fresh faced look while holidaying.

A good eye cream applied before you board the plane is a precursor to arriving at your destination looking fresh and ready. StriVectin-SD Eye Cream contains all the original formula of its breakthrough cream minus the aromatic agents. A small drop is all you need to feel the cream deliver moisture and hydration to the eyes' delicate areas. It also reduces eye bags and puffiness from lack of sleep.

When it comes to keeping the body moisturised, pre-flight application also works wonders. Your body will benefit from Sundari's Gotu Kola and Lotus Body Oil, a lightweight concoction of fast absorbing and deeply hydrating coconut oil. Ayurvedic Damascus rose essence and lotus oil scents work together to calm both the mind and skin.

The low humidity of the cabin air can also cause mild dehydration as well as dry and irritated nostrils. What you can do is also swab a little of the Gotu Kola and Lotus Body Oil around your nostrils to keep nasal membranes moist and help clear nasal passages. This same dry, cabin air is also the culprit behind frizzy hair. Using a leave-in conditioner, such as Korres Almond Proteins Leave-On Conditioner, helps keep flyaway hair in check, thanks to almond and wheat proteins. It can also be used as a pre-styling product, so that's one more unnecessary item off your luggage list.

Finally, don't forget the towelettes. They are great to refresh yourself prior to landing without having to wait in queue for the lavatory. With their mantra of being kind and gentle to your skin, Simple Cleansing Wipes are great to have when travelling, as it removes not only makeup and grime, but tones and moisturises the skin as well.

Once you've got your own personal flying pampering remedies down pat, perhaps flying coach may seem like first class. ■

PHOTO GETTY IMAGES

**OHM REMEDIES** Sundari's range of skincare will delight fans of Ayurvedic philosophy. The line unlocks the regenerative powers of skin through Ayurvedic principles, combining it with the highest



grade, all natural essential oils and other natural skin care ingredients. Consider its Neem Night Cream. Neem has been used for centuries as a remedy due to its antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. This emollient nighttime treatment effectively restores the natural, radiant luster to the skin. *Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur; +603 2782 9090*

## BESPOKE COVER

Imagine a mask that is light as air and able to address all your skin concerns. At MTM, the Custom-blended Hydrating Miracle Mask scores big with its hydrating formulation of cucumber extract, carrageenan and sodium hyaluronate that encourages skin cells to regenerate. Yet, it can also be designed to tackle other woes. Whether to soothe sun effects or target radiance, there are over 300 different custom blend formulations available at your service. *MTM Custom-blended Skincare Centre, S3 Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL; +603 2144 8861*



**TAKE 5** Beaubelle's New Beginnings renews skin using natural fruit extracts in an intensive programme perfect for all skin types. By combining the use of its skin refining packs, face masks and AutoThermic décollete and face massage minerals, this is a great alternative to the conventional abrasive forms of skin renewal regimes. A promotional first trial for its Week 1 Treatment is priced at RM280, valid until Jan 31, 2009. *Baubelle Skin and Body Care Day Spa, S15, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL; +603 2148 4898*



**DEEP BLUE** Discover a true marine experience with Phytomer's Champagne of the Sea. Phytomer, the pioneer in marine skincare cosmetics, lets you experience the soothing effects of its Self Heating Marine Mud in this treatment that works like a thermal blanket to ease muscle tension and promote deep cellular detoxification. Sandwiched between a relaxing dry scrub and a moisturising massage, this two-hour pampering treatment is priced at RM528. For first-timers, take

advantage of this special promotion where you can enjoy two treatments for the price of one. *Essentials Urban Retreat, S32-37, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, KL; +603-2148 3288*



# RESOLUTION REJUVENATION

AFTER USHERING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH CHAMPAGNE, COUNTDOWNS AND CONFETTI, THE NEXT THING TO DO IS TO LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR BODY TELLS YOU BY ANIS RAMLI

THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS ARE GOOD FOR A FEW THINGS. The first, and the main one, that most people look forward to, is an excuse to eat, drink and be merry. But once the festivities are over, the thing to do is then stop, take stock and perhaps kick start some health-inducing habits. If for the past 364 days we take no notice of our bad eating, working and lifestyle habits, the start of the new year should be the ideal time for us to begin considering cleansing the body's clutter.

Only a few years ago, the word 'detox' meant recovering from a Saturday night, or a stint at a rehab centre. Today though it means taking stock of the abuses we've imposed upon our bodies - clearing the mess amassed from unhealthy eating habits that have been left unchecked for too long. Our liver, kidney, intestines, lymphatics, blood and lungs are the major systems that allow our bodies to detox. A healthy body detoxifies naturally through these built-in mechanisms when we perform our daily bathroom rituals.

Interestingly, the skin too, plays a major role in ridding our bodies of metabolic wastes, for instance, when we perspire. The skin, in fact, can reflect the state of a functioning or malfunctioning organ. A liver that is not functioning properly is mirrored by a jaundiced skin, accentuated by discolouration, itching and rashes. Impaired kidney function shows up through skin that is both pale and yellow, suggesting anaemia. Imbalanced hormones can affect the skin's moisture, collagen production and elasticity - the fundamentals of premature ageing.

More recently, detox has taken a new, wider meaning. It encompasses cleaning up not just the insides of our body, but our mind and spirit as well. Just as a gradual cleansing of the body can help purify it and allow the body to resume healthy







stimulate skin that has been under attack from environmental pollution while rejuvenating skin cells' vitality.

While massages are generally relaxing, they also offer other benefits such as increased blood circulation, lubrication of the joints and elimination of impurities from the body. Herbal oils that are applied to the body with a particular type of massage, specifically in Ayurvedic practices, further help toxins move towards the gastro-intestinal tract. The Ayurvedic healing programmes at Spa Village Pangkor Laut Resort usually run between seven or 14 days for its full benefits to be experienced. The programme begins with

bodily functions, a detox programme can also help improve the mental, emotional and spiritual levels of our existence. Such a holistic approach to detox can only enhance the effectiveness of us functioning optimally as an individual, allowing us to get through our daily lives with the best mental attitude and positive outlook.

your every need. The trick to stay still, listen to what your body needs and then pamper yourself with a suitable therapy based on those needs.

In Spa Village Majestic Malacca, cooling treatments and a diet based on the healing practices of the Peranakan (Straits Chinese) culture support

## MORE RECENTLY, DETOX HAS COME TO ENCOMPASS CLEANING UP NOT JUST OUR BODIES BUT OUR MINDS AND SPIRITS TOO

Detoxification programmes are meant to give support to these natural mechanisms that might not be functioning optimally. For example, if one is constipated, a mild laxative is introduced. If one is not sweating, a few minutes at the sauna can help. Fasting, light and/or vegetarian meals, cooling foods, extra fruits and vegetables will support the detoxification process.

The award-winning Spa Village has an entire range of bespoke detoxification programmes that will suit

detoxification. The Egg Rolling Therapy, combined with Yoghurt/Guava Leaves Body Scrub and Cucumber/Aloe Wrap are designed to target the body's manifestation of excess heat (fire) as a result of too much toxins that can give rise to feverish sensations, swellings, pains and redness. These are all signs of inflammation within and outside the body. The cooling treatments have the ability to reduce heat sensations, redness and pain and inflammations. Likewise, Spa Village Kuala Lumpur's Pearl and Rice Facial and the Egg Undulation Face Treatment can help



a consultation with the resident Indian doctor before a bespoke routine that combines detoxification (Dinacharya) and destressing (Shirodhara) is recommended. Day One starts with cleansing of the five senses (Dinacharya): the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. Ayurveda practice believes this to be an important aspect of self care as keeping the senses functioning properly gives greater perception of one's reality.

The rest of the series is made up of daily treatments of Abhyanga and Shiro Dhara. Abhyanga, a herbal oil massage, provides the means for trans-dermal absorption of the healing qualities of the ingredients used in the oil while helping the skin to perform its diverse functions efficiently, whether to dispel toxins from the body or to nourish tissue functions. Shiro Dhara, which means 'to pour oil on the head', involves flowing a prescribed herbal oil continuously over the forehead, or the 'third eye'. This calms the central nervous system and restores balance.

Similar principles are also applied at Spa Village Cameron Highlands Resort, where the three-day detox programmes includes one inspired by the Semai (an indigenous tribe) that delivers a complete detox





## AYURVEDA PRACTICE BELIEVES THAT KEEPING THE SENSES FUNCTIONING WELL GIVES GREATER PERCEPTION OF ONE'S REALITY



experience. The Semai treatment combines a herbal bath, a massage, a sitz bath and a scrub that uses unique ingredients sourced from the highlands' forests that have long benefited the tribe. Indigenous roots, herbs and flowers of the area, that have for generations been used as healing remedies for the Semai, are incorporated into the detox ritual. The sitz bath, for instance, creates an internal thermal reaction to eliminate toxins and excess fat. It also banishes bloating and encourages a restorative and peaceful slumber after. The following two days in the detox schedule involve a programme that combines treatments with avocado, chrysanthemum and a Malay heated stone therapy called Tungku Batu that alleviates water retention and relieves joint and muscle pains.

For guests retreating to the Spa Village Tembok Bali Resort, the three-day detox programme takes advantage of the island's serene surroundings that culminates in a three-day lifestyle change. The spa provides a tailored menu for a detox diet that incorporates fresh juice blends, excursions

and activities designed to heal, calm and revive the spirit, and a mixture of massages that relaxes and energises.

A typical day would see guests partake in an activity, such as yoga, pencak silat (local form of martial art) or a bicycle tour, which helps one to be attuned to one's senses while providing an avenue to de-stress the mind. A massage performed later in the day creates the platform to rid the body of toxins from the day before and, combined with a colon cleansing menu designed during the stay, the whole experience allows guests to purify not just the body, but the mind and spirit as well.

Similarly, the Sucimurni concept that is the embodiment of Spa Village Tanjong Jara is a lifestyle concept created to promote wholesome living by emphasising the purity of spirit, health and well-being. Sucimurni is a perfect blend of dynamism between self and nature, as attested to by the detox programme.

Here at the spa, the generations-old practices of the Malay community in bringing balance back to the body, mind and soul are revived in a three-day programme designed to meet the challenges of today's modern living. The body is prepped for the ensuing detox treatments by first digesting the Akar-akar (Roots) drink. Containing ginger, betel leaves, gotu kola leaves and many other herbs and spices known in Malay folk medicine, they work as digestive aids or a detox tea to help protect the liver, alleviate urinary and digestive problems.

The cleansing-detox protocols that follow include Tuam Pasir (a Malay heated sand therapy) on the first day and a combination of a body scrub and Ukup Wangi (scented body steaming) on the second day of treatment. The Ukup Wangi works on the principle of refreshing the core area of the body (groin) that in turn helps to boost blood circulation, elimination and



digestion. It directly stimulates the root chakra, which governs sexual energy and reproductive organs. For women, this is especially beneficial in regulating the menstrual cycle and menopausal symptoms.

The final day of the detox programme ends with the Ikal-ikal (a hair and scalp treatment). The Malays believe that headaches and migraines are caused by excessive heat in the body. The herbs used here help draw away heat and stabilise body temperature. In between treatments, guests enjoy a healthy menu that includes kampung-reared chicken to enhance the programme, as well as activities designed to nurture the mind and bring the body back to balance.

Detoxing is a multi-layered health approach that lets us manage our body and our environment positively. No doubt our body does much of the detoxification process by itself, but as our bodies age and our immune systems weaken, giving our system a conscious detox will go a long way in bringing back the body and mind to optimum health. Now isn't that a good thought to start the new year. ■





# FUTURE NETWORKS

THE CONCEPT OF WEB 2.0 HASN'T JUST CHANGED THE WAY WE 'LIVE' ONLINE; IT'S PRESENCE IS BEING FELT IN SO MANY ASPECTS OF OUR 'REAL' EVERYDAY LIFE BY MATT ARMITAGE

DESPITE THE UBIQUITY OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB, many of its users are still a little bit fuzzy about the exact meaning of some of its latest developments. For an example, What is an RSS feed and why should you need it? Similarly, despite the Interweb being full to the brim with spurious and specious blogs, how many people out of a world population of 6 billion know how to blog, let alone why?

Yet we're constantly being assured that these online tools, marketed under the catchall term of Web 2.0, are the future of communications, commerce and connectivity. Without getting too technical, the journey from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 can be loosely described as a transition from read only content to a read-write framework. This includes sites like YouTube where users are able to upload their own videos through a simple online interface and share them with the world.

So huge was the explosion of popularity around sites like YouTube, MySpace, eBay and Blogger.com that Time Magazine was prompted to make all of us - as the new content creators - its 'Person of the Year' in 2006. Yet, two years later, even

those sites now look outdated as more of us enjoy high-speed broadband services at home that include video-on-demand, network gaming and three dimensional 'virtual' worlds like Second Life.

But as much as the technology has supposedly freed us, it's the changes in our behaviour it has provoked that are more far reaching. In the US this year dozens of newspapers have downsized, shedding staff and shifting their emphasis towards their online operations. Hardest hit have been the small-town papers with low circulations that are unable to compete with the immediacy of information, especially via audio and video reporting, on the Web.

Industry rumours suggest that many major international newspapers are planning to shelve their print editions within the next five years to rebrand themselves as online media organisations offering interactive content. Indeed, many TV companies, most notably the UK's British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) now make much of its current and archived content available for free streaming from its website (through a special media player).

PHOTO CORBIS

And the film companies are also, slowly, coming round to the idea. Earlier this year Joss Whedon, the writer-producer behind TV hits including Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel, premiered his latest creation, Dr Horrible, online. With an all-star cast, the low-budget 12-minute episodes were specifically designed to be viewed online and on mobile players, allowing fans to purchase and download the series through retailers like the Net-based iTunes Store.

While Whedon put his energies into Dr Horrible largely as a response to the Writers Guild strike that paralysed much of US TV during the first half of this year, its foundations are built on cult shows like 'lonelygirl15' which first appeared as a seeming videoblog until it was later revealed to be the work of a group of underground New York film-makers.

That show has already spawned a more commercial spin-off in the form of KateModern which was aired on social networking site Bebo. Then there's the animated Afterworld, the 90-second episodes of which were specifically designed to be downloaded and viewed on the current generation of media-rich cell-phones and mobile devices.

And for those terminally addicted to blogging they can now 'twitter' from their mobiles, posting their tweets online and receiving tweets from feeds they subscribe to. If the last sentence had you reaching for the geek dictionary, don't worry: it's literally so complicated to explain that you may be better off not knowing.

But it's from within these social networks that the biggest changes are being forged. Look at Facebook. What was started by student Mark Zuckerberg as a network for fellow students at US college Harvard now has more than 120 million users worldwide, a figure that represents around 1% of the world's total population. Imagine a TV channel that could boast so many viewers and imagine the potential advertising revenues it could generate.

Not that there's anything inherently wrong with firing a few ads at users once in a while: they provide a zero-cost service so effectively that ad exposure is the 'fee' its consumer base pays. But more importantly the social networks and other online developments mark a shift away from the open-access philosophy that founded the World Wide



JOSS WHEDON CORBIS

Web to closed, commercial systems that potentially own the information, photos and videos that users post on them. But closed or not, sites like Facebook have really delivered the online democracy that Web 2.0 pointed to. It has become a way of making new friends, re-discovering old friends and finding fellow twitchers and tweeters. More than that, it has become a grassroots platform that enables anything from organising a back garden barbecue to more politically and socially motivated activities. It has even become a way for neighbourhood businesses to talk directly and cheaply to its customer base.

And, privacy issues and technology gap aside, that's perhaps the biggest transformation: where once we had to be tempted to visit the online presence of stores and retailers, now they can come to us, pre-armed with the kind of information they know we'll appreciate. As for those RSS feeds, well you'll just have to Wiki it, won't you? ■



Joss Whedon





# CENTRES OF THE UNIVERSE

HOME ENTERTAINMENT USED TO MEAN NIGHTS CROWDED AROUND THE CANDLE, squinting at a scrap of paper as you took it in turns to play noughts and crosses on yesterday's newspaper. Thankfully, that's one good old day that's been truly consigned to the past. In the past few years we've seen home entertainment up sticks and become truly portable with flat screens, wireless streaming and discreet flat-panel speakers systems. Now that Blu-Ray has emerged victorious from the format wars, manufacturers have gotten down to the hard graft of moving the technology onwards and giving us, their

loyal consumers, what we always wanted - which is pretty much everything, on demand.

You can now wire your whole house so that the music follows as you move from room to room. And more cleverly, you can programme the same box to play different music or video or online content in each of those rooms. If only those darned 'Star Trek' holo-decks were available it would be perfect. But while we wait for the next jump forward, here are some components you can use to put together your ultimate system.



**PASS THE TISSUES** When we talk about streaming we don't generally mean a cold. And there's certainly nothing unhealthy about the Sonos Bundle 150. Just connect one of the two included ZonePlayers (the ZP90) to your home entertainment set up and it communicates wirelessly to as many ZP120 players with built in amplifiers as you've got rooms to put them in. The full colour wireless Controller, whose buttons and colours seem to owe something of a stylistic debt to those reductionists at Apple, gives you access to all your music. Plus, if you're connected to the Net via Wi-Fi it'll even stream any of the thousands of radio stations that exist out there in cyber space. If that wasn't enough, you can even have the players booming out different tunes in each room. Not bad for a tissue box.



**X MARKS THE BOX** Sure, it plays games. But, so, it seems, do refrigerators and washing machines these days. What you can do is safely assure any questioning family member that this is the most cost-effective way to get yourself an integrated Blu-Ray disc player and hard-drive recorder. With

High Def reproduction at a cinematic 16:9 ratio and 120GB of storage space the games bit is, well, irrelevant. Who in their right mind would want to pit their wits against thousands of other players through Microsoft's Xbox Live network? Or strap on an axe and grind out those riffs on the latest edition of Guitar Hero? No missus, nor I. [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com)



## SOLO PERFORMANCE

If you're treating yourself to some kind of monstrous floor-to-ceiling viewing screen then you're going to need a player and audio machine that really complements the

scale. Eschewing the usual dozen plastic box approach of many manufacturers, Arcam's Solo 5.1 takes things back to basics, housing an HD ready DVD and CD playing unit alongside an amplifier and all that Dolby 5.1 circuitry, not to mention adding a universal remote that will happily take over the tasks all those other slave units currently labour with. Oh, and it integrates seamlessly with iPods, and comes in a neat svelte black package that will happily merge with the rest of your set-up.



**BASE COLOURS** DVDs and CDs are so passé these days, don't you think? Much better to store your movies, music and pictures on a computer and stream to wherever you need it in the house. That used to mean making some seriously ugly beige boxes the focus of your home entertainment needs. But worry no more, because Dell's latest range of Studio laptops and Studio Hybrid desktops come in a variety of eye-watering candy colours sure to brighten your day. And the desktop range has abandoned the old square corners for a compact and sleek oval style more suited to minimalist world of interior design. And to ensure they have the performance to match the looks, all the machines are based around Intel's spiffingly speedy Core 2 Duo architecture, with optional Blu-Ray drives for the very latest in high-definition reproduction. [www.dell.com](http://www.dell.com)



**HIGH FIVE** The Archos 5 makes it in here because of its wireless networking features. It has a 4.5-inch screen, 120GB storage, 4-hour battery life and supports loads of different audio and visual formats, plus it can record direct from your TV with an optional docking station. What makes it home entertainment friendly is its Wi-Fi capability. It can log onto your home network and stream content wirelessly, making it the perfect screen to take with you into the garden. Or even the bath. [www.archos.com](http://www.archos.com)



**TIP TOP TV** Of course, if you're spending all this money to reinvigorate your home cinema and audio experience, you might want to experiment by changing the way you receive that content in the first place. Apple TV's nondescript box is far more than a minimal designed doodad. Sync-ing wirelessly to your computer and other streaming media it allows you to view photos, videos and control audio playback through your TV. So far, so similar? Well, it also connects you to Apple's iTunes store, allowing you to rent or buy High Def content that can be downloaded to a hard drive or streamed direct to your screen from the Internet. Not bad for a box with no buttons. <http://www.apple.com/pr/products/appletv/appletv.html>



# THE JOYS OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

THE WELL-KNOWN 230 HAS ADDED A NEW AND APPEALING DIMENSION TO THE MERCEDES E-CLASS BY ELLFIAN ABDUL RAHIM

ANYONE LOOKING BACK WILL EASILY REMEMBER RIDING IN ONE, be it on the way to the airport, on a long haul 'balik kampung' jaunt in one hired as a cab, or even admiring a well-to-do neighbour's brand spanking new company car. Yet, it's taken up to nearly the end of the current W211's life cycle for Malaysia to welcome the E230 onto her roads. With reports of a new generation E-Class set to debut at the end of the year, this comes late, but it is still very much a noteworthy addition to Mercedes' best-selling line.

The E-Class is easily Merc's best-selling model with the W211 making up almost half of Mercedes-Benz Malaysia's total sales. So the question might be: is it really necessary to expand the model lineup any way? How many more E-Classes can you sell? Well, apparently, there's a little segment that's been unfulfilled by the choice between an E200K and an E280. The E280 obviously provides a more luxurious and powerful option but you'd need an extra RM70,000, or 20% over the E200K's retail price for that privilege. Given that the E200K's supercharged engine provides enough pull for everyday use, not many were willing to shell out just for that extra little bit of exclusivity.

The E230 ostensibly brings this privilege to a more affordable price point, albeit, still 45 grand over the base model's price tag. With the more recognisable 230 badge, it offers a sense of discernment yet avoids the over-indulgence (in most cases, anyway) of buying something so high up the food chain.

And so there has definitely been a need for an option in the middle. Now, the E200K may more than satisfy the entry-level requirement bill into the segment, but some may find that a four-pot, souped-up as it is, isn't quite the way to go. There's the 3.0l E280, of course, which shifted the presentation upwards from the 2.6l-equipped E 240, and which presents all that you'd expect of a high-spec E-Class. But of course, the current fuel crisis would strongly suggest a smaller capacity being the smarter way to go.

The refinement from the bigger six-cylinder job also comes at a price. Which is where the E230 comes in, as it slots in between the two and looks to have the right bag of tricks in its arsenal to appeal to those who think

the entry-level a little too basic and the top-of-the-line a little too out of reach.

New to this E is of course the engine type, which is the same block to be seen on the new W204 C230. The normally aspirated 2.5l V6 - featuring variable camshaft adjustment - offers 204bhp and 245Nm of torque, available across a broad 2,900-5,500rpm range, and this power is transferred via a 7-GTRONIC gearbox. The Avantgarde specification brings along 17-inch twin five-spoke wheels, twin exhaust tips and black bird-eye maple interior detail trim. The vehicle also gets a panoramic glass roof, bi-xenon lights, different interior ambient lighting and rear fold-down seats.

Standard fittings include a Comand APS map-based DVD navigation system with a 6.5-inch colour display, Thermotronic automatic climate control, anti-theft alarm with interior motion sensor, Parktronic, Linguatronic as well as an Intelligent Light System. The last works around the bi-xenon system and includes five different lighting functions - a new "country" mode provides brighter, more extensive illumination

of the offside verge than the previous low-beam headlamps, in this case, by 10m.

The motorway mode, activated automatically at speeds above 90kmh, produces an even projection to a range of up to 120m. Enhancements to handling come in the form of Direct Control, sports coil-springs and up-rated gas-pressure shock absorbers, as well as newly developed spring link bearings and rebound buffer springs, which help limit body roll when cornering. Safety equipment includes items like Pre-Safe, Neck-Pro sensor-controlled head restraints and Adaptive Brake.

Plenty on offer as far as equipment levels are concerned, and happily all this translates into a car that is every bit as effective as the intent promises. Much of it is what you'd expect from the well proven W211 - all the trademarks and characteristics of the type are here; it's comfortable (well, maybe less so at the back, where the rear seats feel a little bit too angled, possibly due to the fold down design), and it hauls the miles in exemplary fashion. In short, it's strong, it's solid, it's a Mercedes-Benz.

From a driving perspective, the 2.5l V6 does very well at sustaining interest levels. It is probably missing a little in low end energy and response, but the linearity and pull further up the range is certainly appealing. And it is fast enough. While outright running speeds didn't quite match that which was quoted, the top end of 240km/h is easily reached without a strain, and nought to 100km/h performance is a very respectable 9.1 seconds. Handling is keen, and the car does track quite well even into high-ish speeds, provided you don't

present it with too much of a challenge. The rear is arguably still a little too soft, the steering still too vague in feel, and there's that ever familiar under-steer, but on the whole, as first seen in the face-lifted E280, the W211 has come a long way in presented dynamics.

So, first impressions of the variant are highly positive, and this should be reflected in its take up - Mercedes-Benz Malaysia expects the RM398,888 vehicle to account for about 20% of monthly sales and the E280 for about 5%, though the lion's share will continue to rest with the E200K. It definitely has a place in the world. The E230 Avantgarde looks the perfect proposition for the Merc E-Class punter who thinks that the E200K isn't quite the cutting edge, and that the E280 is a tad too overboard.

For once, it does pay dividends to settle for a very capable mid-table runner, so that with this compromise, you still get to enjoy a fulfilling taste of the finer things in life, while not having to pay a very hefty price for the privilege of doing so. ■





# THE STAR PERFORMER

THE LEXUS LS460L IS AN IMMACULATE DRIVE ON THE INSIDE AND OUT; YOU'LL FEEL LIKE A SUPERSTAR IN IT BY ELLFIAN ABDUL RAHIM

IT LOOKS LIKE A CAR ON THE OUTSIDE. On the inside, however, it has the luxury of a business jet, plus the comfort and amenities you would find in a Hollywood film director's private screening room.

Cars like this flagship Lexus are no longer merely a form of transportation. As more time is spent in this vehicle, optimum creature comforts and high-tech gadgetry are absolutely needed to keep passengers and driver rejuvenated, relaxed, entertained and without feeling detached in any way from real time concerns of navigating traffic.

The Lexus comes attached with a tag of exclusivity, if just about every car reviewer is to be believed. Even a shot for a media spin behind the wheel of one takes a bit of waiting in line. But when we got the keys to the precious only review model of the new LS460L, it felt like we were finally getting the chance to check into the Presidential Suite of a 6-star hotel.

The LS460L is the longer, stretched version of the LS460, and the extra 12cm in the wheelbase results in a spacious rear passenger compartment

with a limo-like feel. What's more, the first thing that you notice about the LS460L when peeking inside is that the interior is strikingly attractive and appropriately luxurious.

Trimmed in leather and genuine wood, the passenger compartment has an elegant look. The wood and leather steering wheel with multifunction controls conveys a sense of sportiness but the interior is ultimately spacious and comfortable.

As for the exterior, step aside BMW. Move over Mercedes. A sleek, aerodynamic appearance combined with a European influence make this yet another great looking Japanese car. From the bold lines to the big, 18-inch aluminum alloy wheels, the LS460L is aesthetically pleasing with a look of strength and quality. This car, without question, gets more attention from casual onlookers than any vehicle of its kind.

In tech terms, the first thing you need to know about the new Lexus babe is this : it's a sub-RM800,000 investment on a very civilized ride that offers excellent drivability, courtesy of 375 horsepower

derived from its V8, 34-valve engine. That may not sound like much in a car that has a gross weight of 2.5 tons, but thanks to the world's first 8-speed auto box (yes, eight!), the LS460L keeps as close to its peak torque of 493Nm as possible at all times.

When you are ready to venture in and experience it, a proximity sensor allows you to open the door as you approach the vehicle without removing the key from your pocket, and an engine start/stop button on the console is another feature found in almost all high-end luxury cars. As an added convenience, the trunk lid opens and closes at the push of a button.

Supremely composed through corners, the family men among you will be glad to know that absolutely no discomfort will be felt by any

of your passengers (i.e. the kids are safe and well entertained) even if you take a really, really sharp bend. The driver, as well, will feel a conspicuous but well-damped body roll so there's a generous amount of handling to be explored.

Added to this equation is great refinement when on the move. At highway speeds, wind noise is the only sound that disturbs the peace while the self levelling air-suspension is in its element cushioning any bumps. Surprisingly though, the LS460L is less accomplished in city areas, straining a little to cope with our notorious potholes and commonplace road imperfections.

On a more superficial level, smart details such as the integrated exhaust pipes which form part of the rear bumper, and the highly polished window trims both shout quality though the overall effect is more imposing as opposed to stylish. Inside, the cabin has every conceivable luxury and a vast array of gadgets. These include a special diffuser above the rear passengers to re-circulate the air and a camera that monitors the driver and warns of any obstacles ahead if your eyes stray from the road or

you start nodding off. Imagine that.

When you get to where you were going, this big beast of a car can even park itself, thanks to a clever self-steering set-up which measures the size of a space before turning the wheel. All you have to do is operate the pedals! Rear passengers, meanwhile, enjoy plenty of legroom and even get their own set of controls for the stereo system.

The icing on the cake is the electric reclining Ottoman rear seats with a very handy massage function. That's not the end of it. The Rear Seat Relaxation System is your own rudimentary massage spa, providing both Shiatsu and custom pummelling to ease you into slumber on long journeys. These seats are wrapped in semi-aniline leather and adjustable to the point of lazy chair levels of recline.

And that would be just about the perfect place to appreciate the full benefits of a whopping 19 speakers located in places you never even knew existed in a car. The immaculate sound system permeates the atmosphere once the in-car entertainment is fired up.

Yet, despite the luxury of these fantastic creature comforts, one thing remains for certain. The Lexus LS460L is a car that first and foremost values all-around safety as its primary design element. The airbags equal the speakers in numbers for a start. And as a showcase for even more groundbreaking Japanese technology, there's the Lane-Keep Assist safety feature. This amazing system makes driving this car almost absolutely foolproof. It prevents the car from drifting out of line on the highway and provides emergency steering assistance. This sharpens the wheel's response to help the driver avoid a collision. Finally, there are also really clever pre-crash systems that reduce the impact of both front and rear collisions.

Anyone who's had the privilege of driving one will, at the end of the day, ask themselves whether they can afford it, or if they deserve it - and it wouldn't be that much of a mental debate if you actually were a Hollywood mogul. Of course, bear in mind that owning one means that you shouldn't mind turning a few heads as you drive or even park it. But then, getting some well deserved attention is what being a superstar is all about.

Well, wasn't that what you were aiming for in the first place? ■





# POLE POSITION

POLAND AIMS TO MAKE ITS PRESENCE FELT AT THE WORLD EXPO 2010 BY TURNING FOLK-ART INTO BREATHTAKING ARCHITECTURE BY AZIZ ABDUL DRAIM

THE WORLD EXPO IS TO ECONOMY, science and technology as the Olympics is to sports. A global event since 1851, the World Expo is a large-scale, non-commercial exposition that aims to promote the exchange of ideas and improve international relationships between participating countries.

Of its many highlights, the national pavilions created by participating countries are its main attractions. And for the World Expo 2010 to be held in China, the Polish Pavilion promises to astound.

Naturally, a national pavilion has to denote the unique aesthetics of its country of origin but at the same time create an evocative and memorable cultural ideogram. For Poland, designers Wojciech Kakowski, Marcin Mostafa and Natalia Paszkowska found inspiration in the form of a folk-art paper cutout motif. Their polygonal pavilion is thus wrapped in an eye-catching skin that reinterprets their traditional inspiration into contemporary structural planes.

With its many slanting surfaces, the edifice suggests a folded sheet of paper. Wood was the obvious choice for both basic constructional and finishing material. The outer layer of the elevation is made of impregnated laser-cut plywood mounted on glued wood construction modules with fitch plates. When set against the panorama of other Expo facilities, the Polish Pavilion comes alive courtesy of natural sunlight - sunrays penetrating through the cutouts would chisel and shape the space under the vault.

The result is a kaleidoscopic play of light and shadows.

The pavilion's temporary nature dictated the choice of materials and the character of construction. Once the Expo comes to an end, it would be possible to reclaim and recycle the pavilion structure or its parts and to reconstruct it again in one of the Polish cities.

Visitors are encouraged to follow a route into the pavilion as imposed by interiors that follow the logic of the building. The entranceway opens onto the hall housing the information centre, restaurant and shop. From here, one proceeds to the main full-height exhibition area. Inner solid walls double-up as screens on which the scenes of Polish city life are projected. Consequently, the interior of the building depicts a typical Polish market place, creating a background for scheduled performances and presentations. The concert hall located above the entranceway roof can also be accessed from this area.

Next is the exhibition area devoted to the future of the cities. The wooden floor gradually rises into terraced stairs, forming an auditorium for performances taking place below. These stairs stretch to the exhibition ramp, suspended in the pavilion space and leading to the mezzanine where the exhibition of Polish design and an additional bar are located. The last stretch of the ramp leads onto the roof-level viewing spot, where one can then take in the multi-cultural beauty of the entire World Expo before them. ■ [www.polishpavilion.pl](http://www.polishpavilion.pl)



**DO BUY DUBAI** With all the fanfare over man-made islands in the shape of palm trees and the world's first rotating skyscraper, everybody is clamouring for a piece of what Dubai has to offer. Now, for just US\$50, you can own a section of this city. Well, sort of. California-based product design company notNeutral has taken Dubai's city map and printed it onto black porcelain plates. Measuring 12", key buildings - including the Burj Dubai - are painted red while rivers and public spaces are represented in blue and green. Other major city plates are also available. [www.notneutral.com](http://www.notneutral.com)

**THE BEST OF TIME** When Room Interior Design was asked to outfit the new Khronos gallery earlier this year, their modus operandi was guided by one mission statement: to go against the grain. By rejecting traditional concepts of what a watch outlet should look like, the design firm emptied the storefront and moved display cases inside to form a row of 'floating' glass cubes. Copper-hued graphic prints illustrating the gears and Roman numerals associated with horology add to the gallery's uniqueness. This was but one reason why the Khronos - Unique Horlogerie Boutique garnered the Silver Award (Retail Category) at the Malaysian Interior Design Awards 2008. *The Khronos - Unique Horlogerie Boutique is located on the Adorn Floor, Starhill Gallery.*



**SHINING ARMOIRE** Love is a very beautiful thing. Just ask London artist Anna James. In her hands, a fully restored 1930s Venetian armoire becomes less of a piece of furniture and more of a stunning piece of art as she finishes its fine surfaces with declarations of love fashioned in graffiti. These are the very graffiti found on the walls to the entrance of "Juliet's House" in Verona, where Shakespeare is said to have lived when he wrote the tale of his two 'star-cross'd lovers.' Talk about putting the amour in armoire. [www.loveannajames.com](http://www.loveannajames.com)



# TO B OR NOT TO B

THE NEW ARMANI/CASA 2008-2009 COLLECTION IS A STUDY OF HOW MANY FAMOUS 'B' NAMES YOU CAN THINK OF AND CONTINUES THE TRADITION OF MODERNIST, MINIMALIST AND SOPHISTICATED HOME FURNITURE AND FURNISHINGS BY EUGENE NG



Bach. Beethoven. Boticelli. Bergerac. Basquiat. All surnames of famous people throughout the ages but in 2009, these are also the names given to some of the bold and beautiful pieces of furniture in the new Armani/Casa collection.

As always Armani/Casa presents a range produced with some of the most unique and exotic of materials: glossy Macassar ebony (Blush screen), lobster-pink techno fabric for the interior lining of the Bach bar cabinet and a semi-transparent metacrilate with open-weave straw canvas for the Bramante screen.

The collection also features the Brahms television table in pleated-effect glossy black lacquered wood (also in brown oak), specially designed to host the new Armani Samsung television that was launched during last year's Salon del Mobile 2008.

Even Boticelli would have been proud.

To view more of the 2009 collection, visit the Armani/Casa boutique at F1-F3, Explore Floor, Starhill Gallery, Jalan Bukit Bintang, KL; +603-2710 3803



Basquiat

Boticelli



# GONBEI WITH THE WIND

AN AIR OF SERENITY AND A WAFT OF SOME OF THE BEST JAPANESE CUISINE IN TOWN AWAITS YOU AT GONBEI, ONE OF KL'S FINEST. HEAD CHEF ITO MASAMI LEADS THE WAY BY EUGENE NG PORTRAIT BY CHOEN LEE TRANSLATION BY MOMOKO FUKUHARA

THERE IS A SENSE OF OCCASION WHEN YOU ENTER GONBEI. Two rows of thick bamboo sticks formed into an inverted 'V' shaped frame the entrance and lends a cave-like impression as you're walking through it. The other way to look at it is that you've entered a secret tunnel that will lead to culinary delights untold. And if it's Japanese cuisine that you have in mind, then you've come to the right place.

Gonbei is one of the finest if not *the* finest Japanese restaurant in KL city. Located in Starhill Gallery, its hallmark is that it promises diners the most authentic Japanese cuisine. Every aspect of the restaurant, from the food to the design, is based on time-honoured Japanese traditions. Even the word 'Gonbei' is the name of a typical farmer from ancient Japan, and the bamboo structure at the entrance is based on a traditional farmhouse and which symbolises vitality.

The interior of Gonbei is stunning. Old iron pots adorn the inside of the entrance; Japanese cloth handkerchiefs (or Tenuqui) adorn a wall in a semi-private room, colourful rice paper that slides to reveal Kamon (Japanese family crests) on another. Everywhere you look, there is something for the eye to behold - visual, vivid, intricately detailed - the feast for the sense begins even before you sit down.

The food at Gonbei has earned itself a sterling reputation amongst discerning Japanese diners in KL not just for its

taste and quality, but for the unique concept it boasts. In essence, Gonbei isn't one restaurant, but four: Teppanyaki, Sushi, Tempura and Robatayaki. Think Shook! but Japanese and you'll have hit the bull's eye. There is also a sake counter which stocks Malaysia's largest collection of sake and shochu from around Japan, including some ultra premium labels like the exclusive Kame no kou 17 from Nada Kobe, which only produces 400 bottles a year, cost around RM2,500 a bottle and can only be found in one other restaurant in Las Vegas outside of Japan. And of course, Gonbei in Kuala Lumpur.

But back to the food and all four of these famous Japanese cooking styles are featured in individual counters, each manned by a Master Chef. The prime seats in the house are at the counter, where the diner can then watch his food being sliced, deep fried or grilled before he eats it. With ample seats for each counter, this Japanese custom is kept alive in Gonbei.

This four-in-one concept in Japanese cuisine is rarely seen outside of Japan, but it was done through consultation with Masao Kobori, a highly-regarded chef who runs a small but popular among celebrities and politicians restaurant in the Akasaka district in Tokyo. Kobori created the menu and had a hand in selecting the chefs for each counter.

At the helm of the daily running of Gonbei is the 48-year-old Head Chef Ito Masami. A native of Chiba, Japan, he was handpicked by Kobori for this challenging task since its opening in June 2005. "I have been training as a chef since I started working in a sushi restaurant at age 19," says Chef Ito through the help of a translator. I had to learn how to do everything: grill, simmer, tempura, sashimi, sushi and only when you have mastered all those skills, then you can even consider yourself a proper Chef or become a Head Chef."

Chef Ito has worked in Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore, but he has found his spiritual culinary home in Gonbei. And with Zen-like calm, he has this pearl of wisdom to offer as a secret to Japanese cooking. "It's the slow braised dishes. To master the skill to get exactly the right flavour is one of the most important techniques to learn."

**WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT GONBEI?** I believe that we are different from all the other many Japanese restaurants around KL in one main aspect: we keep only to traditional Japanese cooking style. There is no 'fusion' here. Gonbei is the place for authentic Japanese food.

**HOW DO YOU ENSURE THIS LEVEL OF AUTHENTICITY?** What I teach my chefs is what I have learnt throughout my career. The way I see it, I'm not actually 'creating' dishes here; I'm simply preserving age-old cooking skills and techniques that I have learnt all my life. In terms of ingredients, I have a friend in Japan who helps me source for seasonal Japanese food for the restaurant besides the fact we also import our fish from Japan.

**WHICH SEEMS TO BE THE MOST POPULAR COUNTER AMONGST DINERS?** For some reason, it seems to be the grilled food. It's the Teppanyaki and Robatayaki.

**IS THERE A SIGNATURE DISH AT GONBEI?** We always encourage our guests to try something from each of the four kitchens; this is what makes up the essence of Gonbei. But if it's one particular dish... the King Crab (from Hokkaido) tempura; I believe Gonbei is the only place in KL which serves this.

**A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK OF JAPANESE FOOD AS A BEAUTIFUL ART FORM. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT?** When you think of Japanese cuisine, it isn't just about the cooking itself. It's not just the food considered but the knife we cut our food with to the shape, size and pattern of the plate or bowl that we eat from. So that it becomes a complete picture. So it's not only about the skill of the chef but the craftsmanship of the knife, the artistry of the crockery; they all form elements that relate to the cuisine.

**IS THIS ELEMENT PRESENT IN THE CUISINE GONBEI SERVES?** To a certain extent. But we practice this idea more in terms of using different granishes to represent the idea of the four seasons in Japanese cuisines, for example, to represent the notion of winter, we sprinkle corn flour on a dish, or for autumn, we use a sort of pine tree needle to decorate the plates.

**CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT MASAO KOBORI, THE MASTER CHEF WITH WHOM YTL CONSULTED WITH ABOUT THE RESTAURANT?** He is a famous chef in Tokyo. He has very strict ideas about his cuisine. He has his own methods of getting seasonal ingredients all over Japan. In fact, this is his special skill.

**GONBEI HAS ONE OF THE BEST STOCKS OF SAKE AND SHOCHU IN MALAYSIA. HOW DOES ONE ENJOY SAKE AND SHOCHU BEST THE 'JAPANESE' WAY?** For sake, again it depends a lot on the season. In winter, we drink it warm and in summer cold. The Japanese usually only consume sake with grilled fish or vegetable. This is the best way to enjoy the flavour of the drink. It is not customary to drink sake with rice or noodle dishes.

**TELL US MORE ABOUT THE KAME NO KOU SAKE. WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT IT?** It's because it uses the highest quality Japanese rice. The rice is then thoroughly cleaned which is time consuming. This really purifies the flavour of the sake.

**BEING A CHEF AND A JAPANESE, ARE YOU VERY PROUD OF YOUR CULTURE'S CUISINE?** Its important to keep one's traditions alive and to share it with others to. As a Japanese chef in Malaysia, I think it is very important to let other people experience my culture and my cuisine in its purest form. ■

*Gonbei Restaurant, Relish Floor, Starhill Gallery, Jln Bukit Bintang, KL; +603-2782 3801.*





# FEAST IN THE BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

THE LUNAR NEW YEAR SEES LI YEN RESTAURANT AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, KUALA LUMPUR, SERVE UP SOME TRULY SPECTACULAR CANTONESE CUISINE BY EUGENE NG

VERY MUCH LIKE CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR, the most important festival on the Chinese Lunar Calendar - Chinese New Year - is also a time for indulgence. The Lunar New Year signifies the time of the year where it is of essence that every Chinese person on the planet should make the utmost effort to go home for the traditional reunion dinner. And the reunion dinner is where families gather with loved ones after a year of absence perhaps, and then proceed to feast on familial specialty CNY dishes the cook of the family has whipped up.

Times, though, have changed, and as more and more families spend the festive season in the city, and with less and less contemporary cooks in many families, there has been an established trend for families to celebrate the reunion at restaurants.

To usher in the Year of the Ox, the award-winning fine Cantonese restaurant Li Yen - in The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur - has come up with an elaborate CNY menu. Since its opening, Li Yen

(meaning 'Beautiful Garden') has been regarded as one of the best Cantonese restaurants in the city, most notably winning the Five Star Diamond Award by The American Academy of Hospitality Sciences for seven consecutive years. It has an elegant Oriental setting with three private rooms, all in warm colours, dark wood, black polished marble floors and classical and modern Chinese artistic touches. Guests also enjoy live Yangqing music in the evenings.

Keeping up with its reputation for serving delicious dim sum and Cantonese cuisine the master chefs at Li Yen have come up with special dim sum, a la carte, yee sang and set menus for CNY. The yee sang is served either with abalone (if you are feeling extra indulgent), salmon, Chinese carp, jelly fish, sea cucumber and there is even a vegetarian option.

For the a la carte menu, look out for the 'steamed goose webs stuffed with prawn paste and topped with crab roe', 'deep-

fried butter prawns' and 'braised dried oysters with sea moss' among others. Over at the dim sum menu, 'steamed shark's fin dumplings', 'deep-fried bean curds stuffed with prawn paste, lotus root and egg yolk served with mango sauce' and 'pan-fried Lunar cakes' are definitely worth a gander.

You'll definitely be spoilt for choice and in so many other ways at Li Yen this Lunar New Year, but if all that choice gets too much for you, there's always the simple set menus to go for. All regular Li Yen menu items are still available during the CNY period.

For Cantonese cuisine, there is no better indulgence for families than Li Yen. ■

*Li Yen, 2nd Floor, The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, Jalan Imbi, KL; +603-2142 8000; the CNY menus are available from January 20 - February 9, 2009. Chinese New Year falls on January 26, 2009.*





Voted the world's best resort, multiple award-winning Pangkor Laut Resort promises the privileged visitor an experience of exclusivity and elegance. Its home is the private island of Pangkor Laut, blessed with pristine beaches bathed in the waters of the Straits of Malacca. The accommodation is luxuriously appointed and the resort boasts unparalleled hospitality and attention to detail. On the gastronomic front, guests can enjoy a wide range of cuisine, whether dining at the new Feast Village at Fisherman's Cove or by the sea. Add the tropical sun, luxurious surroundings and the services of the Resort's world-renowned Spa Village – which combines the healing arts of India, China and Malaysia – and it is no wonder that this is the choice holiday destination for international celebrities and the most discerning of holidaymakers. Tel: +603-2783 1000; [www.pangkorlautresort.com](http://www.pangkorlautresort.com)



In a small secluded cove near Pangkor Laut Resort rest the eight wonders that make up The Estates. Each of these individually crafted enclaves is reminiscent of the traditional South-East Asian way of living of days gone by, when an 'estate' was made up of a number of special purpose buildings scattered amidst gardens of astounding beauty. Comprising either two, three or four bedrooms, each Estate offers a private infinity-edge pool, as well as discreet living, dining, bathing and sleeping pavilions in various adaptations of Malay architectural traditions. There is also a private vehicle and driver assigned to each Estate should guests decide to leave the seclusion of their villa to dine in one of the Resort's restaurants or to go for a treatment at the Spa Village. The Estates is truly the perfect luxury hideaway. Tel: +603-2783 1000; [www.pangkorlautresort.com/estates/](http://www.pangkorlautresort.com/estates/)

**Intimate Experiences**

Enjoy leisurely sunset excursions that provide the perfect setting for a romantic evening. Cruise around the island on board the Resort's large traditional 'tongkang'-style teakwood boat which will anchor at Emerald Bay where you will witness one of the world's most beautiful sunsets. From there the Captain will sail off to a quiet cove where you'll be served a delicious four-course dinner at a table set only for you.

**Emerald Bay**

A centrepiece of the Resort is the magnificent Emerald Bay, considered by many independent international travel consultants as one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Here the beach is kept as pristine and natural as possible. This intimate bay remains as it has been for eons, providing the perfect place for swimming, sunbathing or simply spending time together.

**Rainforest Revelations**

There are three jungle treks through the rainforest that are accompanied by our experienced resident naturalist. The walks are free of charge and offer a fascinating insight into the spectacular virgin rainforest that is estimated to be over 2 million years old. Some of the interesting wildlife you may spot on the island includes crab-eating macaque monkeys, tropical monitor lizards and yellow pied hornbills.

**Privileged Tranquillity**

Reflecting a South-East Asian aesthetic, each villa at the Estates offers complete privacy to its privileged guests and is crafted to provide refined elegance and luxurious comfort. Polished tropical hardwood floors are accented by textured fabrics that add warmth to the elegant bedrooms with their podium beds; bathrooms and vanity areas are wonderfully spacious, and crafted with fine attention to detail.

**Integrated into the Environment**

Each and every individual Estate is a unique experience - tailored to blend comfortably and stylishly into its natural environment. In fact, the entire Resort was built with integration in mind, so that it not only blends in with the environment, but actually becomes part of it. A variety of wildlife roam the area so don't be surprised to find yourself dining with a peacock or waking up to the call of monkeys.

**Sterling Service**

Every Estate is assigned an Estate Manager, at least two dedicated attendants and a Chef, all of whom will aid in unobtrusively addressing and coordinating every aspect of each guest's tenancy. During meal times, guests can give specific instructions, or be as adventurous as they want, as all our chefs' culinary skills span a wide range of both local Asian specialties and Western cuisine.





An evocation of the elegance and grandeur of 17th century Malay palaces, Tanjong Jara Resort is the only luxury resort that sits along Malaysia's beautiful East Coast beaches. Built on a 17-hectare site that blends in with its natural surroundings, the 99-room Resort is an embodiment of the gentle Malay arts of service and hospitality. With a philosophy based on the concept of 'Sucimurni' (which emphasises purity of spirit, health and well-being), Tanjong Jara is the perfect place to escape and rejuvenate. The Resort offers four different luxurious accommodation options, each commanding stunning views of the South China Sea and appointed in a fashion fit for a Malay king. Tanjong Jara is surrounded by sleepy fishing villages, shaded by coconut palms, alongside a meandering river teeming with wildlife – providing guests with an authentic taste of the region's spirit and culture. *Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.tanjongjararesort.com*



Set amidst tea plantations and rolling hills, this tranquil boutique hideaway promises visitors all the splendour, romance and nostalgia of Cameron Highlands' grand colonial heritage. Cameron Highlands is Malaysia's largest hill resort and is the only place in this tropical country where you can find tea plantations and strawberries, while enjoying a temperate climate. Largely unchanged since its colonial heyday, this 'little corner of England in Asia' is still dotted with Tudor-style cottages and is a place where scones and afternoon tea will not seem out of place. The Resort itself is representative of all this: with tall French doors, timber-beamed ceilings, plantation shutters and even a fireplace adding old-world charm to the surroundings. It also houses a Spa Village as well as an 18-hole golf course and 56 luxuriously appointed rooms and suites which weave in the wondrous colours and textures of Jim Thompson's famed Asian silks. *Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.cameronhighlandsresort.com*

**The World's Most Innovative Spa**

The Spa Village Tanjong Jara was recently awarded 'The World's Most Innovative Spa' by UK's Tatler Spa Awards, a testament to the unique nature of the Malay healing culture found only on the east coast of Malaysia. Ancient Malay healing traditions are honoured through the signature Asam Roselle, 'Panglima – Warrior Massage' and 'Syurga Tujuh – Seven Steps to Heaven' treatments.

**Diving off a secluded Island**

Just off the Resort, approximately 45 minutes by speedboat is Tenggol Island which is part of the fabulous Terengganu Marine Park. Famed for its untouched coral gardens and rare species of marine life, it has over 20 dive spots for both the beginner and experienced diver. The Resort also offers its guests the chance to gain their PADI Open Water Diver licence while on holiday.

**The Heart of Malay Culture**

Culture is an integral part of the Tanjong Jara Resort experience, and this manifests itself in a myriad of ways. Guests can enjoy cooking lessons which will introduce them to the various culinary arts of Malaysia. Or indulge in activities like playing 'congkak', learning the Malay martial arts 'silat' or go on handicraft tours to witness traditional 'kris' blacksmiths, batik painters, songket weavers and shipmakers at work.

**The Spa Village**

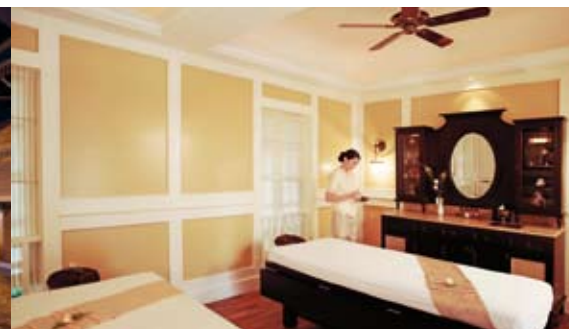
Today, Cameron Highlands is still home to many tea plantations, being Malaysia's largest tea-producing region. The treatments at the Cameron Highlands Spa Village feature healing therapies based on produce from the surrounding jungles and ancient tea rituals. This authentic blending of culture and product, along with the tranquil ambience of the lush highlands, makes it a unique and therapeutic healing retreat.

**High on Golf**

The Resort sits alongside the only 18-hole golf course in the area. The well-manicured course comprises luxuriant green fairways with well-developed trees, fine sand bunkers, tricky greens and forgiving rough. At 5,000 feet above sea level, it has been carved with precision out of the foliage and forests of the area. Tree-covered mountains also provide a spectacular backdrop to this stunning course.

**Taking Tea**

The Resort takes its tea-time very seriously and the Jim Thompson Tea Room is a cosy retreat and the perfect spot for this time-honoured English tradition. Savour finger sandwiches, light-as-air pastries and home baked scones as well as fresh Cameron strawberries. For a local twist, try the scones with exotic local fruit like banana or mango. Complementing this spread is a wide selection of quality Cameron teas.







The key to every YTL Luxury Spa Resort is the marriage of luxurious accommodation and sterling service with beauty, tranquility and a sense of sanctuary. The Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali is all that and more. Inspired by the Spa Village Pangkor Laut, this latest jewel in YTL Hotel's crown embraces the same healing ethos of celebrating local culture, honouring the ancient healing traditions of the region and infusing each visit with the essence of the surrounding location. Set in a landscape of great natural beauty, this 31-room luxury spa resort offers guests the best of Balinese massage, wellness and spirituality therapies which seek to restore not just the body and mind, but also to replenish the spirit through a range of carefully-designed programmes. The seclusion of the resort also offers guests the opportunity to get away from the stresses of the world and rejuvenate within a place tailor-made for that very purpose. *Tel: +603-2783 1000; www.tembokbali.com*



The Majestic Malacca is the first luxury hotel and spa in the historic city of Malacca. Faithfully restored and lovingly refurbished by YTL Hotels, the 54-room Majestic Malacca resonates with historical significance even while it has been thoroughly updated to cater to the needs of today's upmarket traveller. Architecture, décor and dining all reflect the legacy of this ancient city's history, and take guests on a luxurious journey into the past. The Majestic Malacca also houses the newest Spa Village which offers luxury-spa seekers such delights as the warm-energy treatment of Malaccan palm sugar and honey scrub and a hot nutmeg and rice rolling body massage. An icon of Malacca's past has now become something to be desired in the present. *Tel: +603-2142 8000; www.majesticmalacca.com*



**Following the Path**

Each guest is invited to select a Discovery Path based on an analysis of their needs – choosing from Balance, Creativity or Vigour – with each offering a combined range of tailored treatments and activities designed to restore equilibrium to bodies and spirits. Those who wish to improve their personal skills in the art of Balinese massage can join the Spa Village Academy and undergo private training with a group of skilled therapists.

**Meditate upon the Stars**

Unique to Tembok Bali is the Starlight Gazing experience, where you can enjoy the hypnotic pleasure of stargazing while floating on the Resort's infinity pool. You do this listening to Ultra Meditation music, designed to induce the brain into a synchronized theta state of consciousness, found to aid in expanding and enhancing memory and learning capabilities.

**Cuisine Designed to Rejuvenate**

Seafood is drawn daily from the local ocean, fruit purchased from local farmers, and only the freshest of ingredients are used in every dish. With captivating views of the Bali Sea, set just above the slate-hued beach, the open air Wantilan restaurant offers ever-changing flavourful regional and international cuisine. And organic products, as available, are the first choice ingredients.

**The Peranakan Spa**

The award-winning Spa Village opens its sixth wellness centre in The Majestic Malacca. Adhering to the brand's philosophy of honouring the healing traditions of the local region, the Spa Village Malacca is the world's only spa to base its therapies on the healing heritage of the Baba-Nyonya culture and offers treatments which uses a local specialty gula melaka, also known as palm sugar.

**Dining Sensations**

Malaysia is a country that is world renowned for the diversity and depth of its culinary options. And nowhere in the country is this more evident than the multicultural mix that is Malacca – the unique merging of cultures in this historic city has resulted in a novel marriage of cuisines, both Chinese and Malay, known as Nyonya food – which is truly a feast for both the senses and the palette.

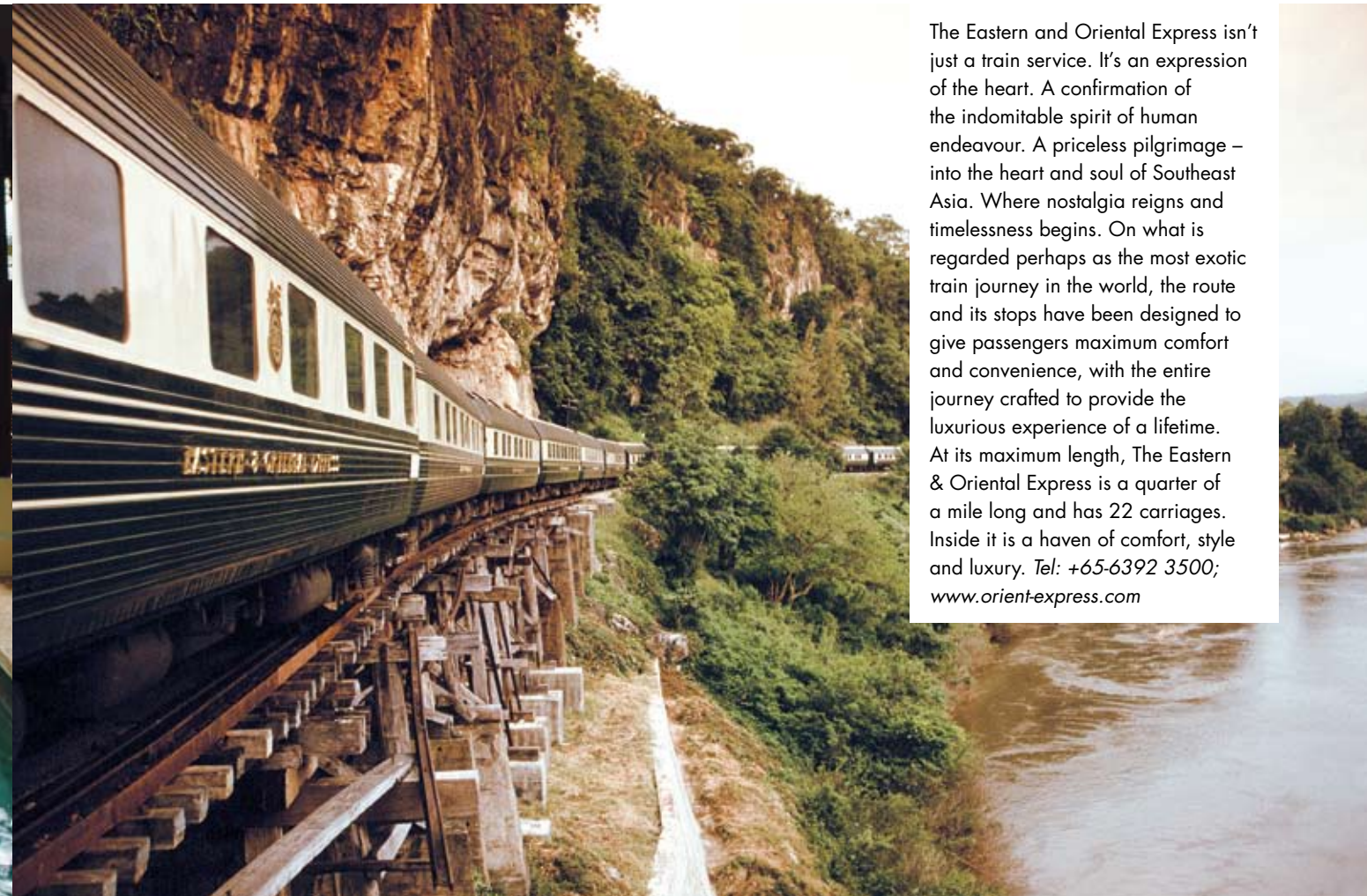
**A Haven of History**

In this small town that was once occupied by the world's major colonial powers of the Portuguese, Dutch and English, The Majestic Hotel rests peacefully on the banks of the Malacca River. Reflections of this historic trading port resonate within the intimacy and luxury of this beautiful hotel, designed to provide experiences that are anchored in the past, but woven together with every modern convenience.





YTL's multiple award-winning Spa Village brand has developed an international reputation within the luxury spa market and grown from strength to strength over the years. Besides the original Spa Village Pangkor Laut, there are now five other Spa Villages – Spa Village Kuala Lumpur, Spa Village Tanjong Jara, Spa Village Cameron Highlands and Spa Village Resort Tembok Bali and the Spa Village Malacca. What's unique about all the Spa Villages is that each draws inspiration from the healing cultures of its particular region and blends traditional therapeutic remedies with a modern methodology. Whether in Pangkor Laut, Kuala Lumpur or Bali, the Spa Village is a sophisticated and rejuvenating experience, not just because of the quality of its services but simply because the Spa Village is more than just a place: it's a philosophy. Tel: +603-2783 1000; [www.spavillage.com](http://www.spavillage.com)



The Eastern and Oriental Express isn't just a train service. It's an expression of the heart. A confirmation of the indomitable spirit of human endeavour. A priceless pilgrimage – into the heart and soul of Southeast Asia. Where nostalgia reigns and timelessness begins. On what is regarded perhaps as the most exotic train journey in the world, the route and its stops have been designed to give passengers maximum comfort and convenience, with the entire journey crafted to provide the luxurious experience of a lifetime. At its maximum length, The Eastern & Oriental Express is a quarter of a mile long and has 22 carriages. Inside it is a haven of comfort, style and luxury. Tel: +65-6392 3500; [www.orient-express.com](http://www.orient-express.com)

**Spa Village Pangkor Laut**  
Paying homage to the three major cultures of Malaysia, ancient Chinese, Malay and Indian treatments drawing from the country's abundance of natural resources have generated international acclaim and accolades.

**Spa Village Cameron Highlands**  
A unique haven for relaxation where tea is the foundation of the experience. Located in the cool upper reaches of the Malaysian Highlands amidst dense jungles and rolling tea hills.

**Spa Village Tanjong Jara**  
The new Spa Village Tanjong Jara is a sanctuary of well-being anchored in the ancient Malay way of life. It features unique restorative treatments handed down by authentic Malay healers.

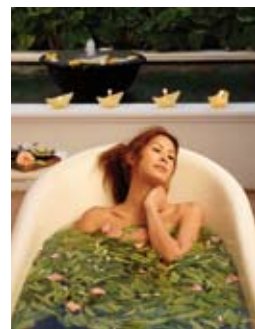
**Spa Village Kuala Lumpur**  
With treatments anchored in the cultural diversity and rich healing heritage of the region, KL's most stylish urban retreat combines ancient practices with a host of the most blissful spa therapies.

The newest addition to the Spa Village family, it is also the only spa in the world to base its treatments on the Peranakan culture, which is native to Malacca and is a cross between Malay and Chinese traditions.

**The Perfect Vantage Point**  
The air-conditioned carriages are perfect vantage points from which to tour the region. The Restaurant Cars, Saloon Car and Bar Car are located in the centre of the train while the Observation Car with its open deck area is located at the very end. It is an ideal spot for watching South-East Asia go by as you trundle along the train's magnificent route, passing through several Malaysian states and South Thailand.

The interior walls of the compartments are panelled with cherry wood and elm burr, with decorative marquetry friezes and intricate design inlays. The delicate embroidery work on the pelmets was done in Malaysia, and the bespoke carpets hand-tufted in Thailand. While guests dine at night, the steward transforms the compartment from a living room to a magical bedroom.

**The Finest Cuisine**  
Chefs on board the E&O Express are internationally renowned for their ability to create a tantalising variety of Eastern and European dishes, using the finest fresh seasonal ingredients. The service is also top of the line and equals the world's finest restaurants. Each morning, a breakfast of freshly baked croissants, coffee or tea, juice and fruit is delivered to your compartment to be enjoyed in luxurious privacy.





The JW Marriott Hotel Kuala Lumpur was designed with the business traveller in mind. Located in the city's business district, this five-star deluxe hotel is the ultimate venue for meetings and functions. Facilities include 47 flexible meeting room options (including a grand ballroom) within the property, the adjoining Starhill Conference Centre and the newly built Carlton Conference Centre at The Residences at The Ritz-Carlton, KL, all of which are connected via link-bridge. There is also a Business Centre providing a full range of business services. Rooms feature ample workspace, a plush high-back executive chair, broadband connection and other standard communication services (two-line speaker phone, fax modem, voicemail). Tel: +603-2715 9000; [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)



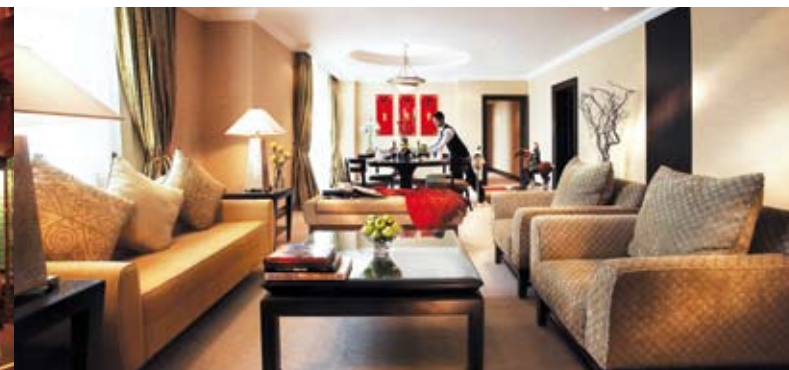
Based on the philosophy that great service should never merely be reactive and compliant but anticipatory and spontaneous, The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur is Malaysia's only 5-star luxury boutique hotel offering a full personal butler service. Its location in the heart of the city's prestigious Golden Triangle district makes for easy access to the trendy Bukit Bintang area: Starhill Gallery, one of the city's premier shopping centres, is linked to the hotel via an enclosed sky bridge. With 365 elegantly appointed guestrooms (including 110 suites and 1 penthouse), 24 meeting rooms, three exceptional restaurants and an award-winning 'tropical' Spa Village, The Ritz-Carlton is regarded as one of the city's finest business hotels where combining business and pleasure is as effortless as the masterly service it provides. Tel: +603-2142 8000; [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)



### Starhill Gallery

Today's truly outstanding cities blend architecture and design, art and fashion, music and culture with a state of mind. And Starhill Gallery, integrated with the hotel, is an effortlessly elegant and cosmopolitan environment that reflects the essence and spirit of Kuala Lumpur and its people. Delivering "A Gallery of Rich Experiences", seven luxurious floors offer quality and exclusivity crafted for those who seek experiences out of the ordinary. Here, the world's premier retailers present a palette of unique personalised shopping experiences, making it easy to combine business and pleasure at the JW Marriott.

On the lowest level of Starhill Gallery, guests can enjoy a unique dining experience at the Feast Village, where 13 restaurants are brought together to create a multi-ethnic culinary experience like no other in the world. Design draws from nature here; walls are asymmetrical and serve not to separate, but rather provide peaceful enclaves where people feel at rest. Rice paper from Japan combines with slate and ikat from Indonesia, granite from China, silk from Thailand, and timber from Myanmar to create an essence of Asia. The Feast Village is truly one-of-a-kind.



### The Ritz-Carlton Residences

An entire all-suite wing makes up the second tower of the Ritz-Carlton complex. Sumptuous two and three bedroom suites designed and decorated to the finest international standards offer guests a unique standard of accommodation. Each suite includes a dining room and lounge area as well as a gourmet-style kitchen where guests can self-cater or use the private catering services provided by Starhill Gallery's Feast Village. Guests may choose to have the Complex's Executive Chef prepare a private dining experience – and every suite comes with its own private butler. It's a home away from home.

A 30,000 square foot, 25 meeting room, three-level facility connected to the hotel at levels 1 and 2. This classically designed, yet state-of-the-art facility allows The Ritz-Carlton, KL, to host events from 10 to 400 guests. The Conference Center also connects via enclosed sky bridge to the upscale Starhill Gallery, a KL city landmark featuring some of the world's most exclusive brands and dining experiences. Guests can also choose to hold functions in the Meeting Suite, the Member's Lounge or at the adjacent Pool Deck, which is perfect for unwinding after an intense day's meeting.



Set amidst a tropical forest on a craggy cliff overlooking the beautiful emerald green of the Andaman Sea is this lesser known gem on the YTL Hotels portfolio of luxury holiday destinations. Located just 15 minutes away from Phuket International Airport on the island's quiet, undeveloped north western coastline, Villa Tassana offers the privileged visitor a vacation of modern sophistication married with a hearty dose of Thai hospitality. Spread out over a generous 2,800 square metres, the Villa features 3 large bedrooms with ensuite bath and dressing areas, a 15m swimming pool, separate living and dining pavilions, a kitchen and even a maid's room. For those looking to 'get away from it all', Villa Tassana is ideal for a spot of splendid isolation, or for spending quality time with family and friends, all while enjoying nature in all its glory, and warm, homely 5-star service. Tel: +603-2783 1000



The latest jewel in YTL Hotels' stellar collection of properties began life as a manor house stable in the late 17th century. Today, it has been lovingly restored and transformed into an elegant, high-design boutique homestay. Featuring an eclectic mix of interiors spanning the Art Deco period of the early 1900s in the lounge right up to its sophisticated contemporary kitchen, Bray House is an experience of the English gentry lifestyle with bespoke service and an intimate atmosphere. Designer furniture, vintage accessories and vivid splashes of colour create an atmosphere that marries the modern and the classic. Each of the 3 bedrooms has its own theme: a lullaby of white, for example, or a symphony of Tuscany red in another. The House also has a courtyard and water feature created from a natural spring found in the garden. Tel: +44 1628 771171; email: [info@braycottages.com](mailto:info@braycottages.com)

### Thai-Style

The Villa is staffed by one dedicated attendant and a chef who between them will address all your housekeeping needs, unobtrusively coordinate all aspects of your tenancy and best of all, prepare fantastic homestyle Thai dishes for all your meals and even upon special requests. The food is top-notch homecooking so be prepared to fall in love with Thai cuisine.

The most precious aspect of the Villa Tassana experience is the intimate privacy it affords. Perched above a secluded cove, enveloped by the sight and sounds of nature, away from the madding crowd and with only your own party for company, it truly encompasses the contemporary essence behind the romantic notion of 'splendid isolation'. A rare luxury indeed, if not the rarest.

Naithon Beach, Andaman White Beach and Hin Kaw Beach are a mere 5 minutes drive away. Guests can also enjoy the first-class spa and sports facilities located at the neighbouring Trisara Hotel. There are 3 fantastic golf courses nearby, including the exclusive Blue Canyon, and also a range of luxury motor yachts available to explore Phuket's many bays, islands and dive locations.

### Ye Olde England

Located in the idyllic village of Bray, near Windsor, experience the heart and soul of old England with its twee period houses, traditional pubs complete with beamed ceilings and fireplaces and a parish church that dates back to 1293. The county of Berkshire, one of the oldest in England, is also blessed with magnificent buildings and picturesque woodlands scenery and riverscapes.

### Culinary Excellence

Humble Bray is considered one of the culinary centres of the world housing many famous restaurants. The most internationally renowned are The Fat Duck owned by Heston Blumenthal and Michel Roux's Waterside Inn, which each boasts three Michelin stars. No wonder then that Bray is also home to numerous ultra-desirable residences of many well-known British celebrities.

### Sterling Service

All housekeeping needs will be addressed during your stay but the services of a butler and private chef can be accommodated upon request. The House's Concierge service include aiding with restaurant reservations and arranging excursions to nearby Windsor for a private tour of the famous Eton College, Henley-on-Thames, river cruises, golf, horse-riding and other English country pursuits.





# ROST IN TRANSRATION

OUR DEAREST LADY DOES HONG KONG

BY LADY CRISTAL CHAMPERS

THE WINTER GLOOM HAS SET IN. The Ladies of the Manor are fretting over their fading tans and the botox is wearing off. It's time to head for the sun. The hedge fund wives are cutting back as their husbands struggle against the tsunami tide of credit crunch, but for aristocrats like us who are not so common as to have to work for a living, credit crunch is not in our vocabulary, darling. "Credit crunch? What's that? Is it a new brand of slimming breakfast cereal?!", exclaimed my partner in crime, Estelle, the deliciously vacuous Arab billionaire's wife.

Her goldmine, or rather, oil field of a husband is so rich that he went to his bank to seal a loan deal: only it was they who wanted to borrow money from him to bail them out. Oil runs in his vein and his teeth are studded with diamonds. His race horses have their own spa and personal trainers as does his wife who is treated as his prized mare. Estelle is want for nothing. She flew us, the 'If-You-Have-To-Ask-The-Price-You-Can't-Afford-It' club on her private jet to Hong Kong for some serious retail therapy and Eastern delights. Barbados is so last year, darling.

In Hong Kong, we were transported in style in a Rolls Royce to the fabulous Peninsula Hotel and ensconced in splendid suites commanding a panoramic view of Victoria Harbour. Elegant, sophisticated and ageless (but enough about us), this iconic hotel exudes style and graciousness and bears all the hallmarks of old world grandeur. I had a personal butler called 'Wingo' and when I commented on his unusual name, he elucidated, "My father is a great fan of Wingo Starr, the Beatle, and he named me after him." Then later, we were told our 'Wolls Woyce' was waiting to take us out shopping. But the Chinese had the last laugh when we ordered an exotic sounding soup at a local restaurant which turned out to be a steaming bowl of offal - slices of intestines, tripe, lungs and some unidentified parts of an animal staring at us. Apparently, offal soup is one of the nation's favourite dishes. It is said that the Chinese eat everything that has legs and wings except tables, chairs and aeroplanes. Then again, Estelle drinks anything that has spirit in it except maybe paint stripper.

We had an epiphanic moment when we went to a Chinese temple dedicated to the Goddess of Mercy for some cosmic therapy. The temple is famed for its fortune-telling by little old ladies who claim not to speak English but were quite fluent when it came to asking for "Fifty dollaah". Estelle was keen to have her fortune read as a gypsy once predicted quite accurately

that she was a very spiritual person, except the gypsy failed to distinguish the kind of spirit she was into.

Poor Estelle is an alcoholic and was in rehab for a while before she met her Prince Charming but now stays firmly on the wagon. Through an interpreter, the temple fortune-teller gushed that Estelle is blessed with good fortune and longevity. Well, her face is her fortune and she will definitely have a long life - preserved in alcohol and plastic surgery. With native cunning, the old fortune-teller advised us to donate money to the temple to get the blessing of the Goddess and the monks would chant prayers for wealth and prosperity to be bestowed upon us. Never one to miss a divine intervention, we donated generously to the temple and insisted the monks added 'eternal youth' in their chants for us. Yes, yes, I know all the money in the world cannot buy us the elixir of youth but it sure can get you great plastic surgeons. And indeed when we returned home, Bubbles, our American heiress friend, introduced us to the best plastic surgeon that money can buy. Looks like the monks have been chanting hard for us. The Goddess is merciful. ■



ILLUSTRATION EDWARD MAK