

# YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

## Holiday Cheer!

Niseko's Winter Wonderland  
Christmas At Camerons  
Magic In Bath

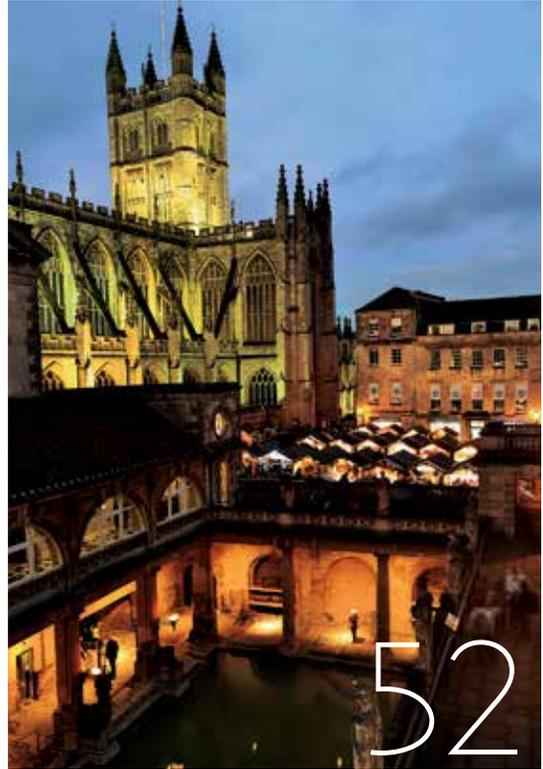
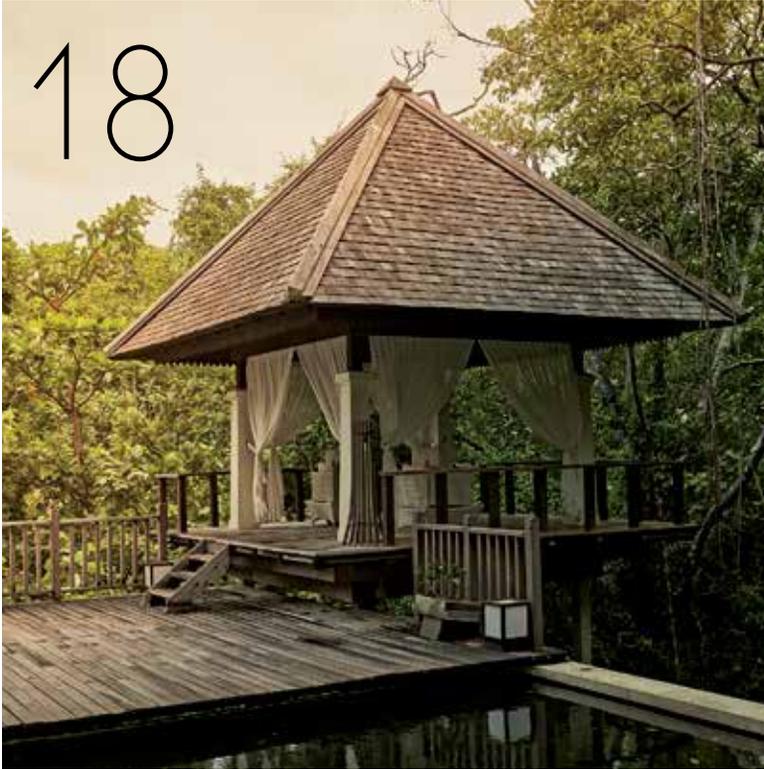
## Paradise Found

Gaya Island's  
Earthy Delights



Spanish Culinary Delights • Royal Spa Secrets • Bali's Spectacular Mountains

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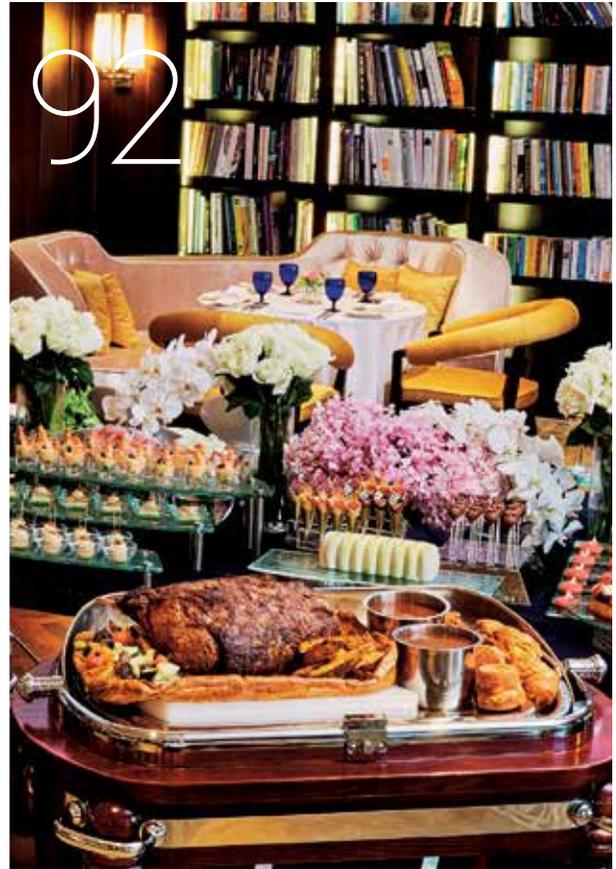
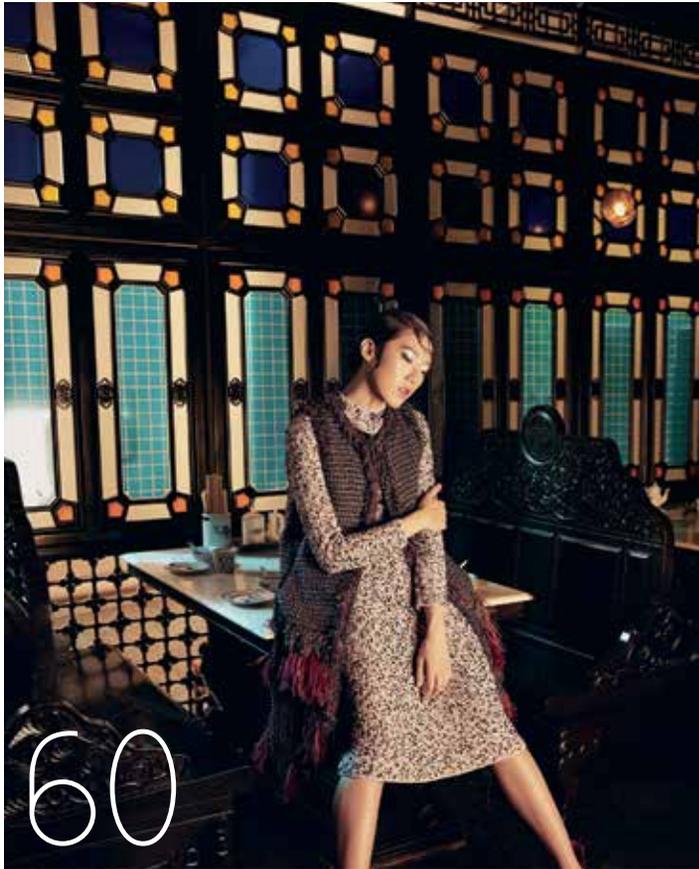


Image The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur

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## Published By

YTL Hotels & Properties Sdn Bhd  
8th Floor, Yeoh Tiong Lay Plaza, 55,  
Jalan Bukit Bintang,  
55100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

## Produced By

Blu Inc Media Sdn Bhd  
(Company No. 7408-K)  
Lot 7, Jalan Bersatu 13/4, Section 13,  
46200 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia  
Tel: +603 7952 7000  
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E-mail: kitchoong@bluinc.com.my

## Colour Separation By

Far East Offset & Engraving Sdn Bhd.  
19-25, Jalan Kuchai Lama, 58200,  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

## Printed By

Percetakan Zanders Sdn Bhd  
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47180 Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia

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# A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



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

Treasured Places, Treasured Moments.

Our philosophy of going beyond the hotel room sees this holiday season embarking on some sparkling new developments for the YTL Hotels universe, starting with Gaya Island Resort which graces our cover this month. Gaya Island is a paradise filled with exotic flora and fauna thriving in our very own backyard, much to the delight of our guests. Our partnership with Sabah Parks sees our commitment to conservation efforts on Gaya Island enhanced in the form of the newly opened Gaya Island Wildlife Centre. It is a wonderful introduction for guests on the island to the exotic inhabitants of the lush jungle enveloping the resort as well as the resort's various conservation programmes.

In Niseko Village we are delighted to add two new state-of-the-art all season ski lifts and a new ski run as part of the next phase of our master plan for development. We are also proud to continue to win awards at the 2016 World Ski Awards in Kitzbuhel, Austria. For four consecutive years Niseko United has been named Japan's Best Ski Resort while YTL Hotels' Hilton Niseko Village has retained the title as Japan's Best Ski Hotel.

We also take great pleasure in adding to our portfolio in the UK, luxury properties in Edinburgh, Berkshire and London. The boutique Glasshouse Hotel Edinburgh boasts an historic weathered stone facade, and a reputation as one of the best places to stay in the city. Refurbishments are planned for Monkey Island, a centuries old retreat in Bray-on-Thames and the Academy Hotel, which comprises a collection of 5 restored Georgian townhouses in London's West End.

I'm excited to also announce the opening of a new gem in our treasure trove. Hotel Stripes, a member of Autograph Collection Hotels, is opening in Kuala Lumpur, early 2017. A striking independent hotel with a distinct, edgy vibe and character, the hotel will soon be making its mark among urbanites and sophisticates travelling to, or living in, this exciting metropolis.

Plenty to celebrate all around! May your stay with us remain truly precious!

God Bless and enjoy the issue!



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# A Decade Of Opulence

*A Journey Through Time*, the prestigious annual watch and jewellery showcase that debuted in 2007, kick-started its milestone 10th anniversary celebrations with a thrilling evening soiree and award presentation. Held amidst the grandeur of JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur, esteemed VIPs that were present during this highly anticipated gathering included the likes of YB Datuk Mas Ermeyati Samsudin, the Deputy Minister of Tourism & Culture, and Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh, Managing Director of YTL Corporation. Highlights of the evening included an opulent showcase of dazzling jewellery and a captivating performance by the talented British mezzo-soprano, Carly Paoli. 📸

1. Dr Bernard Cheong and Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh. 2. Sinthunon Chavanaves, Angela Loh and Arusa Sirikrai. 3. Dato' Yasmin Yusuff. 4. Joseph Yeoh. 5. YB Datuk Mas Ermeyati binti Samsudin. 6. Carly Paoli 7. Datin YM Ding, Dato' Jaime Chan Abdullah, Datin Sri Barbara Yap and Dato' Sri Yap Teiong Choon. 8. Suresh Hathiramani, Lye Wing Voi and Sue Yap. 9. Staphnie Tang and Elena Wuyinn. 10. Anna Frammolino and Paolo Costagli. 11. Neil Frediani, Lisa Cotton, Angie Frediani and Russell Cotton. 12. Ken Ong Thuan Ming and Charmaine Low.



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# Get Your Freak On

Time really seems to fly with Ulysse Nardin's *Freak* timepieces. It's been 15 years since the revolutionary watch made its debut and to mark the milestone, Ulysse Nardin and The Hour Glass beckoned ardent admirers of the timepiece to get their freak on at a private dinner in Starhill Gallery. The evening began with some cocktails at the Ulysse Nardin Boutique Starhill Gallery before adjourning to the centre court of Shook! Restaurant in Starhill Gallery for an exquisite four course dinner specially crafted to match the bold spirit of the *Freak* timepiece. 🍷

1. Richard Chan, Josephine Kok and SK Teh, General Manager of The Hour Glass.
2. Patrik Hoffmann, CEO of Ulysse Nardin, Che Puan Datin Winnie Low and Tunku Dato' Johanez Tunku Annuar.
3. Dato' Jaron Wong, Datin Isabel Loo and Dickson Lim.
4. Alvin Chow and Tania Lam.
5. Michelle Truong and KS Chee.
6. James Chow and Chen Li Ling.

# Tea-Riffic Time!

What better way to learn the art of brewing the perfect cup of tea than with a Twining himself at The Orchid Conservatory of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur? It was a lovely way to spend the afternoon as influencers, business partners and lovers of tea were given the top tips to sip by Stephen Twining, 10th generation scion of Twinnings- the venerable British tea company. Guests also learned the etiquette of afternoon tea while pairing various brews to the delicious savoury and sweet delicacies by the hotel. 🍷

1. Charles Arthur Smith and Stephen Twining.
2. Tiong Sue Lynn, Donyatom Utogapach and Jonathan Putra.
3. Amber Chia.
4. Noor Zahariah A Rahim and Natassia Faber.
5. Shisa Tantisireranee and Bui Pang Vun.
6. Sandra Keyworth and Chef Zaffar Abdul Samad.



# Awards And Appreciation

It was all about good times at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur recently, when the Malaysia Retail Chain Association (MRCA) hosted a gala dinner in celebration of its 24 years of excellence. With the theme 'An Evening of Opulence & Enchantment,' the night saw corporate leaders, politicians as well as members of MRCA gracing the event. Besides the celebration, the Crown Awards 2016 also took place that night to appreciate the cream of the crop on their contribution to the industry, ending the night on a pleasant note. 🍷

1. YB Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Minister of Tourism & Culture. 2. Dirk Schmellenkamp, Dato' Winnie Lim and Jinie Kamal. 3. Sunny Yap and Dato' Eddie Choon. 4. Datuk Lee Hwa Cheng and Datuk Seri Nelson Kwok. 5. HE Masahiko Horie, Ambassador of Global Environment, Dato' Garry Chua, President of Malaysia Retail Chain Association (MRCA), Shawna Yap and Yap Teak Sing. 6. Lawrence Ooi, Vincy Chan and Sam Lee.



# Crowning Achievement

Thai renowned jeweller Lotus Arts de Vivre hosted a spectacular evening soirée recently to celebrate and launch the brand's latest coffee table book *Unexpected Creations*. Held at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, guests, comprising corporate leaders, socialites and friends of the brand gathered to get up close with the book and other remarkable creations of the brand. Guests were seen mingling, socialising and exploring the displayed masterpieces of the Thai brand while snacking on canapés and sipping aperitifs, giving the night an overall memorable tone. 🍷

1. Nicklas von Bueren, Rekha von Bueren, Rolf von Bueren, Founder and Chairman of Lotus Arts de Vivre, Sirintra Chantapan, Tan Sri Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Sri von Bueren. 2. Datuk Lai Voon Hon, Antoine Bakhache and Fouad Ghandour. 3. Tengku Nina Abu Bakar and Tengku Marina Ibrahim. 4. Joon Ooi and Penny Ooi. 5. Shawna Yap, Lim Meng Hong, Shane Chaplin, Datin Nariza Petra and Datuk Ir Rosaline Ganendra.





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### New Stripes In Town

Kuala Lumpur is set to welcome a stylish new hotel, **Stripes**. Opening in the first quarter of 2017, the 184 room hotel is distinct in its character - drawing inspiration from the history and heartbeat of the local neighbourhood. Edgy, adventurous yet oh so chic, the hotel is the truest reflection of the city's bold spirit. Facilities will include Brasserie 25 with its rustic charm, The Snug for a quick start to the day, and the Meeting Studios offering stylish spaces for both business and social events. Joining the wonderfully individualistic world of Marriott Autograph Collection Hotels, Hotel Stripes promises to intrigue while delivering a strikingly unique experience.

### Crystal Clear

Along with the UK's **Monkey Island Hotel** and **The Academy Hotel**, **The Glasshouse Hotel, Edinburgh** now joins the YTL Hotels family to create more treasured moments in true luxury. The 77 room boutique hotel, also part of Marriott International's Autograph Collection, has been enchanting visitors since the mid-19th century first as the Lady Glenorchy Church before being transformed into one of the most stunning places to stay in Edinburgh. The 230-year old history of the building is kept alive through the facade of Gothic arched windows surrounded by weathered stone topped with a historic crenellated tower. Once inside, guests are treated to that renowned Scottish hospitality while enjoying the secret rooftop garden.

### Snow Days

Luxury is all about having needs attended to with utmost care and such pleasure may be experienced at the **Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse**. If you're looking for a snowy getaway skiing down one of Asia's most popular slopes at Niseko Japan, then the *Luxe Alpine Escape* is your dream holiday. Here, a personal residence concierge is always on standby to make sure you're comfortable at all times and the world-famous Japanese hospitality makes itself known as you relish an authentic Japanese dinner exclusively prepared by a private chef together with a complimentary bottle of Moët & Chandon.



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### A Lovely Package

**The Spa Village Kuala Lumpur** beckons those who seek a respite from the hustle and bustle of the city with the lovely *Ribbons & Bows* package. It's a wonderful treat for two with an overnight stay at **The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur**, dining in the marvellous Shook! restaurant and soothing 90-minute spa treatments. Valid for a year, you'll get to treat yourself and a loved one for a mini getaway every so often with ten spa treatments throughout the 12 months. The best part? There's a surprise Ritz-Carlton signature cake to give a special occasion that fabulous ritzy touch.

### Rewarding Treat

When stepping into the serene space of **Spa Village Pangkor Laut**, worries melt away and you're transported to a world of peace and pampering. This is a sentiment shared by all, especially by the judges of the AsiaSpa Awards 2016 who named the four-acre Spa Village on the private island of Pangkor Laut in Malaysia as 'Spa of the Year' in the Southeast Asia and Pacific Region. With treatments inspired from the diverse cultures of Malaysia, Spa Village Pangkor Laut nurtures the body and soul based on concepts of Rejuvenation and Longevity, Relaxation and Stress Reduction, Detoxification, as well as Romance.

### Lady Of The Mansion

A delicious treat is on its way to **The Majestic Malacca** as celebrity Chef Melba Nunis prepares to helm **The Mansion**, serving authentic Kristang fare - food of the Portuguese-Malaccan people that seamlessly blends the culinary traditions and flavours of early Portuguese and Malaccan settlers, creating masterpieces that simply burst with flavour. The face of this intricate cuisine is none other than Chef Melba Nunis whose recipes, passed down for generations, have received numerous awards and accolades. Chef Melba's enticing dishes will make their debut at The Mansion early next year; set to satiate appetites and please palates everyday for lunch and dinner. ■

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



life on the cover //

# Call Of The Wild

Get ready for a wild weekend of sun, sea and serenity at Gaya Island Resort.

Text **Maya Michael** Photography **Edmund Lee, Robin Liew, Justin Juhun, Scott Mayback and YTL Hotels**

Strolls in the park, picnics in the garden or relaxing under the shade of a rustling tree: nature in all its splendour can indeed have a profound effect on one's senses and overall wellbeing. As the legendary naturalist and television presenter Sir David Frederick Attenborough once said: "It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living". And for those yearning to experience all this for themselves, a weekend getaway amidst the luxurious trappings offered at **Gaya Island Resort** is the perfect place to be.

## Land Below The Wind

Nestled right next to the sleepy oceanfront city of Kota Kinabalu, capital of the Malaysian state of Sabah that occupies the northern part of Borneo, Gaya Island has long served as an oasis of flourishing seascapes and vibrant wildlife. Prized for its sandy beaches, coral reefs and lush tropical landscape, this floating paradise is the largest among the five isles that reside in the protected mini-archipelago that makes up Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park. Measuring approximately 3,700 acres, the name of Gaya Island is believed to be derived from the Bajau word for 'big' (gayo).

Besides being rich in fauna and flora, what also makes this floating mass of land so significant is its historical significance. It was in 1882, a year after the British North Borneo Company was given a mandate to rule over Sabah (then known as Jesselton), that a trading settlement was established on the island – quite an

impressive feat once you consider the challenges these settlers must have encountered while transporting the various building materials from the mainland. Alas, this proud settlement would ultimately meet with a bitter end when, in 1897, it was razed to the ground following a revolt led by the local folk hero Mat Salleh, whose legendary struggles against the British rule would culminate with the founding of Kota Kinabalu itself.

Following the incident, Gaya Island remained relatively untouched for over a century until exclusive private retreat aptly named Gaya Island Resort was created. Surrounded by trappings of luxury, it is within this exotic paradise that travellers can not only relax and unwind, but also escape from the humdrum of everyday urban life by reconnecting with Mother Nature.

### Adventure Awaits

Located a mere 15 minutes away from the mainland, the journey to this majestic property is an experience that begins with a speedy boat ride from the city's bustling ferry terminal, Jesselton Point, and involves circumventing massive fishing boats in all colours of the rainbow plus the occasional wayward sampan (flat-bottomed boats with oars).

As you approach the crystalline waters of Malohom Bay, the thrilling joy-ride culminates with a glorious view of the island retreat that blends harmoniously with the surrounding lush tropical jungle that embraces the sand and sea, as well as glimpses of the villas scattered throughout the property, each categorised based on the different views available. Depending on one's preference, guests can choose to wake up to the sights and sounds of tranquil mangrove forests, the surrounding jungle canopy or the distinctive peak of the legendary Mount Kinabalu.

Measuring in at a staggering 4,095m, this revered symbol of Sabah is believed to have existed for at least 15 million years during the Pliocene period. A monument of pluton, a granite mound said to exist deep beneath the Earth's crust, it might have lost its status as the tallest mountain in South-East Asia (that title now belongs to the 5,881m high Hkakabo Razi mountain in Myanmar), but many locals still retain a deep respect for this rocky behemoth. According to Kadazan lore, Mount Kinabalu is the resting place for souls bound for heaven, which is also why most locals refer to it as Aki Nabal, which translates to 'the revered place of the departed'.

### Nurture & Nature

Upon arrival at the resort, guests will be ushered to the grand lobby area, where they will be greeted by a cheerful *Kopivosian!* (welcome), before being served a refreshingly cold beverage as the resort's helpful porters assist in delivering their luggage to the rooms. Distinguished by its giant pillars, sumptuous seating areas and high wooden ceiling, the lobby is also the place where guests



*Clockwise from left: Fascinating facts revealed at the Gaya Island Wildlife Centre; One Eye, the collared scops owl; lush jungles surrounding the verdant resort.*



can sign up for a variety of recreational activities that immerse them into the various scents, textures, sounds and tastes that make up Borneo's diverse cultural heritage, which is deeply rooted in the local wilderness.

As one can probably surmise at this point, nature plays a starring role at Gaya Island Resort. Not only are there several eco-friendly initiatives in place, ranging from conservation through education to wildlife rescue programmes, but the resort also offers a plethora of interesting activities and incredible experiences that highlight the enchanting beauty of the island's natural surroundings – and a great place to begin this quest for knowledge will be by visiting the brand new **Gaya Island Wildlife Centre**.

Situated in a two-storey building perched atop a hillside, the centre was the brainchild of resident senior naturalist and walking encyclopaedia, Justin Juhun. Located just above the **Omakase** Japanese restaurant, the centre might appear modest at first but a closer look will reveal intrigue hiding in every corner, including tables showcasing several species of jewel-like insects; a gallery that lists the various animal species indigenous to the island; and fascinating displays of mineral collections, meteorite-like rocks and fossilised wood.

According to Juhun, the main purpose of this facility is to allow guests on the island to familiarise themselves with the island's diverse wildlife as well as the resort's various conservation





Clockwise from left: Proboscis monkey snoozing in a tree; the Gaya Island Wildlife Centre, wild mushrooms found along the Tavajun Trek; Justin Juhun, Senior Resident Naturalist of Gaya Island Resort.



programmes, with two nature talks conducted each week. Among the recent initiatives undertaken by Juhun and his team is a wildlife rescue project that involved collaborating with the Sabah Wildlife Department and Sabah Park to translocate endangered proboscis monkeys from nearby islands to Gaya Island as a way of increasing their dwindling population.

The wildlife centre also functions as a place where injured animals found throughout the premises can recuperate in peace. During this writer's visit, Juhun introduced a collared scops owl (*otus lettia*) that had been delivered to the centre after the frail creature was discovered with an injured eye. "We've since decided to nickname him 'One Eye'. He likes to perch on this tree so that he can greet our guests," he jokes. For Juhun, Gaya Island not only serves as a sanctuary for the resort's guests, but also for the natural inhabitants that reside in the nearby rainforest, which includes a variety of exotic species of plant and animal life that are in dire need of rescue.

Having spent most of his childhood growing up in the jungle, Juhun is grateful for having witnessed Mother Nature in all her wondrous splendour. This also explains why he is so passionate about



preserving it for future generations as time is of the essence. "I am looking forward to expanding this wildlife centre, as it will enable us to broaden the resort's conservation activities. In a developing world, nature is the one that suffers the most. From land clearing to support the needs of economy, pollution, illegal wildlife trafficking and harvesting of natural resources plus many other unsustainable practices... unless we do our part to intensify conservation efforts, the Earth will come to an end – and once that happens, everything else will perish along with it."

When not manning the centre, Juhun and his team also conduct daily **nature walks** that offer guests a golden opportunity to uncover the mysteries of the ancient dipterocarp forest that resides in the resort's backyard. The journey involves traversing various trails that have been installed as a way to minimise human intrusion. Hiking enthusiasts will especially enjoy taking on the **Tavajun Trek**. Hiking shoes are definitely a must for this voyage of discovery, which involves journeying through trickling streams, rocky terrain, undulating vines, scratchy rattans, prickly palms, tiny shrubs and massive hardwood trees. Lasting a good 45 minutes, the trail leads to the resort's private beach known as **Tavajun Bay**, home of the **Gaya Island Marine Centre**.



Clockwise from left: The Gaya Island Marine Centre; the tranquil Spa Village Gaya Island; a sumptuous private dining with the North Borneo Straits Tiffin; Scott Mayback, the resort's Resident Marine Biologist.



able to witness such a spectacle would indeed be worth crossing off the bucket list. "We also recently launched a turtle hatchery in our sister property in Tanjong Jara, and that experience has to be one of my favourite highlights this year. The guests were so excited to watch these little turtle hatchlings emerge from the nest."

As for his take on the resort's new wildlife centre, Mayback was amazed to learn that Juhun and his passionate team had managed to accomplish such a feat within six months with little outside assistance. "The guests who visit the wildlife centre will surely appreciate the educational experience," he adds. As for his own plans for the marine centre, Mayback intends to establish more coral planting activities to help rejuvenate the surrounding reef while also working with local schools on the mainland to launch new recycling programmes.

## Making A Splash

First established in October 2013, this research centre is manned by the resort's resident marine biologist, Scott Mayback, and focuses on all things to do with marine conservation. Inside are several glowing tanks housing a variety of intriguing corals that play an important role for the biodiversity of sea life, while a massive 14,000-litre recovery tank designed for housing sick and injured sea turtles greets visitors at the entrance. According to Mayback, the purpose of the tank was to enable sea turtles to recuperate in a safe and controlled environment as a way to increase their chances of survival. Believed to have existed since the time of the dinosaurs, these gentle creatures have become increasingly endangered as a result of poaching, loss of coastal habitat and commercial fishing. Since the launch of the marine centre, a total of 10 turtles have been rescued with five successfully rehabilitated and released back into the ocean – and, for any true-blue thalassophile, to be

## Holistic Healing

After a long day of getting to know the resort's wild side, a great way to cap your island adventure would be to indulge in a little rest and relaxation at the award-winning **Spa Village Gaya Island**. Located a mere three-minute walk from the wildlife centre, this pampering retreat offers a variety of sumptuous spa treatments inspired by the traditional healing customs that have been practiced by the indigenous people of Sabah for countless generations.

Set amidst a lush landscape of mangroves and vibrant morning glories, this tranquil slice of island paradise offers a calm and reclusive environment for guests to completely unwind from the events of the day. Upon stepping inside this relaxing haven, your soul will feel completely at ease with the serene ambience that includes a glistening pond filled with brightly coloured koi fish and the soothing smell of scented oils wafting in the air. As



one waits for the bliss to begin, the spa attendants will be on hand to attend to your every need, which includes serving a delicious cocktail blend of lime, chilli and tropical fruit juices to help rejuvenate the senses.

Six treatment rooms are available, each complete with high ceilings, massive glass windows shielded by thick curtains and a private deck – the perfect spot for gazing out into the wilderness before being lulled to slumber by the soothing sounds of the crashing ocean waves nearby. Also located at the Spa Village is the **Mangrove Theatre**, a spacious area where one can participate in wellness activities such as yoga. Guests on the lookout for a unique experience can also sign up for the **Sabah Scent Adventures**, an educational session that involves learning how to create your own scent using pure essential oils.

After clocking in a couple of hours at the spa, it is understandable to feel afflicted by a sudden case of clinomania. For those who opt to dine in for the rest of the day, a quick call to the concierge to request for the **North Borneo Straits Tiffin** will help to satiate any hunger pangs. Priced at MYR300 per person, this private dining experience for two showcases a variety of local and western

life on the cover //



delicacies, with each dish concocted based on the rich history that led to the development of the renowned Straits cuisine.

Included in this delightful feast are juicy satay sticks of stone-grilled chicken, beef and prawns; a seafood consommé with dumplings and vegetables; a selection of local delicacies presented in quaint ceramic tiffins; the Kalimantan Kolak Sago with sago pearls, sweet potatoes, palm sugar and coconut milk; and two shots of delightful lihing, a popular local aperitif made from yeast and glutinous rice. If you ask nicely, perhaps they might even sell you a bottle or two. Aramaiti! 🍷

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

## BORNEO BEAUTY

If you're looking for a complete head-to-toe pampering experience, the **Borneo Vanilla Orchid and Honey Cocoon** at Spa Village Gaya Island will be more than worth your while. Designed to reinvigorate one's skin and hair, each session begins with a relaxing leg massage that takes place on a private deck which faces a mangrove forest. After a gentle exfoliating body buffing treatment that involves a delicious mix of crushed vanilla pods and yoghurt, the body is wrapped in a nourishing vanilla-infused honey cacao fruit masque. This is followed by an invigorating Indian scalp massage and a nourishing vanilla honey hair masque to add a little extra lustre to tired locks of hair. The entire experience ends with a blissful full body massage. Using a toasted 'coconilla' concoction, the masseuse will gently knead away your tired muscles. Each session lasts approximately two and a half hours. (MYR765 per person)

# Make A Run For It

Winter is set to become more magical for skiers at Niseko Village this season, with multiple new features on the slopes and runs.

Text Vivian Chong

I GATE niseko village  
1992-2021

*Niseko's new ski lifts will enhance connectivity around the central village*



Left: Get set for an even more magical winter wonderland at the Powder Mecca

Upper Village Gondola, is a 300m pulsed gondola that is also the first of its kind to be housed at a Japanese ski resort. Besides allowing guests of Kasara Niseko Village and Green Leaf to access a beginners' area located on the mountainside of the latter, the gondola is connected to the top of the Village Express lift. For guests, this means a seamless commute around the central village, Niseko's contemporary lifestyle hub comprising townhouse-style buildings modelled after traditional wooden machiya. Behind the ornate lattice doors lies fine gourmet offerings and international designer fashion.

Both the Village Express and Upper Village Gondola will operate until 10pm during winter so that guests can enjoy the convenience all day, make time for an evening out or head to the slopes again for night skiing. During peak season (from Christmas through to Chinese New Year), the expanded night skiing area will also be served by the Mori no Chair lift. As if the offerings are not enticing enough, a new 1.2km ski run will also be in place. The course winds from The Green Leaf to Kasara Niseko Village, by the central village, and traverses a bridge towards Hilton Niseko Village. Additionally, two magic carpet surface lifts are in the pipeline, to be built between the Village Express lift base and Niseko Kids beginners' area, creating a conducive and comfortable learning area for first-timers. For returning skiers, everything that you have come to know and love about Niseko Village is poised to become even better this December. Go on – suit up, strap on your boots, and make a run for it. ■

To find out more about what's on offer this winter at Niseko Village, please visit [www.niseko-village.com](http://www.niseko-village.com)

It's your day on the slopes. You find your spot inside the gondola and the ski lift ascends smoothly, affording even more breathtaking vistas of the wintry wonderland that is Niseko Village. You look around you, taking in the pristine all-white terrain dotted with colourful specks that are the skiers' outfits. And then you peer downwards and realise you're floating above them, the inspiring snowscape spread out beneath you and visible through the glass bottom.

Come December, the experience is set to become a reality when YTL Hotels commences operations of two new state-of-the-art, all-season ski lifts that will take the popular winter sport to greater heights at its award-winning ski resort, one of Japan's most premium. The glass-bottom single gondola cabin is one among



several highlights that await guests once construction, which has been taking place throughout summer, is completed in time for the upcoming ski season. Part of YTL Hotels' tireless commitment to continue upping the game at Niseko Village, the two new lifts are significant in that they are unprecedented designs for a ski resort and feature many firsts. The innovative master plan will also conceive a new ski run as well as two magic carpet-surface lifts that cater to beginners.

As regulars will attest, the skiing at Niseko has always been top-notch; dubbed the Powder Mecca for the abundance and fine quality of its snow, it's widely recognised as the zenith of skiing in Japan. Located in Hokkaido at the foot of Mount Niseko Annapuri, on a fair weather day, it's a two-hour drive from Sapporo's

New Chitose International Airport. YTL Hotels operates three properties here – The Hilton Niseko Village, Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse, and The Green Leaf Niseko Village – that are all conveniently linked to the slopes and runs, as well as restaurants, shopping and other lifestyle outlets in the central village.

The first of the two new ski lifts is the high-speed Village Express that extends for 830m and comprises six-person chairs (the first for a major ski resort in Japan) plus eight-person gondolas, including the glass bottom model. The mixed gondola-chair design is also a first for Japan. The Express will also stop at a mid-point station next to Asian tapas bar Two Sticks in the central village, allowing easy access to shopping, entertainment and dining options. The second ski lift, the

# Take Divergent

Follow the unconventional route with these unique timepieces and jewels.

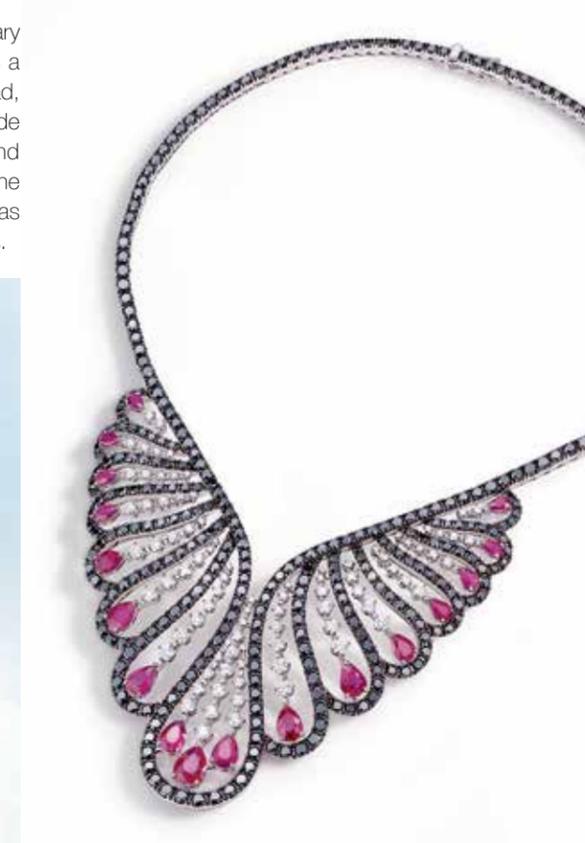


## Black Beauty

Waterproof watches are not a novelty in the world of horology. But, **OMEGA** is taking things a notch higher with the release of its latest Seamaster Planet Ocean "Deep Black", which is truly an epitome of technical excellence and stylish design. Evolving from the *Speedmaster Dark Side of the Moon* that was first released in 2013, this latest revamped collection sees craftsmanship at its peak as it improvised the art of ceramic watchmaking. Driven by the Omega Master Chronometer Calibre 8906, the watch is made from a single block of ceramic that can withstand the pressure of the ocean at 60 bar (600m), making it a dream possession for fervent divers.

## Elegant Embellishment

Melding a rich heritage of classic jewellery making with bold artistry and contemporary designs, the Swiss and Emirati luxury goods manufacturer **Mouawad** introduces a brand new range called *Leila Collection*. From a design suggested by Leila Mouawad, wife of eminent jeweller Robert Mouawad, the cheerful and feminine collection is made of 18K white gold pieces fashioned into floral tapestries of delightfully colourful and sparkling motifs. Consisting of handcrafted pieces of pendants, earrings and rings, the collection is set with white diamonds, red rubies, blue, white and orange sapphires as well as green tsavorites, making it a colourful and elegant adornment for all occasions.



## Fan-Tastic Jewels

Far from being just a decorative item, Italian luxury jewellery brand **Damiani** uses the fan as the primary inspiration of its newest *Vanita* collection. Created with black and white diamonds, combined with colourful gemstones like sapphires, rubies and emeralds, the collection emphasises and revives the sensuality inherent in the use of the fan, transfiguring its look and delicate structure into jewellery of exceptional visual impact. Comprising of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings and brooches, one common denominator that is seen throughout the collection is the drop cut, a sophisticated final touch that further emphasises the shape of the fan, giving it an overall aesthetic of elegance, luxury and wearability. **■**

## Haute Horlogerie

Echoing the **Hermès** theme for 2016 "Nature at full gallop", the French luxury goods manufacturer presents three one-of-a-kind pocket watches in the *Arceau Pocket La promenade de Platon* collection, decorated based on the techniques of enamel miniature painting. Inspired by the silk scarf "La Promenade de Platon" created by artist Annie Faivre, the unconventional watches unite enamel, interwoven, microsculpture and engraving in a method that is close to heart of the philosopher's much-loved gardens of Academus. Driven by the Hermès H1837 movement, all the watches are placed inside an asymmetrical Arceau case, which is one of the brand's signatures, and finished off with an alligator cord strap.



# Royal Romance

Be transported to the land of romance and experience love like never before with the *Raja Sehari* package at Pangkor Laut Resort.

Text **Rubaashini Shunmuganathan**

The West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia holds a certain amount of magical enticement. Be it the lush rainforest with abundant flora and fauna or the pristine blue sea water that exudes a serene calm, it is no surprise that this part of the world is regarded as Malaysia's pride. Pangkor Laut Resort lets you indulge in all of these natural wonders. With numerous relaxing activities to enjoy during your stay here, one that is worth highlighting is the signature *Raja Sehari* experience.

The experience is inspired by the traditional Malay wedding ceremony noted for its pomp and pageantry, where the couple is often regaled as King and Queen for the day or *Raja Sehari* in the Malay vernacular. Planned as a full-day event, this is perfect for honeymooning couples or a twosome who are all set to reignite the romantic flame in them.





known as *Syzygium grande*. A coastal tree that is commonly found throughout Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand, Indo-China, Myanmar and Borneo, the sea apple is chosen because of its sturdy nature and its high life expectancy. As such, this tree is said to symbolise the eternal love that you have for each other. If you ever happen to return to the resort after a decade, do look for Arif and he will show you the exact tree that you've planted with your partner as each of the trees has its own tracking system.

### Private Jungle Walk

Upon completing the tree planting ceremony, follow Arif as he takes you through the verdant tropical forest

that covers the enchanting island for a private jungle walk. Following the 2.4km southern trail—the walk will last about 30 minutes as you go through terrain of ascending and descending steps while you discover nature in its purest form. Far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, the forest has a spellbinding effect on people, turning them introspective as it projects a sense of tranquility. With streaks of sunrays caressing your face during the stroll, you will notice the large and towering tree dominating the area known as *Dipterocarpus gracilis*, or locally called as *keruing*. Commonly used for timber, the large tree is grown plentifully giving Pangkor Laut the title of lowland dipterocarp forest.

### Couples Spa Experience

Of course, no romantic sojourn is complete without a visit to the Spa Village at Pangkor Laut Resort. As with all Spa Villages at YTL Hotels, every spa experience is preceded by a pre-treatment ritual based on the practices and customs of the area. The resort's unique Bath House Ritual represents various bathing traditions from around Asia and is a rare experience not to be missed.

Start off the ceremony with a soothing petal-scented footbath, followed by the Chinese Foot Pounding treatment where you and your partner will be given a brisk, invigorating tap on the feet with a small wooden hammer. The action will immediately kickstart one's circulation and encourage better blood flow. A tradition that used to be solely enjoyed by the concubines of feudal China, today, the practice can be experienced by people from different walks of life. After completing the treatment, be escorted to the first Bath House and enjoy the traditional Malay 'circulating' bath. Set in an open-air pavilion that has water cascading from sculptured stone walls mimicking waterfalls and raindrops, the entire ritual represents how the traditional kampong women bathed in the open air in rivers or lakes. Allow yourself



### Breakfast By The Beach

Dawn breaks at Emerald Bay and a romantic table for two for breakfast is already set by the white sandy beach, overlooking the serene beauty of the ocean. The sound of waves lapping on the shore and birds chirping will already set you on the course of a fine romance as you prepare to whet your appetite with a hearty continental breakfast prepared specially by the chef. The array of choices for breakfast is impressive, with everything from flaky pastries and breads to platters of cheese and an aromatic selection of coffee or tea. While there, don't miss the opportunity to dip your feet into the sea or maybe go for a quick swim with your

partner and completely immerse yourself in the tranquility of nature before moving to your next activity.

### Tree Planting Ceremony

A hearty breakfast is just what a couple needs before embarking on a tree planting ceremony. Just a stone's throw away from your breakfast location at Emerald Bay, you will be greeted by the effervescent and extremely knowledgeable Mohammad Khairul Arif, the Naturalist of Pangkor Laut Resort. With 20 years of knowledge of the lush rainforest surrounding the resort, Arif will guide you and your partner on how to plant a sea apple tree or scientifically





to sit beneath the 'waterfalls' as the water pressure helps to relieve muscle tension and strain. Walk out of the open-air bathtub and move towards the inhalation therapy spot. Then breathe in from one of the four different steam boxes. Each container releases a natural scent that helps to either calm, uplift, detoxify or de-stress the body.

Then head towards the Japanese Bath House where an exfoliating process will start with a *goshi-goshi* cloth before soaking yourself in the naturally warm rock pool *rotenburu*.

End your Bath House Ritual with the signature Shanghai Scrub performed by the professional spa staff. The gentle exfoliating scrub and wash is done on a cool marble bed, leaving your skin feeling silky soft. After completing the scrub, enjoy a cup of calming tea before making your way to the luxurious Belian Spa Pavilion for the three-hour Couples Spa Experience.

Enclosed in its own private compound, consisting of indoor and outdoor relaxation areas, this is an exclusive retreat with its own outdoor whirlpool, yoga pavilion, nap gazebo, steam room and private treatment area.

The custom of "preparing" the bride and bridegroom has you and your partner enjoying a series of royal body treatments that have been highly treasured and kept secret by royal Malay households for generations.

*Panglima Bukit Gantang* and *The Secrets of Puteri Lindungan Bulan* are the treatments offered in the Couples Spa Experience, perfect for a warrior and his princess. Begin the royal treatment with a traditional Malay massage called *Urutan Panglima* and *Urutan Gamelan*, for him and her. The deep tissue healing massage helps

to stimulate energy points and loosen up the muscles for smoother blood circulation. The treatment continues with coconut oil, rice paddy stalks and pandanus leaves gently applied on your locks, leaving them glossy, silky and fresh. Then, a herbal facial and body scrub is performed with turmeric and galangal, giving you an immediate glow, followed by a fragrant bath that helps to relax the muscles and uplift your spirit.

What is almost certain after this epic spa journey is that all your aches and worries will melt, leaving a revitalised and rejuvenated you. To end the spa experience just like the royals, indulge yourself in a fragrant sauna that has the entire body feeling fresh and radiant. A special tonic signals the end of an unforgettable experience.

### Dinner at The Straits

As dusk falls, make your way to The Straits for a romantic candlelit dinner with an exotic Malay theme. Set against the rocks by the beach, take in the elegant beauty of the environment while a 4-course dinner is prepared for you. As the sun sets on the horizon, enjoy a glass of champagne with your loved one, and enjoy the majestic view, truly befitting the King and Queen for the day. ■

*The Raja Sehari Signature Experience is limited to one couple daily and is priced at MYR3,500nett per couple. To find out more, visit [www.pangkorlautresort.com](http://www.pangkorlautresort.com).*

# Walking Down Memory Lane

Established in 1932, The Majestic Hotel in Kuala Lumpur was managed and successfully run by the Lim family for more than 40 years until it closed its doors in 1984. In 2012, YTL Hotels revamped the property and restored it to its former glory. Jenny Lim Cho, a member of the family, recently celebrated her 60th birthday at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur. She shares her memories of her family and of the grande dame of Kuala Lumpur with YTL Life.

Text RUBAASHINI SHUNMUGANATHAN Photography JASON LEE

## What's your favourite memory of your grandfather Lim Thye Hee, the Managing Director of the Majestic Hotel in 1932?

My grandfather was the most respectable, straightforward and honest person I've ever known. Despite being quite wealthy, he only rode a bicycle to work every day—this showed he was also a humble and modest individual. After moving to Kuala Lumpur from Singapore, my siblings and I stayed with him and each time we paid him a visit at the Old Majestic, we were only allowed to use the staff entrance and not the main grand entrance. I vividly remember sitting in his office and being asked to study, even during the school holidays. I used to feel so sleepy but I still had to push myself to study because he had always instilled in me the importance of education. Besides studying, my siblings and I would also have to make our own tea or coffee if we felt like having one. Although my grandfather ran the entire hotel, we were never once given special treatment and today, I appreciate whatever that he's done because it has made me a grounded and sensible individual.

## Lim Heng Suan was the bookkeeper of the hotel in 1932. What do you remember of him?

He was actually the son of Lim Thye Hee and one thing that most people didn't know about him was that he actually had a permanent job with Sime Darby. So,



I also got the chance to sip a cup of the finest quality tea and have it with scrumptious cakes and fruit prepared by the hotel staff. I don't think life got any better for a young girl like me at that time.

## What do you think of the restored and revamped Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur?

Ever since YTL Hotels bought over the hotel in 2012, I've visited the place a couple of times. One thing that I really appreciate about the new Majestic is that they kept the Old Wing. Each and every part of the Old Wing brings back a particular memory of my childhood, so I feel extremely blessed that YTL Hotels decided to maintain the old building. As for the New Wing, I feel that it brings out the luxuriousness of the hotel even more. With its architecture, furniture and lighting, the new Majestic looks nothing short of magnificent. They managed to preserve the past in a classy way, especially the entrance. Those days, the entrance was seen as a sign of grandness as guests could drive up their lavish cars and stop right at the front door. Although they don't use the old entrance anymore, it's still emblematic of the Majestic Hotel. I also love how the Old Wing and the New Wing subtly blend and complement each other, and that is not commonly seen in luxury hotels these days. ■

For more details, visit [www.majestickl.com](http://www.majestickl.com).

he only did the bookkeeping for the hotel after working hours or during the weekends. It clearly shows how hardworking he was as an individual. Also, most of the staff working for us at that time were from China. So, they hardly got the chance to visit places or enjoy good food. I remember him buying baskets of local fruits like durian once in a while and sharing it with all the workers. It was like a party for them and it gave him a fulfilling feeling seeing smiles on their faces.

## Share with us your fondest memory of the old Majestic.

Entering the Majestic filled me with total euphoria. I loved coming over to the hotel because it was so big and spacious, and it channeled a sense of opulence like never before. Those days, it was rare to walk into such a grand building, so having the chance to do so made me extremely happy. I particularly liked entering the Tea Room because it had very high ceilings.



# Return To Innocence

Soak up the spirit of Bali at its authentic best in the unspoilt setting afforded by Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, tucked away on its beautiful north-eastern coastline.

Text **Diana Khoo** Art Direction **Penny Chew**  
Photography **Jason Lee**

Bali has long been one of Asia's most compelling destinations. From its mystical vibe and exotic temples, to the dramatic landscapes of lush greenery that span tropical jungle and bamboo forests, and, of course, the allure of its sun, sea and surf, it's easy to see why it's often referred to as the Island of the Gods. But, as tempting as the coconut martinis are at the beach clubs that line Legian and Seminyak, Bali also attracts numerous visitors who come to experience its heart and soul – from its plethora of healing and wellness experiences to tours of sacred, historical sites, and to simply soak up the island at its pure, natural best.

“Regarded as an act of purification (the Balinese believe negativity is absorbed through the feet), it is a perfect way to begin your stay.”



Those who travel with a sense of awareness have long known or heard of Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali. Set on the tip of the north-eastern coast, between the famous dive destinations of Tulamben and Amed and the waterfalls right up north in Singaraja, Tembok exudes a gentle, spiritual air. In fact, your journey to this unspoiled gem of a resort would invariably have taken you past the island's majestic mother mountain of Gunung Agung, whose name means 'mighty' in Bahasa Indonesia and upon whose slopes stand Bali's holiest and most revered temple – Pura Besakih.

Those wishing to explore a gentle, spiritual side of this part of the island in soothingly luxurious style would do well to book YTL Hotels' *The Authentic Bali* package, a four day three night experience that allows guests to enjoy a few days of pampering as well as tailor-made, insightful experiences while ensuring you leave rested, refreshed and markedly healthier. This pleasurable





journey starts the moment you arrive at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, under an archway of towering bamboo, only to be whisked away for a welcome that says 'Bali bliss' like no other. As your bags are seen to, you will be served a glass of chilled lime, mint and honey, which you can slowly sip as your dedicated therapist immediately treats you to a foot scrub using black volcanic sand right off the beach and, after the long drive north, a much-needed neck and shoulder massage. Regarded as an act of purification (the Balinese believe negativity is absorbed through the feet), it is a perfect way to begin your stay.

Over the next few days, your Tembok sojourn should be as relaxed (or active) as you wish. The stay includes a Balinese massage as well as a session of Mepijit – an acupressure-based treatment that combines traditional Balinese *urut* strokes with Indian head massage – as well as Starlight Gazing, an innovative spa treatment that's the highlight of many guests' stays here, as it involves lying weightless on a floating platform in the middle of the resort pool, simply taking in the enormity of the universe and its innumerable twinkling stars overhead. You can choose to elevate the experience further by tuning in to meditative melodies. Alternatively, let the sound of the surf, the breeze rustling swaying palms or the plaintive call of a nightjar be your little night music.

One of the lovely things about staying at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is its menu

of healing and spiritual programmes, many of which are complimentary, including learning *pencak silat* (a Balinese martial art), how to make the traditional scrub called *boreh* and the sacred flower-filled palm leaf offerings seen everywhere in Bali called *canang*. For those who don't mind leaving the sanctuary of the resort, three excursions are also included in *The Authentic Bali* programme, including a visit to Pura Ponjok Batu, a seaside temple where, should you so wish, you may pre-arrange a blessing and water ritual by a Balinese priest; a visit to Pak Jero Darsana, a local healer in nearby Tejakula; as well as a trip to Penglipuran, a traditional village famed for its beautiful architecture.

If external pursuits don't prove tempting, it's equally pleasurable to simply stay in. The wonderful chefs at the resort's Wantilan Restaurant are only too happy to arrange for a healthy cooking class so you can learn how to prepare the delicious, healthful meals that are served to you daily, like red rice *nasi goreng*, freshly made almond milk or a power-packed green juice. If you prefer



Pak Jero Darsana, a local healer in nearby Tejakula

to be outdoors, you may choose to work on refining your warrior or standing bow poses in the expansive garden's tranquil grounds. If you aren't quite up to a yogi's level yet, feel free to join the complimentary Hatha Yoga classes, which are focused on mindfulness, breathing and physical movement. For those keen on something slightly different, there are also Nyuwun Yoga classes, a unique class that combines basic *asanas* with body alignment, postural awareness and balance, and Yoga Swing, which works using the universal pull of gravity via an exercise tool with handles of varying heights.

However you choose to spend your four precious days at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, just know that you'd leave with a heightened sense of awareness – of life, your body, mind and soul – as well as a deeper connection to an island that is palpably magical. It is an easy truth that we are all nourished from the earth. What better way to spend a few days, then, than by grounding yourself in one of its most special places? ■



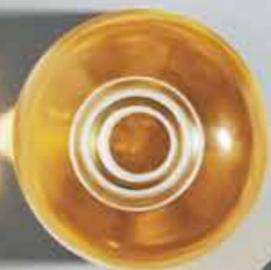
Set in the north-east of Bali, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is a place of enchanting peace and a haven of wellness. Guests seeking tranquillity, restoration and restfulness set in an atmosphere of spirituality will find it all comes together beautifully in this unspoilt part of a magical island where black volcanic sand, azure sea and the mystical way of Balinese life is lived out most pleasurably, in the shadow of majestic Mount Agung. For more information or to book, please visit [www.spavillageresort.com](http://www.spavillageresort.com)

# Pampering Pleasures

A luxurious array of standout fragrances and skincare products to indulge in.

## Scent of the Gods

The saying "fly high, let your spirit soar..." is the very quintessence of **CARTIER**'s latest creation L'Envol de Cartier, a unique oriental-transparent fragrance for men. Inspired by the mythical ambrosia of the gods on Olympus, the woody and nectar-like scent is believed to confer immortality. Created by the brand's perfumer Mathilde Laurent, the eau de parfum is seen as both muscular and mellow as it quivers with freshness before becoming more rounded, inspiring and uplifting all who experience it. To complement the enchanting smell of the fragrance, the golden liquid is kept inside a capsule-like bottle with detachable glass dome, allowing it to stay true to Cartier's vision in style and creativity.



## Pure Indulgence

Rule number one to a healthy and radiant skin is to always remove your makeup before bed. However, finding one that actually cleanses the face thoroughly is an onerous task. Light, fresh and transparent, **La Mer** introduces The Cleansing Micellar Waters, a unique combination that sweeps away impurities and micro-emulsifies makeup, while delivering essential hydration and radiant energy. Constructed with new Marine Micellar Waters, the cleansing structures offer both instant and long term benefits where its positively charged water molecules micro-emulsify impurities, including waterproof makeup, and completely cleanse the skin without rinsing, giving you a healthy, balanced and radiant skin.



## Groomsmen

When it comes to facial regimen, the skin is not the sole focus for men. A gentlemen's beard should also be given equal importance, if not more. **Truefitt & Hill**, who have groomed the owners of the finest beards and whiskers for over 210 years, presents a collection for men's beards and moustaches with its Beard Oil, Beard Balm and Moustache Wax. The Beard Oil is made with a natural blend of the finest and purest oils leaving the beard looking and feeling soft, well-conditioned, non-greasy and neatly styled, whereas the Beard Balm is a meticulously formulated blend of Jojoba, Kukui Nut, Avocado and Aloe Vera Oil that is not only easily absorbed by skin, but also helps to nourish, condition and soften even the toughest beard bristles. For those in favour of Movember, the Moustache Wax is formulated using 100 per cent natural, non-synthetic ingredients that provide an excellent mouldable hold that will allow the moustache to be styled in a variety of shapes, giving one a well-groomed look. **✚**



## Natural Selection

Widely known for its Oud-based fragrances and associated products, **Fragrance Du Bois** is expanding its portfolio by releasing the Nature's Treasurers collection, a non-Oud based selection of perfumes that is hand-blended using only the best, sustainably sourced, natural ingredients. Featuring six exquisite fragrances - Baie Rose, Patchouli Argent, Brume du Matin, Petales de Cashmere, Santal Complet and Zest Marin, each scent has a distinctive melange displaying the perfect balance of sophistication and allure. Committed to producing only the finest perfumes, the renowned French luxury brand works with French Maître Parfumeurs, whose adroitness of touch has enabled all the scents to be bold and subtle, yet light and fresh. Each perfume is housed inside a signature Fragrance Du Bois glass bottle, replete with a gold-plated cap and encrusted with Swarovski crystals.

# Highland Hiatus

A cool climate and lush greenery make Cameron Highlands the perfect destination for a quick getaway. Take it easy as you celebrate this Christmas amidst the old-world charm of Cameron Highlands Resort.

Perched at 1,500m above sea level, high on the Titiwangsa Range – the spine of Peninsular Malaysia – Cameron Highlands Resort is just the place for a break from the rush of daily life. Located a 3½ hour drive north of Kuala Lumpur, the resort is surrounded by soothingly lush nature and facing the 18-hole Cameron Highlands Sultan Ahmad Shah Golf Club across the road. The resort's elegant interiors recall the highlands' grand colonial heritage – think tall French doors, timber-beamed ceilings and plantation shutters.

More importantly, Cameron Highlands Resort exudes a comfortable laidback vibe. Time slows down appreciably here and the automatic inclination to take it easy starts as soon as you arrive and make your way up the steps at the entrance. Working around the theme of 'trails, tales and traditions', the resort, however, does offer more than enough to keep you occupied, especially if you want more than just gazing out the window while sipping a cup of tea.

## The Great Outdoors

"Cameron Highlands is paradise for those interested in nature," says S Madi, the resort's resident naturalist. "Birdwatchers will find that Cameron Highlands is one of the best places in the country for birding," he adds. Madi, proudly born and bred in the highlands, is the perfect guide when you sign up for nature walks organised by the resort. A font of knowledge where flora and fauna is concerned, Madi is also a natural raconteur, full of tales of highland goings-on. While some walks, like the Nocturnal Jungle Trekking Adventure, and Gunung Berembun and Gunung Brinchang Trails, can be taxing fitness-wise, others are more relaxed saunters.

An easy and popular walk is the Jim Thompson Mystery Trail, which follows in the footsteps of the Thai silk king on the day he disappeared in Cameron Highlands back on 26 March 1967. The walk, amidst fragrant pine trees and mist-swathed hills, is impossibly idyllic – and hardly seemed





Clockwise from left: Curl up with a whisky and book next to the fireplace; carollers entertaining guests at the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony; Cameron Highlands Resort is perfect for a relaxing break; Gonbei's hotpot dinner keeps the cold away; the verdant surroundings of Cameron Highlands; Jim Thompson's disappearance has never been solved.

like the setting for a mystery that remains unsolved to this day. Madi remembers that time well and has his own theories about what really happened. Rather than spoil the surprise here, sign up for the walk and find out for yourself.

### Rest And Relax

After a hard day out tramping about the jungle in Madi's entertaining company, it's time to take it easy back at the Cameron Highlands Resort. Afternoon tea at the Jim Thompson Tea Room is one of those time-honoured rituals that are part of the tradition here. Tuck into oven-fresh pastries, delicate sandwiches, and homemade scones with clotted cream and strawberry jam, as well as fresh strawberries, washing it all down with speciality teas from Cameron Highlands.

If you prefer to wait for dinner, however, any time on hand would be fruitfully spent at the Spa Village Cameron Highlands. Treatments here feature healing therapies based on produce from the surrounding jungles and ancient tea rituals, combined with knowledge drawn from the orang asli's deep understanding of the healing properties of the local flora. Sign up for the signature Rose Garden Experience, which starts with a warm yellow rose tea bath soak that reduces stress and promotes

relaxation, even as it soothes and pampers your body. This is followed by a rose petals body scrub for brighter and softer skin, before a rose aroma massage leaves you in total bliss.

Paradise found, it's time to prepare for dinner. The cool weather in Cameron Highlands makes a hotpot meal just the tonic, especially if the day's been rainy. At the resort's semi-al fresco Gonbei restaurant, the warming broth, complemented by fresh farm vegetables, seafood, meats and noodles, is also a great communal meal, perfect for sharing with family or friends. Postprandial, head for the Highlands Bar, where you can get a game of snooker while enjoying the extensive selection of drinks – including whiskies, cocktails and wines – on offer. Or just curl up with a book on one of the leather couches in the Reading Room and enjoy the peace and quiet that is only interrupted by the crackling from the fireplace.

### Yuletide Charm

Fittingly, for a location that is known as a 'little piece of England in Asia', Cameron Highlands is perfect for a Christmas getaway. This famous hill station was initially discovered in 1885 but it was only in the early 20th century that it became

popular, drawing British colonials and expatriates, including British planters who realised the area's potential for growing tea. The cool air and picturesque mountainscape add to the charm, one that is made complete by the fairy lights that decorate the pine trees outside Cameron Highlands Resort every year when the festive season begins.

The Yuletide spirit in the resort begins with the traditional annual Christmas Tree Lighting Weekend. Preprandial cocktails at the Highlands Bar were followed by a lavish Christmas dinner, held in the Cameron Ballroom, that featured smoked turkey, roasted leg of lamb and salmon en croûte, served with sides of glazed carrot, baked potatoes, cauliflower and bacon gratin, roasted vegetables and spiced red cabbage. Adjourning to the main entrance, a short countdown completed the lighting ceremony, transforming the façade into a glittering wonderland. Christmas carols, performed by a choir, filled the air as the Christmas Market, packed with gifts and treats, opened. Then, it's back to the Highlands Bar to refuel and, maybe, some board games in the Jim Thompson Tea Room. Or, just sit in front of the fireplace, drink in hand, and put your feet up. Christmas is coming and this could just be the perfect gift for yourself. ■



*Bath has been a favourite destination during the festive season since Georgian times.*

# Festive Wonderland

Few places offer as much as Bath during the festive season. **Kim Inglis** discovers how history, architecture, shopping and a jolly good time dovetail perfectly in this UNESCO World Heritage City in south-west England.

During Georgian times, the town of Bath in the south-west of England was a favourite destination during the festive season. The so-called 'Bath Winter Assemblies' featured a special calendar of events at the Assembly Rooms from October onwards. Guests would arrive at six o'clock in the evening for an agenda of music, dancing, light bites, card-playing and conviviality – all in the stately, double-height ballroom lit by five magnificent crystal chandeliers. At 11 o'clock on the dot, the evenings came to a conclusion, with guests heading back to their lodges in carriages.

Now, as then, visitors flock to Bath at Christmas and New Year. These days, they come on the train, the station being conveniently located a five-minute walk from city centre. The evenings may not be so regimented and there is certainly more variety of venues and things to do – but the historic and festive atmosphere of the UNESCO World Heritage City at Christmas is as beguiling as ever. The town has some fantastic shops and a host of special yuletide activities, so it's the perfect destination for a winter break. From singing, shopping and shows to theatre, dancing and dining, there is a full spectrum of Christmas and New Year entertainment on offer in Bath.

One of the highlights of the season is the Bath Christmas Market, this year running from 24 November to 11 December 2016. Set against the backdrop of the beautiful Bath Abbey, it is regularly voted the most picturesque and popular market in the country. Featuring more than 170 decorated wooden chalets lining the streets alongside the Roman Baths, it specialises in high-quality artisan products – from local artworks, handmade Christmas decorations, bespoke jewellery and homeware, to festive food and drink, toys, accessories and even gifts for pets. Most of

the stallholders are businesses from the south-west of England, making it a truly local affair.

Returning for a second year is the Christmas Lodge, an indoor venue reminiscent of a rustic snow lodge, located on Stall Street. Bath Ales serves heart-warming food, hot drinks, cakes and locally produced real ales here from 10am to 10pm daily. Boasting a marvellous festive atmosphere, it complements the musical talents of Bath's various entertainers – carol singers, musicians, street theatre practitioners and children from local schools singing their favourite Christmas songs.

In addition to the market, Bath boasts some wonderful shopping opportunities. Milsom Street, with the country's oldest department store of Jolly's, was a favourite in Georgian times with Jane Austen and her ilk buying fabrics, bonnets and buttons in its haberdashery department. This was invariably followed by afternoon tea in the beautifully appointed Tea Rooms with its full range of teas, coffees and snacks. In fact, the store has now been fully revitalised by owners House of Fraser and, once again, offers a unique shopping experience. Other stores, gift shops, art galleries, antique markets

and more radiate out from this main thoroughfare. With such a huge variety of goods on offer, it is also easy to shop as you never have too far to walk.

Many people specifically travel to Bath to buy antiques, either at the string of shops lining the so-called London Road, or at the Vintage and Antiques Market that takes place on the first and last Sunday of every month. Held in the historic Green Park Station, a listed Victorian building with a vaulted curved glass roof, it houses up to 60 different traders selling anything and everything antique. There's invariably a DJ spinning original vinyl, an organic juice bar and restaurant selling Sunday roasts, as well as some bargains on offer.

For those with an interest in arts and crafts, there are a few specially organised festive workshops on offer in December. Lunch and flower arranging with Ston Easton florists, Elly Bayne and Jude White, bring out creative talents, while an evening of origami at the Museum of East Asian Art introduces guests to this ancient paper-folding technique. Akiko Wakefield, an experienced origami instructor, demonstrates how to make Christmas decorations and mini trees with a distinctively Japanese aesthetic. Another workshop, for the foodie-orientated, is a Christmas cake decorating class. Dates and times of workshops can be found at [visitbath.co.uk](http://visitbath.co.uk).

At the heart of Bath – geographically, spiritually and in its sheer physicality – lies the magnificent Bath Abbey. Founded in the 7th century, it was reorganised in the 10th century and rebuilt in the



*The magnificent Bath Abbey is geographically and spiritually at the heart of Bath.*



*The heated rooftop pool at the Thermae Bath Spa offers excellent views of the city.*



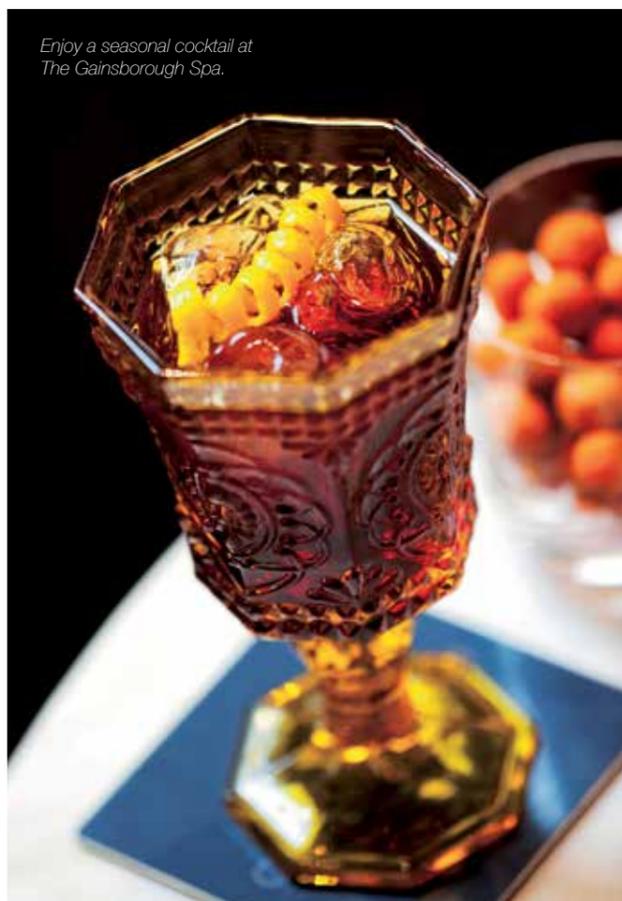
*Prior Park and its famous Palladian bridge.*



*Catch the panto at Bath's Theatre Royal.*



Michelin-starred chef Johann Lafer has created special festive menus at The Gainsborough Bath Spa.



Enjoy a seasonal cocktail at The Gainsborough Spa.



Soak in the mineral-rich waters of Spa Village Bath.

12th and 16th centuries; today, it is recognised as one of the largest and finest examples of Gothic architecture in the south-west of England. Edgar, the first king of England, was crowned here in AD973, and numerous kings and queens have visited since. Christmas is a very special time at the abbey, with midnight mass on Christmas Eve, as well as a schedule of Bath City Choir recitals and carol singing services in the run up to Christmas Day. Be sure to pop in and join one of these special choral events.

A crisp December or January morning is the perfect time for a winter walk in Bath. Choose between Prior Park with its famous Palladian bridge, the towpath alongside the River Avon where fishermen brave chilly winds year round for a catch, or the heritage Skyline. This walk through hidden valleys, woodlands and small meadows affords spectacular views of Bath city, the Mendips and beyond. And, as usual, Bath's Royal Victoria Park will be featuring its traditional ice rink this winter (until 3rd January) in its marvellously picturesque surroundings. All this outdoor activity will be bound to help you build up an appetite for the plethora of dining options available in and around the city. Gastropubs, wine bars, five-star hotels and more all organise a number of specials over the yuletide season.

The Pump Rooms adjacent to Bath Abbey will have some sparkling drinks receptions around the magical torch-lit Roman Baths, both in December and January. Or you can enjoy the 21st-century equivalent at the Thermae Bath Spa, where the thermally heated rooftop pool offers superb city views. These special mineral-rich waters are open until 8pm on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, giving guests a chance to relax before the big day. Carol singers in the Cross Bath are another attraction, and the Thermae Gift Vouchers make popular Christmas presents, perfect for a last-minute purchase if you're a little disorganised!

Just across the road at The Gainsborough Bath Spa, the five-star hotel is offering an all-inclusive two-night package over Christmas and a one-night package over New Year. Champagne, canapés, four- and five-course meals, and warming hot toddies are the order of the day (and night) here, and all guests can enjoy complimentary access to the Spa Village Bath facilities between 7am and 10pm along with 20 per cent off spa treatments. This hotel is the first in the country to have direct access to mineral-rich waters directly below the hotel – and its programme of hot dipping baths, Jacuzzis and steams is a real boon on a cold winter's day or evening.

life feature //

And that's before we mention the special menus that have been devised by Michelin-starred head chef Johann Lafer: concentrating on local produce, they include braised shoulder of Mendip lamb, a traditional Christmas lunch with all the trimmings, and a New Year's Eve menu that includes ham hock and foie gras terrine, poached halibut and crab risotto with a lobster bisque, and a roast fillet of beef. On Christmas Eve, special escorts are on hand to guide guests to Midnight Mass and dole out hot whisky toddies and mince pies on their return to the hotel. With a special Christmas gift from Santa, movies and the Queen's speech in The Chapel along with other indulgences, you will be hard pressed to book something more luxurious in the city.

One of Bath's attractions is its accessibility. Everything is located close to each other, and it's never a schlep to get from one place to another. Little cobbled streets and alleys, lined with historic buildings in honey-hued Bath stone, give architecture buffs a real treat, while shopfronts are always decorated with special snowy scenes at Christmas. Just round the corner from The Gainsborough Bath Spa is the Theatre Royal, one of the oldest working theatres in Britain. Built in 1805, it has enjoyed an illustrious history – and continues to entertain visitors in a manner that has spanned more than two centuries. Specific to the UK's theatrical tradition is the Christmas and New Year season pantomime (or panto), a type of participatory theatre that is much loved across the country. With songs, slapstick comedy and dancing, as well as gender-crossing actors performing a story loosely based around a well-known fairy tale, the panto this year at the Theatre Royal is *Aladdin*. Running from 8 December 2016 to 8 January 2017, this story of the boy, the lamp and the genie is one of the most popular, a real delight for children and adults alike. Also recommended at the adjacent children's theatre, The Egg, is a production of *Snow Mouse* by the Travelling Light Theatre Company and swashbuckling spectacular in the form of *Robin Hood*. Visit [theatreroyal.org.uk](http://theatreroyal.org.uk) for more details.

Rugby is hugely popular in Bath and, luckily for sports lovers, there is a home rugby match on the weekend of 30 December 2016. The club offers a variety of hospitality options catering for parties of two to 100 people, so you can choose the friendly informality of the Riverview Suite or opt for a more traditional affair in the Ricoh Suite. Hugely atmospheric affairs, you'll be guaranteed some fine action on the pitch and the suites all kick off with the warmest of greetings from the courteous staff.

In fact, this is one of the real joys of a break in Bath: the congenial welcome you'll receive from the local population. Whether you're simply making a quick purchase or buying an expensive gift, it doesn't matter. Locals always have time to chat (in fact, you may well get their life history before you know it!), and they genuinely want you to enjoy the beauty of their very special city. With centuries of tradition, wonderfully preserved heritage buildings and streets, and a plethora of activities on offer, it definitely makes for an inspiring and relaxing winter break. ■

For more information visit <http://www.thegainsboroughbathspa.co.uk>

# Creating Stars

YTL Life speaks to Leong Yin Kit, Chief Executive Officer, and Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Dr Abu Hassan Othman, Chairman of YTL International College of Hotel Management (ICHM), to find out more about the college that is growing steadily in Malaysia.

Text Rubaashini Shunmuganathan Photography Edmund Lee



## Tell us about YTL International College of Hotel Management (ICHM).

**Leong Yin Kit:** It was the objective of Dato' Mark Yeoh, who's the Executive Director of YTL Hotels and Resorts Division, to build an institute that will produce professional hospitality students that can embark on a career with YTL Hotels itself, upon graduation. So, in 2005, we started the college with just five classrooms that can accommodate up to 50 students at Vistana Hotel. Over the years, we started growing and in 2013, we moved to Starhill Gallery, where we are now flanked between two 5-star hotels – JW Marriott and The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur. This was a big milestone for us as our students can now truly experience the world of hospitality.

## Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Dr Abu Hassan Othman:

We are a boutique international college that believes in creating professional all-rounders for the hospitality industry. Since we are located at Starhill Gallery, we are privileged to be surrounded by renowned hotels, giving our students the opportunity to be placed in the real world (quite literally) from day one. Besides that, the students are also given the chance to be placed in different YTL Hotels, including both local and international locations, as part of their industrial training in the course. So, this is something great for them as they can get real-life work experience

under the tutelage of renowned individuals in the industry around the world. This is something that most colleges can't provide and we see it as our hallmark, in terms of student exposure.

## What can students expect when they join YTL ICHM?

**Leong:** The first thing that we tell our students when they join our college is that they're guaranteed a job at the end of their course. This is something that is not offered in most colleges and we can do it because of the support that we obtain from YTL Hotels. All our diploma students are given a supervisory position upon graduation. One thing that we do differently here is that we don't put the industrial placement, which is an integral part of our syllabus, at the end of the course. This means that students get a minimum of two placements at two different hotels, through the span of two and half years of their studies. This is extremely beneficial for them as they get real-world practical training from leading experts in the industry. Besides that, we are also associated with ICHM Adelaide for our Diploma in Hotel Management course. The syllabuses are taken from Australia and every year, ICHM Adelaide comes down for our graduation and grants our students an Advanced Diploma. With the Advanced Diploma, students are now given the choice to do their Bachelors degree in Australia for just a year.

**Tan Sri Abu Hassan:** Beyond that, what most parents would expect from a college is to provide quality and recognised education for their children. We are a Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) certified international college, which is a must here. Apart from that, our partnership with ICHM Australia also ensures that the quality of education is world-class and is recognised in both Malaysia and Australia.

## Proudest achievement?

**Leong:** For me, the proudest achievement has to be when we moved from our old campus at Vistana Hotel to Starhill

Gallery. We did it because we managed to increase our student count and today, we have about 360 students with us. In addition, we started our college with just the Diploma in Hotel Management. Then in 2013, we introduced Diploma in Culinary Arts and last year we added Diploma in Baking, Diploma in Event Management and Diploma in Spa Treatment. Seeing this kind of steady and positive growth has made me feel extremely pleased. Besides that, in 2014, our Diploma in Culinary Arts students were invited by the Swedish Embassy to participate in a competition, and I'm proud to say that we won the competition, despite being a new player. Our students were all in their first year and they were competing against third year students. Being named as the winner of the competition definitely made us hold our heads up high.

**Tan Sri Abu Hassan:** It has to be seeing the rapid growth of students over the years. When we had our first graduation ceremony, we only had ten students and today we have about 360 students. Our most recent graduation that happened in August this year saw 167 students graduating. It was held at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur and I feel extremely honoured and privileged to be having the ceremony at such an exclusive venue.

Besides that, the entire event was planned by our second year students and I must say they did a wonderful job.

## How do you ensure the student count at YTL ICHM is constantly on the rise?

**Leong:** We bring high school students over to our campus for field trips, in order to explain and educate them about the hospitality industry. By doing so, we try to instill the passion in them and hopefully, they'll join us after completing their high school. We are committed to doing this as we bring about two groups of students every month. Other than that, we also have YTL Hotels' leaders coming over to share their work experience and inspire them to start a career in this line.

## What's next for YTL ICHM?

**Leong:** We are definitely looking at growing the school by recruiting more students. Since the industry itself is growing, it is only right that we train more professional and competent individuals to join the workforce in the near future. Also, with more students, we also realise that we need to provide a platform for them to further their studies. Therefore, we are planning to conduct our own bachelor degree programme. So, both of these are in our pipeline and hopefully will soon be achieved. ▣

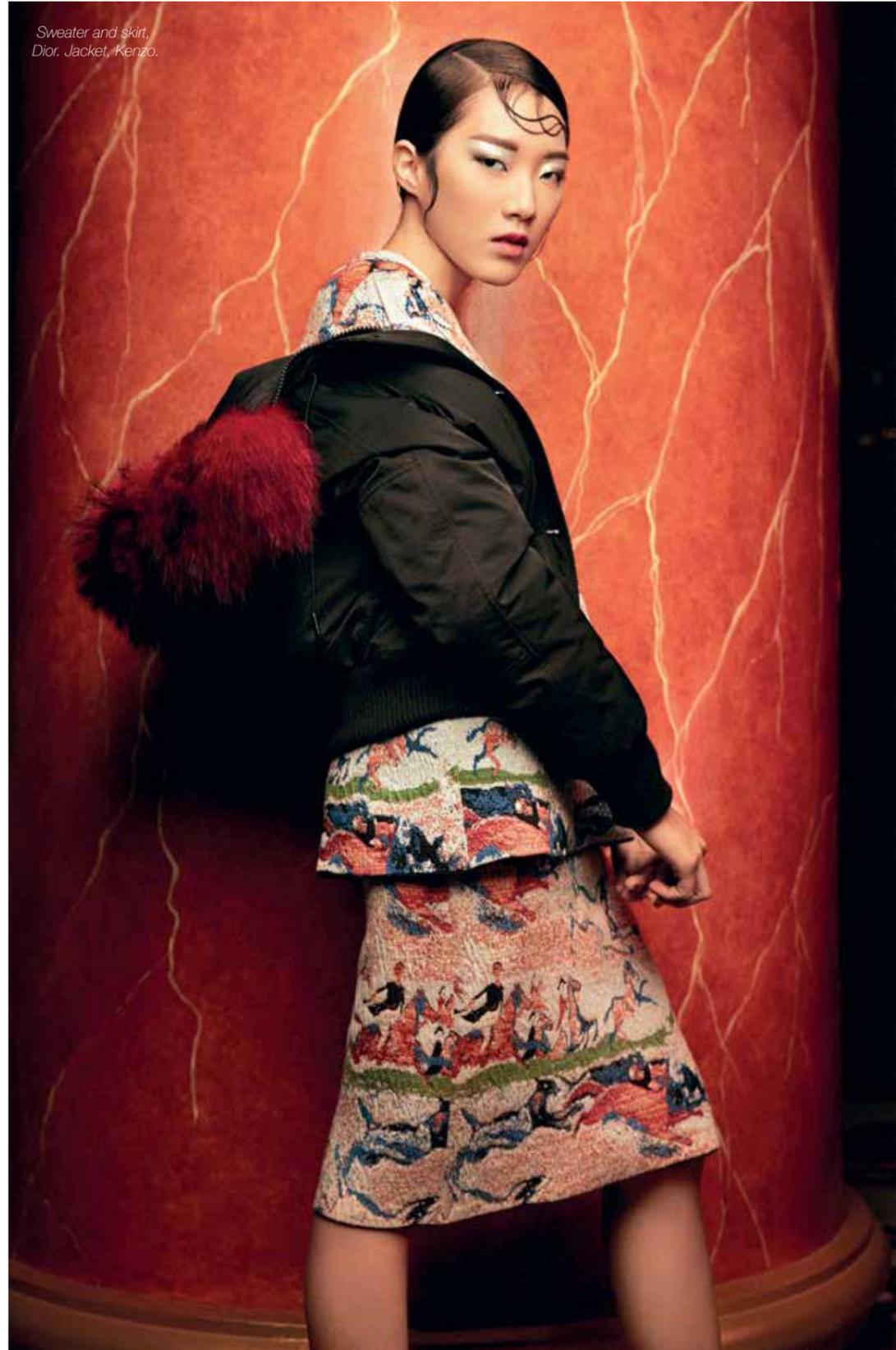
“The first thing that we tell our students when they join our college is that they're guaranteed a job at the end of their course. This is something that is not offered in most colleges and we can do it because of the support that we obtain from YTL Hotels.”

# East of the Sun, West of the Moon

Sense and sensibility meet in a perfect union  
of exotic details on modern silhouettes.

Photography **Chuan Looi/ Yipieyaya Studio**  
Styling **Andrea Wong**  
Make-up **Joey Yap** Hair **Juno Ko**  
Model **Janice Low**  
Location **Feast Village Starhill Gallery**

Top, Shiazty Chen.  
Skirt, Khoon Hooi.  
Heels, Dior.



Sweater and skirt,  
Dior. Jacket, Kenzo.



Sleeveless coat,  
Khoon Hooi.  
Dress, M Missoni.  
Heels, Dior.



Dress,  
Shiatzy Chen.



*Jacket and scarf,  
Khoon Hooi.*



*Dress and sweater,  
McQ by Alexander  
McQueen. Bag and  
heels, Dior.*

Jacket, Kenzo.  
Dress, Shiatzy Chen.



# Fearless And Fabulous

Unleash your inner diva with these statement fashion pieces.



## Everything Fabulous

It's the first collection released by French luxury fashion powerhouse **Christian Dior** ever since Raf Simons, its Creative Director departed. A rather anticipated line by all, the Autumn/Winter 2016-17 Ready to Wear Collection is everything that we've expected from the brand, with a lineup of basic black and a Bar jacket that is both attractive and alluring. Staying true to Dior's DNA, an array of coats and knitwear were also presented in the range with coats folded open from the throat, revealing vibrantly coloured mink, or rested gently on the shoulder-bone with zippered ribbed turtlenecks underneath.



## Winter Warmers

It's that time of the year to unpack your gloves as the temperature drops. But, rather than selecting a boring and dull mitten, why not pick this eye-catching one from **KENZO's** *Holiday Collection 2016*. Designed to keep one toasty as the chills set in, the warmers come with an eye badge, the label's own iconic design. So, be ready to ring in the New Year in style with this comfy yet cool warmers.



## Think Pink

This season, Italian fashion house **Valentino** brings you a handbag that's both feminine and edgy. Released as part of the *Kimono 1997 Collection*, the single handle bag in calfskin features Japanese floral print that has flower printed leather cutout pieces applied with micro studs. The newest print was inspired by a reinterpreted kimono that was created by Valentino Garavani way back in 1997. One thing is for sure, this handbag is guaranteed to complement any of your outfits in the most mellow and subtle way ever.

## Hats Off

Have you ever dreamt of being the centre of attraction at events but don't know how to do it? Then, you might want to start by picking this wide-brimmed hat in felt from **Hermès**. Made of soft felt underlined with matching grosgrain ribbon, this hat has an asymmetrical brim that can be turned up or down. The next time you feel like making a grand appearance, don't forget to grab this hat on your way out. ■



Sunrise at Lake Batur,  
the largest in Bali.

# The Green & The Blue

Bali's mountains and lakes are among the island's most underrated attractions. **Simon Pridmore** makes a case for the very volcanoes that Bali owes its existence to.

When you ask people what attracts them to Bali, you will get a number of different answers. Some will say they love Bali's long sandy beaches and its almost endless waves. Others may point to the island's generous, warm, friendly people and its unique, fascinating and colourful ceremonies. Many come to Bali simply for its very special ambience, its mélange of east and west. Few, however, will mention the island's mountains and lakes, despite the fact that, in many respects, Bali is defined by its imposing chain of volcanoes. The mountains are also the primary focus for the Balinese people and their religion.

For much of the year, the peaks are invisible from the southern coastal plain. They emerge in the early morning before retreating into the haze as the day warms up, only to reappear after a rain shower. From the northern coastal strip, though, the mountains are ever-present, a green and tan curtain acting as a backdrop to the stage of life.

Bali owes its very existence to its volcanoes. They stretch across the island from west to east and from sea to sea. They are the primary source of the island's natural wealth. It is the volcanic soil that makes Bali so fertile and fecund, the magic ingredient that produces multiple annual rice harvests, lush forests and beautiful gardens. They also attract the clouds that produce the life-giving rainfall that courses down their slopes via the streams and rivulets of the unique, thousand-year-old Balinese water management system called *subak*. Eat a papaya, cast a rogue seed behind you into the undergrowth and, six months later, a papaya tree will be standing tall in that very spot, with heavy fruit dangling from its stem. As you drive around Bali, notice how the low, covered, roadside sitting platforms called *bales* are all surrounded by papaya trees.

## The Mother Mountain

Bali's most famous peak is the mother mountain, Agung. Its summit is the highest

point on the island and this is the place where Bali's day begins, as the rising sun spreads its conical shadow over the plain below. Agung is an active volcano. It rises over 3,000 metres above the sea and is currently the largest of the string of mountains on Bali's spine.

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

Agung does not only have religious significance. In Bali, the spiritual world



Hindu devotees praying on the edge of Lake Batur.

actually the smallest and most recent of the trio and is still relatively classically volcano shaped, a tall pyramid dominating the East Bali skyline. The other two are now only visible by subordinate peaks on the rim of their vast calderas and crater lakes.

It is their crater lakes by which the other two volcanoes are best known, as the cones of both were obliterated by cataclysmic eruptions in unrecorded times and all that remains are vast calderas. The more recent of these two systems, Batur, is still instantly recognisable as a volcano and, indeed, it is still active. It has erupted more than 20 times in the past 200 years. Ancestral Batur was approximately 4,000m high, nearly a kilometre taller than present-day Agung. The caldera was formed by two colossal eruptions, the first 29,000 years ago, the other 20,000 years ago.

The Batur viewpoint in the village of Kintamani is one of Bali's most popular tourist sites and iconic vistas. Visitors stand on the crater edge and gaze out at the lava field from the most recent eruption. A huge lake lies beneath the crater wall to the south-east and the small central Batur cone rises to the north in the centre of the plateau. The far side of the crater is 7.5km away in the distance. To the north-east, Mount Abang, Bali's third highest point, is a new volcano growing out of Batur's crater wall. The Batur cone is popular for sunrise treks, as its peak is free from forest cover, is relatively easily accessible and the summit offers spectacular views.

### The village in the volcano

There are hot springs near the crater lake and the village of Trunyan, a Bali Aga village, sits on its shores. The majority of Balinese

people today are descendants of the Javanese Hindu Majapahit, who invaded Bali in the 14th century and remained in control of the island until the early 20th century, even after the empire elsewhere was no more. The Bali Aga, or mountain people, are an ethnic minority that did not accept Majapahit ways and continued their traditional practices.

The ancient rites are followed to this day in Trunyan and one or two other Bali Aga villages dotted around the island. In one particular respect, the customs of Trunyan are utterly unique. Unlike the majority of Balinese, the Trunyan villagers do not practise cremation. Instead, after a ritual cleansing with rainwater, the body of the deceased is placed in a bamboo cage under an enormous 1,100-year-old banyan tree called the *taru menyan* (sweet-

is closely entwined with daily life. Here, people do not talk of north, south, east or west. They refer instead to *kaja*, *kelod*, *kangin* and *kauh*. Wherever you are in Bali, the direction facing Mount Agung is *kaja*, and this is the most sacred and pure point on the compass. Generally speaking, if you live in the south, *kaja* is north-east: in the north, *kaja* is south-east. The opposite and most impure direction is *kelod*, facing away from Mount Agung and towards the sea. *Kangin* means facing the rising sun that evokes birth and beginning. *Kauh* is the direction looking west towards the setting sun, a symbol of ending and death.

The most important parts of a Balinese house, the temple and the *bale daja*, the raised pavilion where the family's most precious possessions are kept, are always located on the *kaja* side of the compound. Beds are positioned so that the occupants will sleep with their heads pointing towards the volcano in order to benefit from the beneficial forces emanating from Agung. Facilities such as toilets and pigpens are situated on the *kelod* side of the house.

### Ancient Giants

Agung is currently the highest mountain on Bali but that has not always been the case. The island is home to three separate huge

volcanic systems and two relatively minor ones, whose growth over eons has given Bali its current shape and geology.

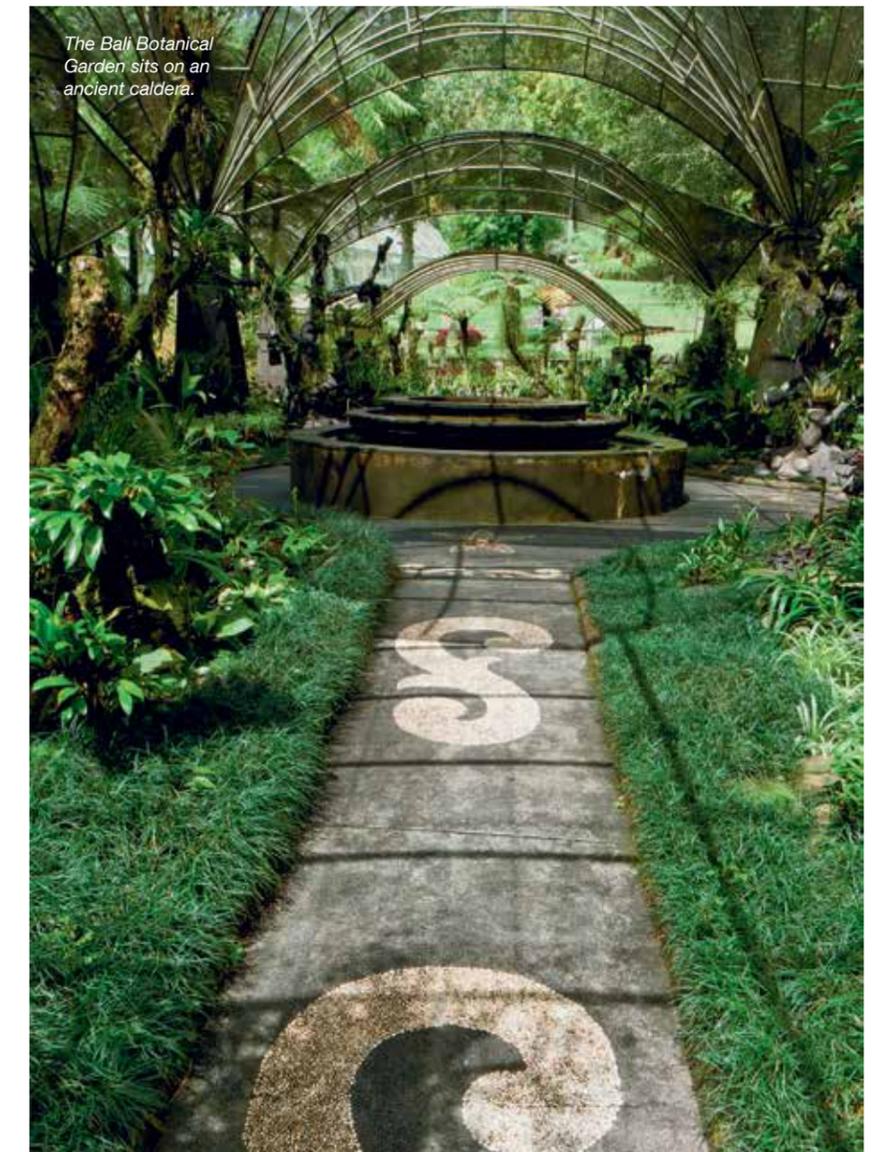
The island consists, essentially, of the slopes and lowlands of the three major peaks, with massed sand and silt (alluvial) deposits in the north and south-west, where the main tourist areas of Kuta, Legian, Seminyak, Canggu and Sanur are situated. A large elevated limestone island in the deep south, called Bukit Badung, is joined to mainland Bali by an alluvial causeway, and this is where Nusa Dua and Uluwatu are located. Other islands offshore, including Lembongan, Ceningan and Nusa Penida, are also elevated reefs, the visible part of a submerged shelf extending from the tip of neighbouring Lombok.

To put it another way: the map of Bali looks like a chicken facing west and laying an egg. The volcanic range is the chicken's backbone, the fertile lowlands are its belly, the alluvial deposits are the legs and Bukit Badung is the feet. The three islands off shore, of course, are the egg(s)!

Bali, as it is today, was created and shaped by the growth and subsequent eruption of the three major volcanoes. Agung is



A guardian statue at the entrance of Pura Besakih, with Mount Agung in the background.



The Bali Botanical Garden sits on an ancient caldera.



Mount Agung is Bali's most famous peak.

smelling) tree and allowed to decompose naturally until only the skeleton remains. Then the skull is placed on a stone altar. The Trunyan cemetery is only accessible by boat. Experienced Indonesian travellers will immediately see parallels in the culture of the mountain people of Toraja in Central Sulawesi.

### The Most Ancient Peak

The oldest of Bali's three major volcanic systems is one where the caldera is so huge and covered in greenery that most of the millions of people who visit the area every year do not even perceive it. Travelling due north from Denpasar, the road rises gently for a long way then becomes very steep, and you get views to the east of Bali's central plain below and Mount Agung rising in the distance. To the west, a number of smaller volcanic peaks reach for the sky. The lush vegetation everywhere conceals the fact that you are climbing up the ridge of the Buyan-Bratan volcanic complex, also known as the Bedugul or Catur caldera. The cones to the west are actually new volcanoes growing out of the south-western rim of the crater.

The eruption or series of eruptions that led to the formation of this enormous pit are thought to have taken place hundreds of thousands of years ago. Scientists believe that the mountain that once stood here, ancestral Mount Catur, would have been well over 3,000m high. There is no evidence of eruptions here in recorded time but there is still plenty of geo-thermal activity in the crater – there are over a dozen hot springs! Today, Bedugul is a very popular resort destination. It draws visitors because its elevation gives it a cool, fresh climate, which is very attractive to city dwellers tired of sweltering in the heat of the lowlands. Bedugul's three large lakes, Bratan, Buyan and Tamblingan, are the major features. Lake Bratan is a very holy spot for the Balinese and Pura Ulun Danu Bratan is one of the most photographed temples on the island. Viewed from the right angle, it can seem to be floating on

the water. Built in 1633, it is devoted to the goddess Dewi Danu.

At 4.5 sq km, Danau Buyan is Bali's second-largest lake, behind Lake Batur. It is quite shallow and is situated below the northern rim of the caldera. The third of Bedugul's lakes, Danau Tamblingan, is a smaller body of water. It is popular among hikers and there are over 30 temples dotting its shores. Buyan and Tamblingan used to be one body of water until a landslide separated them in the early 19th century.

### Bali's Fruit Basket

The volcanic soils in the Bedugul area are prodigiously fertile and this deep bowl lays a good claim to be Bali's fruit and vegetable basket. Patches of crops take up almost every spare bit of open ground and you know you are in the right place when you start to see strawberry sellers lining the road. In the morning, especially,

there is a lot of activity around the Bukit Mungsu traditional market. You will find all manner of very fresh local produce on sale, as well as a great selection of classic Indonesian spices. It is located in the town centre, but a little away from the main road, near the unique and unforgettable yellow concrete corn cob!

The bed of the ancient caldera has also proven to be the perfect spot to create the Bali Botanical Garden, one of only four official botanical gardens in the whole of Indonesia and a must-visit if you are passing through. It is not well signposted from the main road but, again, the corn cob is your marker. From there, look for a large Balinese split gate and you will be on the right road. The garden is truly world-class. It has won a number of international awards and covers some 1,500 hectares, but getting around is easy with excellent roads and concrete pathways. It is even wheelchair friendly.

It is divided into a number of areas, featuring varieties of the main tropical plant species. There are patches of dark, mossy rain forest, open grassy conifer forest and palm groves. You will also find tall tree fern walks and herb gardens. Benches and gazebos are liberally provided so you can get off your feet occasionally. The Botanical Garden is not on the usual tourist trail, so there is a good chance you will have the place to yourself, except on weekends and public holidays, when there may be crowds of local people here.

To get the best photographs of the Bedugul caldera and its lakes, head north towards the mountain villages of Gobleg and Munduk, where plantations of cloves, coffee and cacao cover the slopes. The road will take you right along the edge of the crater for quite a few kilometres and there are plenty of places where you can pull over. Watch out for hungry monkeys! 🐒



Located on the slopes of Mount Agung, Pura Besakih is Bali's most important temple.

### DON'T MISS THE MOUNTAINS

Guests heading for Spa Village Resort in Tembok will usually pass through Bali's range of mountains en route to the resort, so resist the temptation to doze off the jetlag and enjoy the magnificent sights along the way. During your stay at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, you will also have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience sunrise over Batur, do some gentle trekking and even have a picnic near the top of the island.



# In The Jungle, The Mighty Jungle

In the verdant surroundings of Cameron Highlands, secrets of the mysterious jungles become known to you at the tranquil Spa Village Cameron Highlands.



The state of Pahang in Peninsular Malaysia is especially known to be home to hundreds of aboriginal tribes or Orang Asli as they're known here. The largest of these tribes are the Semai people who have inhabited the lands for centuries, said to be part of the native inhabitants of Southeast Asia. Thus, it is only natural for these 'original people' to have masterfully uncovered mysteries of the jungles at the heart of the Malay Peninsula.

To the Semai, the jungle is their life, full of unbound treasures. Reaching out to these skilful people, the Spa Village Cameron Highlands brings forth the Semai practices and remedies of treating ailments using seemingly benign plants of the forest in the restorative

The Jungle Secrets of Anti-Aging for Her treatment. Crafted to make you feel like you're in the jungle itself, the 'trek' begins with a warming cup of camomile tea and hot towel that feels like a loving embrace in the refreshingly cold air of the highlands. Once you feel a sense of calm starting to envelope you, the therapist with a smile as warm as that cup of tea will guide you to the bathing rooms to wash away all your frets and pains.

Stepping into the bathing rooms, a large welcoming tub of anti-aging herbal bath beckons you for a soak with its heady scent of green tea intertwined with ginger and sebang plants. For a good 15 minutes, you feel your skin becoming refreshed as your worries melt



an invigorating Semai scrub. As the therapist polishes and buffs your skin to perfection, it's a moment to marvel at the cleverness of the Semai people who quite accurately isolate the benefits of each forest plant and root. Your body is coated in a mixture of rice, green tea, jasmine and herbs such as turmeric and galangal that work together harmoniously to cleanse the skin, giving you a beautiful glow.

After every inch of your body has been scrubbed back to health with the therapeutic blend, it's time for one last refreshing shower. Patting yourself dry, it's a little sad knowing that the pampering has come to an end, but it's not quite over yet. Once dressed, you're guided back to civilization with a cup of herbal tea known as the Semai Fountain of Youth to cleanse your body on the inside. Flavours of the jasmine green tea, betel leaves and ginger dance on the tongue, pleasing your palate before working their magic to heal the body. As you quietly contemplate on the tonic brew and birdsong, you'll notice a lightweight feeling in your soul and a knowing smile on your lips. Why? You now have a secret as well. ■

At this point, it's safe to say you're on cloud nine as you're massaged to near comatose bliss and the dreamy journey continues with a Muhak Herbal Sitz Bath. This is where things get a little bit technical as you're given a special concoction of betel leaves, henna leaves, green tea and salt- ingredients used by the Semai to cleanse and keep the nether regions firm, especially after childbirth. Next comes

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



away in this remedial brew of the Semai people that moisturises the skin while promoting blood circulation. Slices of kaffir lime sit in the bath, purifying the waters with their antioxidant rich juices also believed to remove negative energy. If you're up for some self-therapy, these lime slices are perfect for some self exfoliating along with sugar scrub and honey and tea scrub provided. It's a nice prelude for the thorough scrubbing yet to come. But before that is the relieving Minjau Asli massage. Working her hands deftly across the pressure points of your body, the skilful therapist rubs and kneads away at the knots that she magically notices. For over an hour, each physical pain is carefully worked away by the therapist's able movements using the special minyak Minjau- a healthful blend made with coconut oil, patchouli, tea and black pepper. The special oil blend with its intoxicating aroma alleviates mental fatigue along with physical fatigue as it is massaged into the skin with long, deep strokes.

#### WHO ARE THE SEMAI PEOPLE?

The Semai people are part of the largest indigenous ethnic group, Senoi or Orang Asli in Peninsula Malaysia, known for their gentle nature. Thought to be descendants of the ancient, original population of Southeast Asia, the Semai practice a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, depending on the richness of the forests to nourish them. Their diet mainly consists of mountain rice, wild boar, tubers, sweet bananas and vegetables. Interestingly, studies have shown that the Semai people are biologically related to the Khmer people of Cambodia and speak an Austroasiatic language bearing similarities to the Vietnamese, Khmer, and Mon languages.

#### NATURAL THERAPY Healing properties of the jungle's treasures.



**Galangal** – Known as lengkuas in Malay, this rhizome from the ginger family is known to have anti-inflammatory properties, improves blood circulation and relieves nausea.



**Pegaga (Centella asiatica)** – Long known as a medicinal herb in Ayurvedic and traditional Chinese medicine, pegaga is used to treat wounds, skin conditions and diseases of the female genitourinary tract.



**Kaffir lime** – In traditional medicine, kaffir limes are used to remove negative energy that causes ailments. The lime is also used to treat digestive ailments, for skin care and as a hair tonic.

**Sepang (Caesalpinia sappan)** – The heartwood of this plant possesses remarkable medicinal abilities as an antibacterial and anticoagulant. Thus, it is traditionally used to treat gynaecological disorders such as amenorrhea, dysmenorrhoea and postpartum blood stasis.

**Betel leaves** – The leaves largely consumed all over Asia have amazing antiseptic properties and are used to treat wounds, mouth and body odours as well as to treat leucorrhoea in women.

# Gourmand's Delight

Kim Inglis discovers the culinary pleasures of  
YTL Hotels' Malaysian properties.





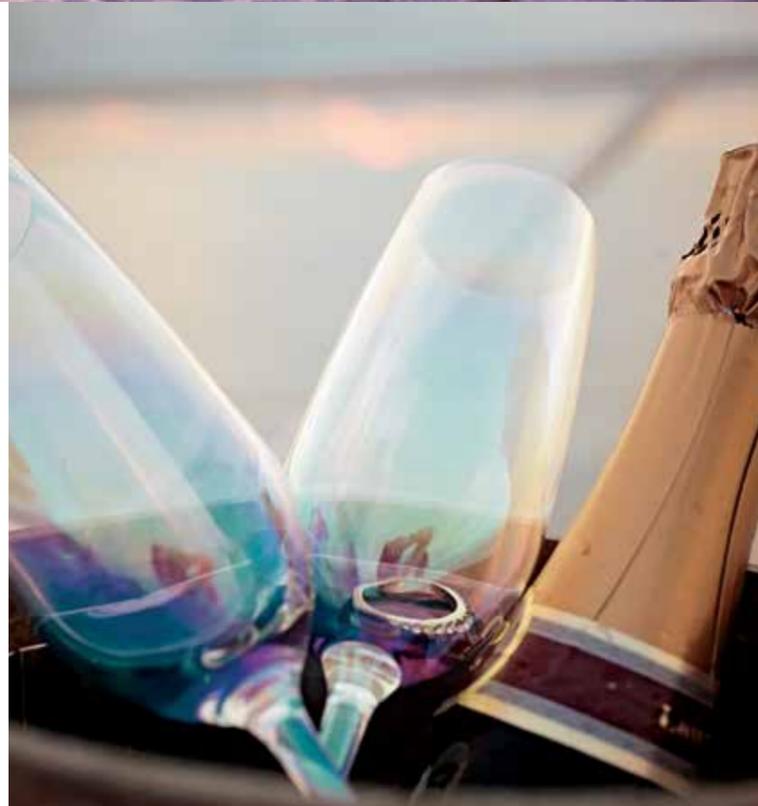
*Clockwise, from far left: A sybaritic sunset cruise at Gaya Island Resort features fine champagnes, and more; the velvety tea plantations near Cameron Highlands Resort are the perfect backdrop for an indulgent picnic experience.*

riders when the sport paled – and, for some reason, became known as ‘picnics’. The provenance of the word is unknown, but the practice never went away. In fact, over the centuries, picnics became more fashionable and more inclusive. After the French Revolution in 1789, royal parks became open to the public for the first time and picnicking in the parks was enjoyed by many newly enfranchised citizens; the early 19th-century Picnic Society in London met monthly in the Pantheon on Oxford Street; picnics were increasingly seen in landscape paintings of idealised country settings; in India, Rajput gatherings enjoyed huge outdoor picnics in massive tents in bucolic surrounds; and, eventually, the picnic became a family activity – a time for parents and children to come together al fresco to socialise and enjoy each other’s company away from the home dining table.

Fine food and wine are an integral part of most people’s holidays and nowhere is this more true than in Asia. It’s safe to say that Asians are passionate about eating and drinking, believing that an evening of indulgence at a bar, restaurant or club is part and parcel of a vacation. And it’s all the better if the event is specially organised in an exotic locale and to one’s very own specifications.

It’s hardly surprising, therefore, that YTL Hotels in Malaysia has crafted some extraordinary personalised experiences that celebrate the delights of dining in a variety of locations. As Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh, Managing Director of YTL Corporation, noted at the opening ceremony of one of its properties in 2015, YTL Hotels is not here to “buy, polish or sell”, but is in the hospitality business for the long term. “It’s all about touching people’s lives and giving them the very best experience,” he said.

Crafting inspired experiences in the food and beverage sector has always been a key part of the YTL experience. The folks at the various hotels take their food seriously and a great deal of thought goes into the different restaurants. There are some that pop up in a few different locations, such as **Feast Village**, **Fisherman’s Cove** and the idiosyncratic **Shook!**, a concept that spans East and West with a powerful panache. Then there are more site-specific restaurants and a variety of cuisines from all corners of the globe. YTL Hotels is happy to serve sushi in Shanghai or a British-



style high tea in the hills of Malaysia. Diversity is key; unusual experiences, the spice of life.

Then there are the personally tailored foodie experiences that are customised to individual guests. Whether you want to celebrate a special occasion, such as an anniversary or birthday, or simply partake in something that you wouldn’t normally do at home, is irrelevant. What matters is that these indulgences are available for hotel guests. We outline a number of these tailor-made excursions, adventures and experiences at the various hotels to whet the appetite. They prove that no request is too great and no detail too small for YTL Hotels’ dedicated team.

### Picnics in Paradise

In the Middle Ages, when hunting was a popular pastime in Europe, elegant outdoor meals were prepared for aristocratic



“Romance is certainly not dead when your date organises a stunning dinner setting beneath a star-studded sky, complete with the sound of lapping waves, an atmosphere of flickering candles and the smell of freshly barbecued seafood.”



Be it a huge spread or a more intimate affair, a whole industry has grown up around the art of picnicking – rustic hampers equipped with practical, yet pretty crockery, attractive coolers for wine and champagne, and plush rugs for comfort and cleanliness are all de rigueur. But, better than organising the outing yourself, put yourself into the hands of YTL Hotels staff at either **Cameron Highlands Resort** or **Gaya Island Resort**, who have devised two bespoke outings with picnics at their hearts.

Cameron Highlands, situated on a 1,500m-high plateau in mountainous forestland, is the perfect spot for a picnic. The elevation ensures it's cool enough to enjoy the outdoors; the surrounds of the BOH tea plantation, with its velvety, rolling tea gardens, provide stunning vistas; and the YTL Hotels butler ensures you don't have to lift a finger. The expedition begins with a guided tour of the magnificent tea valleys, where personnel take you through the process of growing and producing exquisite teas. Fragrant tea bushes, steaming cuppas and stories of intrepid planters put you in the mood for the sumptuous picnic spread that follows. Seated beneath an umbrella on plumped-up cushions,

with the ubiquitous *Camelia sinensis* all around, freshly-plucked strawberries, sandwiches, scones and more are washed down with freshly brewed tea or a glass of fine chilled champagne. What could be more pleasurable?

If sea, sun and sand are more your thing, a trip to Gaya Island Resort, situated in Sabah's Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, could provide your picnicking paradise. Here, personalised gourmet picnics can be arranged at the destination of your choice: on a private beach on nearby Tavajun Bay; aboard the resort's yacht, the elegant *Lumba-Lumba*; or on the deck of your villa deep in the rainforest canopy. You can combine a snorkelling trip with some fine dining, or simply laze away the afternoon sipping and snacking on a beach that affords picture-perfect views of Mount Kinabalu, South-East Asia's highest mountain. Whatever your option, the experience will be tailored to your requests.

### Dining à Deux beneath the Stars

A fine romance is assured when your date organises a stunning dinner setting beneath a star-studded sky, complete with the sound

of lapping waves, an atmosphere of flickering candles and the smell of freshly barbecued seafood. This type of experience can be enjoyed at many of YTL Hotels' seaside resorts and can be as elaborate or as simple as you desire. **Tanjong Jara Resort** may be one of the best places to indulge in. Situated in Terengganu, along a coastline of fishing villages, coconut groves, white powdery sand and a sea teeming with coral and marine life, it may be YTL Hotels' most authentically Malay outpost. Laidback yet luxurious, it was the first deluxe tourist accommodation to be built on Malaysia's east coast – and is proud to continue its primary aims of preserving local architectural heritage and working with local communities. Over the years, it has built up a substantial body of repeat visitors.

Many of Tanjong Jara Resort's tailor-made excursions encourage interaction with the surrounding culture: on the cuisine front, guests are welcome to visit the local market at nearby Dungun, barter and buy local fruits, veggies and seafood, then take their finds back to the resort to cook them at the well-established Cooking School. It's a fun way to learn more about local food and foodstuffs. But, sometimes, it's more relaxing to let others do the work, and



Clockwise, from far left: Tanjong Jara Resort offers a variety of al fresco dining treats, including a Dining on the Rocks option; the freshest of ingredients at an outdoor Pangkor Laut dinner.



you can view the serene East Coast night sky through a tableside telescope – and all options include a discreet service team, illumination from candles, moon and stars, as well as gentle sea breezes and lapping waves. You're made to feel special but you're also given privacy to allow you to truly savour your special loved-up evening.

**Pangkor Laut Resort** also offers similar experiences on the rocks or beachside at historic Emerald Bay or in a secluded nook on the sandy beach by the Fisherman's Cove restaurant. As at Tanjong Jara Resort, the emphasis is on romance, the fresh flavours of the sea, cocktails and canapés, and the last embers of the setting sun. Once again, chefs personalise the five-course menu according to guests' requests, and tables are lit by the flames of tiki torches and a bonfire.

### Metropolitan Mollycoddling

If bright lights and big cities are more to your taste than secluded seaside surrounds, YTL Hotels is not short on urban options too. One particular location immediately comes to mind: the Orchid Conservatory at **The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur**. What could be more romantic than a private dinner in this airy light-filled glasshouse, filled to the brim with a fabulous array of Phalaenopsis orchids, many of which are large-petalled varieties? Built between the Majestic and Tower wings at this historic hotel, the 'room' bridges the divide between the original hotel wing and its Art Deco style high-rise counterpart. As such, it offers an unusual, and enticing, atmosphere.

this is what happens when you pamper yourself and your loved one with one of the resort's Private Dining extravaganzas. Choose one of four options: Dining on the Rocks, Feet in the Sand, South China Sea or Barbecue under the Stars. All are al fresco but in slightly different locations, and all include a personalised five-course gourmet menu. The Rocks are right next to moonlit waters, while the sandy beach and South China Sea options are set in a romantic gazebo at the water's edge. For the barbecue, you'll be sited on a wooden platform surrounded by luxuriant jungle. Local herbs and spices, Asian and Western dishes, freshly-caught seafood, 'surf and turf' options and sweet homemade desserts are all part of the evening's repast. If you're interested in the stars,

When the Majestic Hotel first opened its doors in 1930s colonial Kuala Lumpur, it quickly became the *hotel du jour*, famed for its high-quality cuisine, extravagant New Year's Eve parties and lavish receptions. The cocktails were the talk of the town; the food unrivalled. It was also extremely modern, with an Art Deco vibe, elevator, modern sanitation and that marvellous invention... air-conditioning. An early advertisement declared it 'A Hotel of Pre-eminence' that was particularly known for 'its distinctive social atmosphere, its comfortable and up-to-date accommodation, its courteous service, and the excellence of its cuisine that has earned a reputation renowned among epicures'.

That cuisine has been revived today in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Colonial Café and can be sampled à deux at the Private Conservatory Dinner. Think classic prawn cocktail served in a tall glass, followed by Ayam Kunyit, a mild curry favoured by both colonials and locals, or Hainanese Chicken Chop, an old KL favourite. Desserts are no less eclectic: swiss roll that uses local kaya instead of fruit jams, English Trifle, and bread and butter pudding with Madagascar vanilla. A besuited waiter tends to your needs, while, all around, candlelight flickers, allowing the giant moth orchids to create shadowy winged silhouettes against the glass. It's a unique experience, one that could not be replicated in a different environment.



### Cooking up a Storm

We've already mentioned the Cooking School at Tanjong Jara Resort where guests are introduced to the creative culinary heritage of Malaysia's Malay, Chinese and Indian residents. But another cuisine that is equally celebrated and loved by locals is the unique Peranakan one of Malaysia's Straits Chinese. The term Peranakan (translating as 'local born') refers to people of mixed Chinese and Malay/Indonesian heritage. Peranakans are descendants of Chinese immigrant traders who travelled (and later settled) in Nanyang from the 14th century onwards, and married local Malay women or Bataks from Sumatra. Their offspring, and succeeding generations, were also known as Straits Chinese, as many were born in the British-controlled Straits Settlements of Malacca, Penang and Singapore.

At **The Majestic Malacca**, an authentically restored 1920s Peranakan mansion turned heritage hotel, you are encouraged to learn about Straits Chinese culture through architectural walking tours, river cruises and personalised Cooking Classes. As with interior décor, clothing, customs and more, Peranakan food is a heady mix of eclecticism and exuberance. Combining Hokkien cooking methods with local ingredients such as chillies, coconut milk, *belacan* (shrimp paste), tamarind and lemongrass, dishes have a distinctive taste. Malay flavours permeate throughout, but you'll be amazed to see some imported English provisions in a Peranakan kitchen. As dedicated Anglophiles, the Peranakans were keen on products such as Bovril, Milkmaid condensed milk and Lea & Perrin's Worcester sauce!

At The Majestic Malacca's Cooking Class, a Peranakan Master Chef takes you through the basics, then teaches you how to cook some specific dishes you can eat later. Delving into the history of each exquisite recipe, you'll expand your knowledge of aromatic ingredients and cooking styles. Afterwards, you're encouraged to have lunch or dinner in the formal Mansion restaurant to savour the spoils of your toils. Hopefully, the dessert will be the eponymous Sago Gula Melaka – a dessert that tastes a bit like crème caramel, yet has hints of coconut and palm sugar as well – and is one of my personal favourites. Bon appétit! 🍴

Left: a Peranakan cooking class at The Majestic Malacca is a fun, authentic experience.

# Sundays At The Ritz

The quintessential English tradition of the Sunday Roast continues at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's The Library.

Text Vivian Chong



*Clockwise from far left: The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur has been named one of The Greatest Hotels in the World; indulge in a traditional Sunday Roast amidst the elegant settings of The Library; feast on freshly-shucked oysters*

In every city that The Ritz-Carlton calls home, the property undoubtedly becomes an icon, a landmark that lives up to an exalted reputation of classic luxury, elegance and impeccable butler service. The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is no exception. Since welcoming its first guests in December 1997, when it opened as the country's first luxury boutique accommodation, the 364-room hotel has never been short of accolades and admiration. Nestled within the Golden Triangle yet buffered against the city's well-known bustle and congestion, the hotel delivers on location – strategic, yet quiet – and impresses with its service standards. The Independent ranks it as one of the 'Top Five Butler Hotels in the World', Travel + Leisure recognises it as one of 'The Greatest Hotels in the World', while Condé Nast Traveler has welcomed it into their prestigious 'Gold List'. The hotel befittingly draws an esteemed clientele, from members of royal families and international celebrities to corporate leaders and heads of states, seeking a getaway that's the epitome of sophistication.

To many, The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur already had it all but the hotel went on to show that you can improve on perfection. The entire property underwent a refurbishment that saw its guest rooms, suites, public areas and facilities completely updated. Fresh and modern were the buzzwords that characterised the 'new' hotel, unveiled in March 2016, underscored by the hotel's origins and staying true to its roots. The result is an exquisite haven cocooned in genteel grandeur, and a paean to timeless grace.

The hotel's essence remains untouched, with some adjustments introduced in order to elevate guests' experience. The ever-popular Sunday Roast continues to be a highlight of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's culinary offerings, but where it used to be served in The Cobalt Room, it is now presented at The Library. Executive Chef Zaffar Bin Abdul Samad has made sure to retain traditional favourites on the menu, while expanding it so that even regulars have something fresh to look forward to.



*Clockwise from far left: It's all about the tender roasts from the meat trolleys; a live jazz trio sets the tone; aside from the buffet spread, you can also order from a small menu of hot dishes; save room for the decadent desserts*

Step inside The Library and you will be immediately lulled into that weekend state of mind as the soulful sounds of jazz, performed live by a trio, drift across the handsome space marked by timber floors and dark wood panelling. Bookshelves lined with various tomes form feature walls and the best tables come with plush, curved sofa seatings that are ideal for cosy tête-à-têtes. These surround the main buffet display, which forms the centrepiece, that's laden with scrumptious appetisers, cold dishes and decadent desserts. Flanking the ends of this table are arrays of shellfish, sushi and sashimi. On yet another table, freshly shucked New Jersey oysters come under a deserving spotlight as one of the most well-received delights in the spread of over 60 dishes.

Whet your appetite with crisp salads and Mediterranean dips, before diving into succulent prawns, sweet lobsters and plump mussels. Make room for cuts of gravlax, foie gras terrine and beef carpaccio before heading to the meat trolleys. The main stars are the signature roasts of lamb and prime beef ribs; melt-in-the-mouth tender, the carved slices of perfectly cooked meat are best enjoyed bathed in silky jus and served with roasted greens and Yorkshire pudding. There's not all to the brunch: A small selection of hot food complements the buffet, cooked upon order and served by attentive staff who will make sure your glass is never empty of champagne or wine. Pair them with the mushroom soup with truffle oil, baked cod fish or spaghetti with wagyu meatballs. Finish with some gorgeous gateaux, mille-feuille, cake pops and macarons from the sweet end of the spread or take your pick from the cheese cart.

The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's Sunday Roast lasts three hours, which gives you all the time to feast, imbibe and immerse in an inviting ambience that's made for upholding a classic English tradition – not at all a bad way to spend a Sunday. **■**

*The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's Sunday Roast is available from noon to 3pm every Sunday, and priced at RM198 or RM398 (with champagne and wine) per person.*



# The Perfect Brew

Three centuries since Thomas Twining set up Britain's first known tea room in London, Twinings of London has expanded to over 115 countries and an astonishing 500 varieties. Stephen Twining, 10th generation scion of the illustrious tea clan and the brand's Director of Corporate Relations, continues to build on the legacy of his predecessors – spreading the Twinings message around the globe, one cuppa at a time.

Text Kirat Kaur Photography Edmund Lee



The Orchid Conservatory at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is the perfect spot for afternoon tea.

## What does tea mean to the man who drinks at least nine cups a day?

It means refreshment, knowledge, comfort, friends and family. There's so much to it physically and emotionally as well. In the physical realm, there are the mindboggling varieties, blends, locations and flavours. On the emotional spectra, it's amazing how tea can cheer you up, calm you down and enhance each moment. What can I say, I'm pretty passionate about it – it's a big influence in making my day.

## Fondest memory of tea?

I was about eight years old and we were doing a subject on geography in school regarding India and discussing the tea connection between the British Empire and India. The geography master was well aware of my family's legacy and thought it would be better to have me at the front rather than at the back, asking naughty questions! So, I turned to my father for help and, in typical dad style, he got very excited and gave me some tea samples along with a thorough briefing. At the end of my presentation, we had a tea tasting and I'll never forget the expressions on my classmates' faces. Up to this point, all they knew of tea was that it's dark brown and you drink it with milk because that's how they saw their parents and grandparents do it. And I astonished them with white and green teas, and teas of unusual flavours. The penny dropped and, in that moment, I understood the significance between tea and my surname. I realised it would make my life very happy just teaching the world about tea. I decided to do just that and here we are!

## What's the Twinings magic?

Our philosophy is to be totally committed to producing the highest quality teas and make them accessible to everyone. It's proven in our history with Richard Twining, who was a central character in creating The Commutation Act of 1784 that slashed tea taxes and made it affordable to all. From this philosophy, we have master tea tasters who we train ourselves and pass the knowledge down from generation to generation – it requires amazing skills to take different elements and make your cup

of tea taste exactly the same every time. We have a magic ingredient that runs, not just through me, but also our tea tasters and members who have a passion for what we do. We're all willing to go the extra mile to help satisfy the customers and the company is simply full of lovely and enthusiastic people.

## Could you describe the perfect afternoon tea?

In the early 18th century, tea became a fashionable drink over which aristocrats used to swap stories while alleviating pangs of hunger before dinner. Today, afternoon tea is all about sitting back in a very civilised and relaxed manner. Therefore, setting is very important with three key components: good company, delightful small and delicate food, and the choice of accompanying tea, of course. Proper tea-drinking etiquette dictates no talk of religion, politics or anything that will cause an argument.

## What is life like as a tea ambassador for Twinings?

What excites me most is the reaction you get from people when you serve them a new type of tea: their eyes go big and they have that 'wow' moment. That doesn't always happen but when it does, it's a terrific feeling knowing that you've brought something into their lives that's going to give them many special moments in the future. As I travel the world, and introduce the magic of tea, I often end with a poem that perfectly captures the relationship of tea and the Twining family: "It seems in some cases kind nature hath planned That names with their callings agree, For Twining the Teaman that lives in the Strand, Would be 'wining; deprived of his T.'" ❖

*Twinings' Large-Leaf Discovery Collection is served at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur with accompanying delectable afternoon tea sweets and savouries for an utterly lovely time at The Orchid Conservatory and The Tea Lounge. For more information visit [www.majestickl.com](http://www.majestickl.com)*

## TOP SIPS

Stephen Twining's guide to the perfect cup of tea.

- 1. Quality of water is important.** Use fresh, cold tap water or carbon-filtered water. Never use distilled water as it is completely devoid of oxygen. Tea gets its flavour from the dissolved oxygen water.
- 2. Warm up the teapot first before brewing.** Pour in some hot water in a teapot, leave it for a minute or two and then pour it out.
- 3. Put in the tea leaves first.** The old rule of thumb is one teaspoon of tea leaves per person and one more for the pot.
- 4. Pour in just boiled water.** As soon as the water reaches its boiling point, take it off the heat and pour it into the pot. For every extra second it boils, precious oxygen is lost.
- 5. Let the tea brew.** Different teas have their own brewing times. For black tea, let it brew for four to five minutes; regular tea about three; and green tea for three minutes with boiled water that has been cooled for about five minutes. Make sure to follow the instructions on the packaging for a most flavourful cup.
- 6. Stir the teapot before pouring** because the tea leaves (which hold the most flavour) are at the bottom.
- 7. Additions:** Historically, milk is poured first but adding it later makes very little difference to the flavour. Add some lemon to dark tea as it enhances the flavour terrifically and no sugar, please – drink it nature's way. The overpowering sweetness of sugar will mask the delicate flavours of tea.
- 8. Remember.** No matter the rules, it's still your cup of tea – drink it the way you enjoy. That's why it's the world's most personal drink.



# When Food Is Life

Executive Chef Jose Alonso of Binomio in Singapore demonstrates how the finest food is often the simplest.

Text CHIN MUI YOON Photography Andrew and courtesy of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur

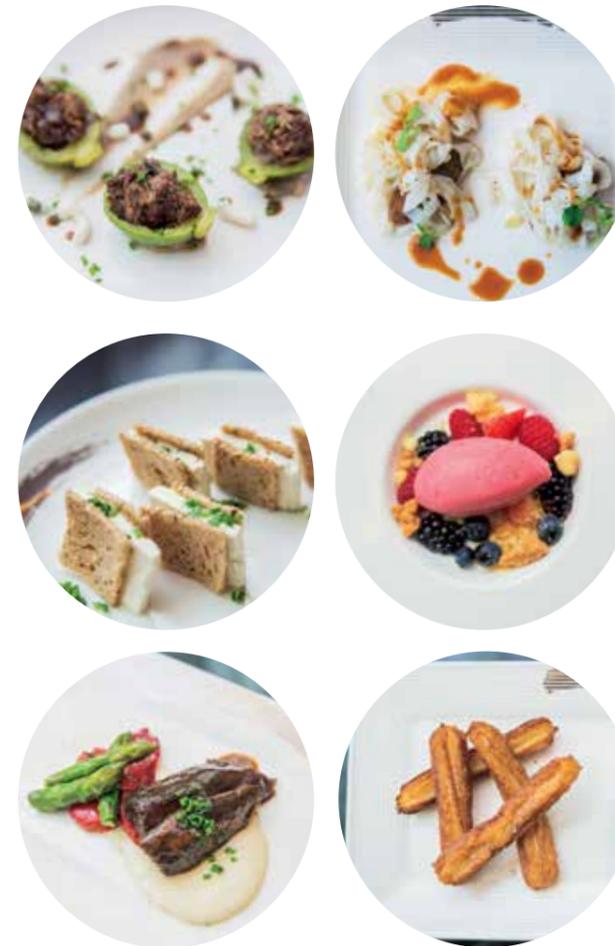
“Spanish food is very honest and heartfelt, cooked with the freshest ingredients with time-honed skills.”

A sumptuous selection of classic Spanish cuisine was the star of The Library in October. For only five short days, this quiet space, tucked within the elegant confines of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, played host to a perfect culinary ambassador for Spain. Executive Chef Jose Alonso, who has worked with celebrated chefs like Santi Santamaria and now owns the popular Binomio in Singapore, was eager to point out that the finest food is often best served in its true classic form without need for embellishment or fancy techniques.

As such, the menu held a spread of Spanish offerings that was enjoyable for its honest authenticity and artful combination of flavours without any pretence to what it really is – well-prepared

and absolutely delicious food. A tray of tapas included a light and delicately crispy fried eggplant with a touch of honey that diners couldn't get enough of, only to be topped by chicken and boiled egg croquettes with a perfectly crispy coat encasing a velvety mash of meat inside.

The fried cheese terrine bikini, again, looked most unremarkable – after all, what's the fuss about what was essentially a slice of cheese sandwiched between two dainty squares of wheat toast? But no. Of course, Chef Alonso had to have his very own homemade cheese, whipped with a blend of olive and truffle oils to create an exquisite taste.



departure from the usual ways that the staple of rice is cooked and presented. A generous serving of barramundi, cuttlefish and clam were served on this perfectly cooked rice alongside a dollop of aioli. The dish was a joy to consume for its simple ingredients yet delicious blend of flavours. After all, the original recipe is known as arroz de pobre, or 'poor's man rice', a reflection of its modest ingredients.

“Spanish food is very honest and heartfelt, cooked with the freshest ingredients with time-honed skills,” says Alonso. “It is very rich with various flavours as well as influences from our locality. For instance, the north of Spain, where the food is richer, or in the south, with Arabic influences such as spices like paprika and cumin that add an exotic touch, while classic Mediterranean flavours from Italy and Turkey can also be found. All of these translate into a unique cuisine that is becoming very popular nowadays. I just think my country is incredibly blessed with an abundance of good ingredients that go into the amazing richness of food we have – like seafood, meats, truffles, mushrooms and wines.”

The difference was the absence of pork, which is usually found aplenty in Spanish food such as ham and chorizo. The chef made up for it with an abundance of seafood instead. “I've often been asked about my cooking philosophy,” Alonso reflects. “To me, what counts most is 100 per cent flavour. Each and every ingredient must be fresh and ideal, as they all contribute to the dish.”

“As chefs, we work a lot of hours, up to 16 on some days. I am 34 and I've been doing this since I was 18, and I've never stopped even today. My philosophy is doing what I love most. I cannot imagine doing anything else. I am lucky to have my own restaurant at my age. I miss time with my family or travelling, but when I'm in the kitchen, I don't want to be in any other place.”

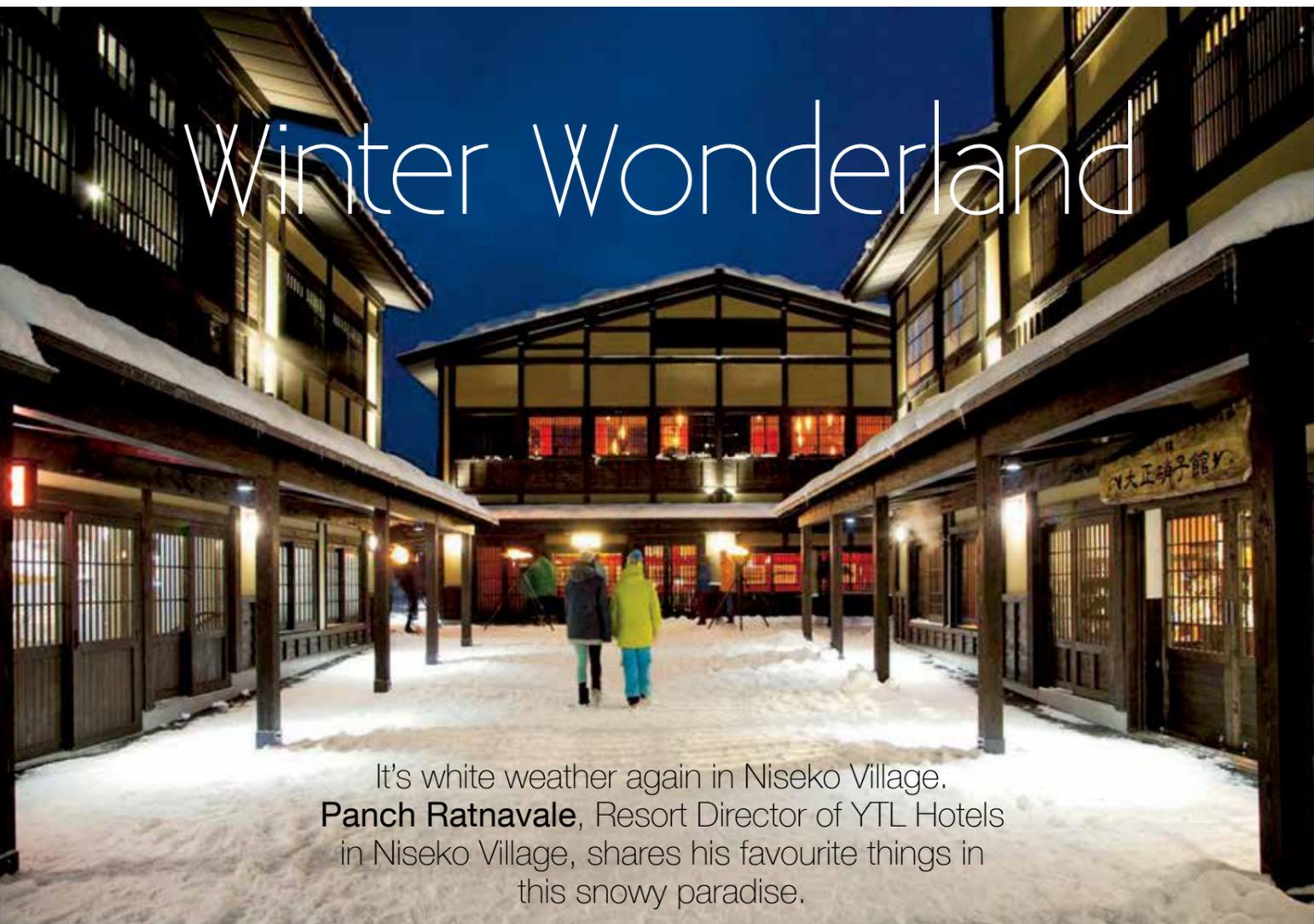
“Food is truly life for us in Spain.”

The star of the show was the sumptuous squid ink paella with seafood or Arroz Negro – not the most photogenic dish of them all, but a remarkably rich flavour that left guests desiring seconds. This Mediterranean inspired Valencian-Catalonian seafood special has always signalled Summer days but, here in Malaysia, where tastebuds are attuned to strong flavours, it was a fascinating

“It has all started from home, as my mum loved to cook. We didn't go out to eat much and the quality of food was always high in my home. Meals were never something casual or quick. We never waited to have good meals at special celebrations. My mum would select choice ingredients. My dad also owned a wine retail shop. So, we drank a lot of good varieties of wine and it's important alongside good food. We are all used to this kind of lifestyle, and I had an elderly neighbour who'd still cycle to the morning market to buy fresh herbs to grind into his very own pesto, something he'd been doing for 50 years!”

“Food is truly life for us in Spain.”

# Winter Wonderland



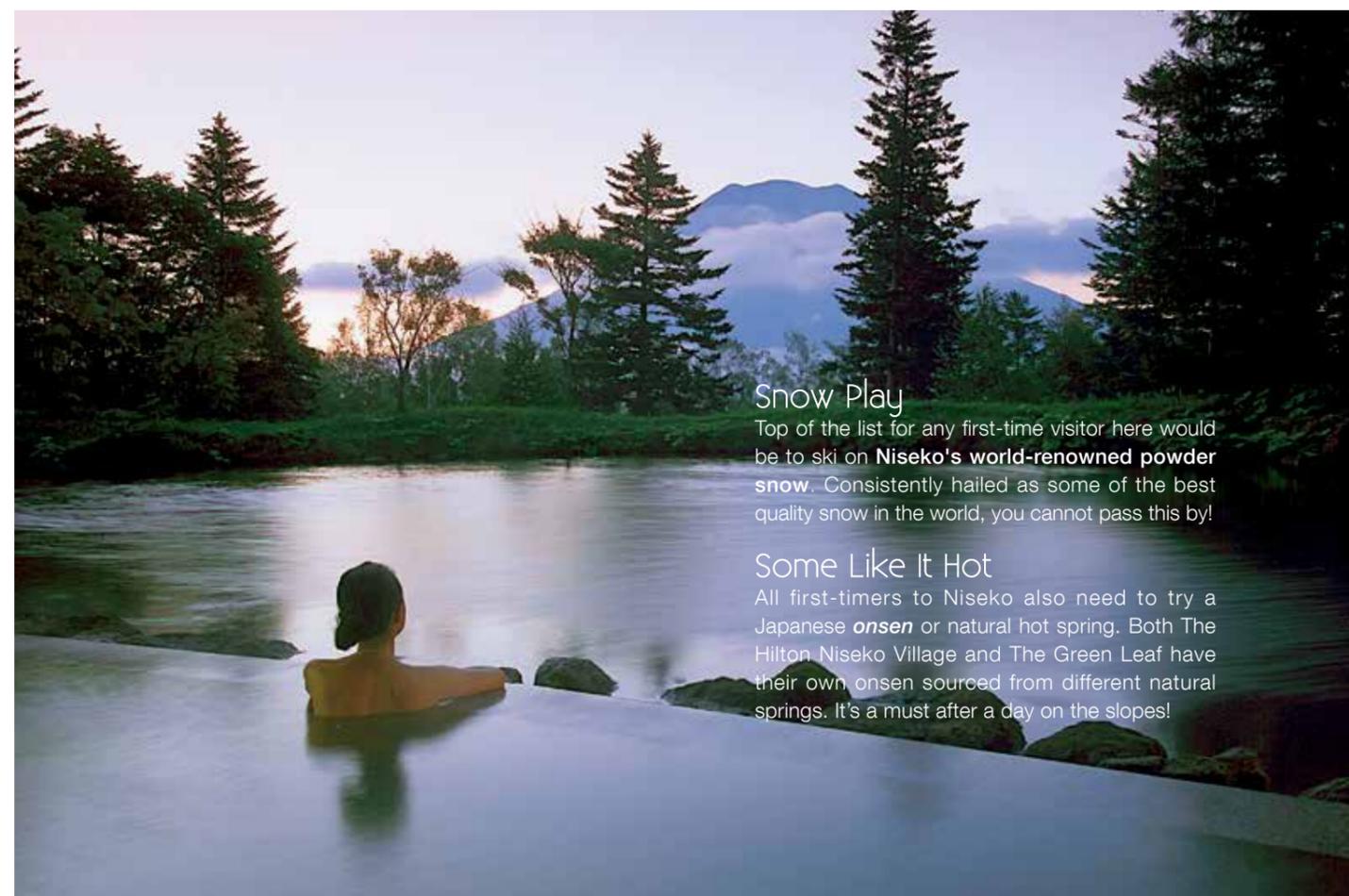
It's white weather again in Niseko Village. **Panch Ratnavale**, Resort Director of YTL Hotels in Niseko Village, shares his favourite things in this snowy paradise.

## Perfect Pair

My all-time favourite dish in Niseko Village is mixed black pork and A5 wagyu shabu-shabu at **The Crab Shack Niseko Village**. The combination of locally sourced Rusutsu pork and Hokkaido A5 grade wagyu beef pairs perfectly with seasonal fresh vegetables in a warm savory broth!

## Fine Fare

My favourite restaurant in Niseko Village would have to be **Two Sticks**. As it is fast paced Asian dining, it's easy to satisfy my cravings for local delicacies or my home town favourites!

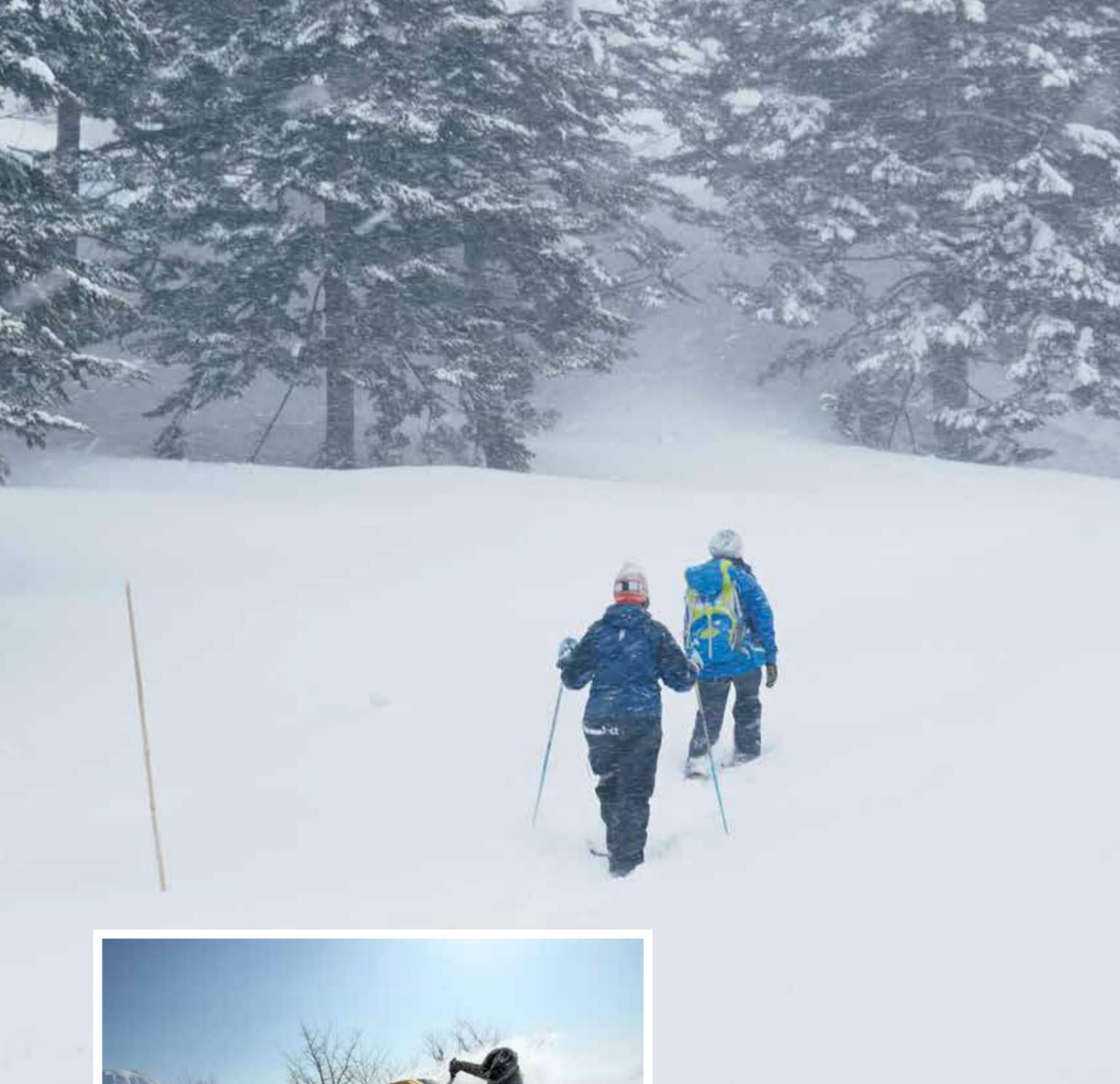


## Snow Play

Top of the list for any first-time visitor here would be to ski on **Niseko's world-renowned powder snow**. Consistently hailed as some of the best quality snow in the world, you cannot pass this by!

## Some Like It Hot

All first-timers to Niseko also need to try a Japanese **onsen** or natural hot spring. Both The Hilton Niseko Village and The Green Leaf have their own onsen sourced from different natural springs. It's a must after a day on the slopes!



life guide //



### Dainty Delights

Everyone must visit the local dairy **Milk Kobo**. The shoux cream (or cream puffs) are the perfect treat for the whole family. The cheese tarts are really good too!

### View From The Top

My favourite scenic view in Niseko will always be **Mount Yotei**. The sleeping volcano can be seen from all over Niseko. It is the symbol of Niseko and its beauty takes my breath away every time I stop to admire it.

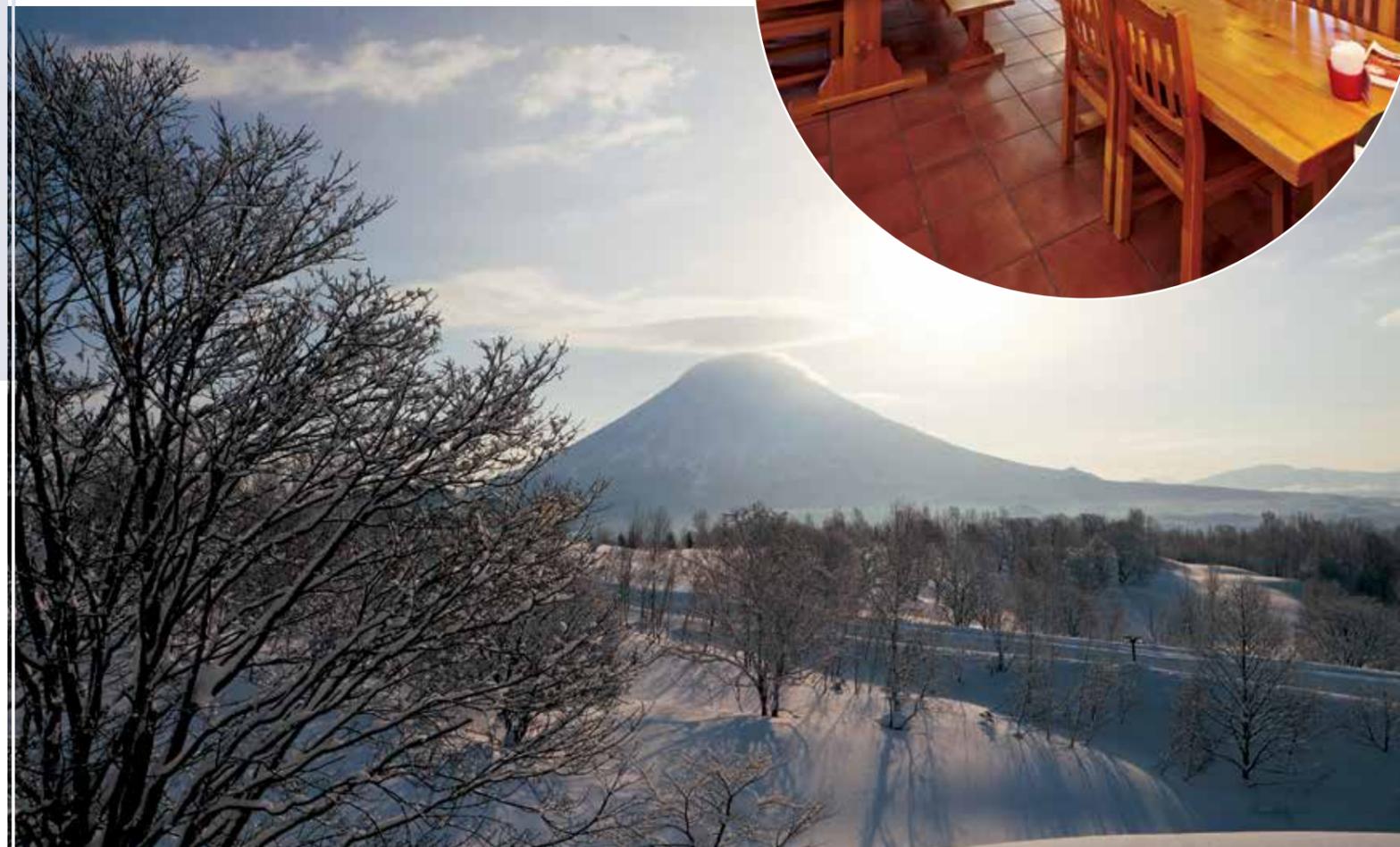


### Rush Hour

**Snowmobile** adventures are great fun. It's a great adrenaline-fuelled activity that skiers and non-skiers can enjoy and it makes for great tales to tell.

### On The Trail

For a more relaxed activity, **snowshoe tours** are a must. There is something really special about walking out onto an untouched blanket of fresh Niseko powder and taking in the natural landscape.





### Child's Play

**Children's ski lessons** are the best way to keep children learning and having fun in the snow at the same time. Off the slopes, snow rafting and the famous reindeer sled rides will have the kids in smiles all day long!

### Toasty Treats

**Keeping warm** during winter in Niseko Village is easy! A warm cup of coffee from **The Village Patisserie** starts my day. The afternoon 'pick-me-up' is a hearty bowl of ramen at **Two Sticks Restaurant**. My après ski warm up is a nice mulled wine from Tomioka White in **The Green Leaf** or **The Flame** in **The Hilton**. A steaming kaizen nabe or seafood hotpot for dinner at **The Crab Shack** will keep me going. Before bed, a relaxing onsen soak. The warmth will last until morning! ❄️



*Panch Ratnavale, Resort Director of YTL Hotels in Niseko Village.*



### Pressing Need

After a day out on the slopes, visitors should arrange for a session of Japanese shiatsu. This traditional pressure-point treatment always does the trick after the first few runs of the season. A dip in **The Green Leaf** outdoor onsen while fresh snowflakes fall seals the deal.

### Cool Run

I fell in love with **skiing** when I came to Niseko. The snow is unbelievable and, each season, I just can't wait to hit the slopes. My favourite run is Ukairo. Located at the top of Mount Annupuri, Ukairo is a beginner to intermediate run from the highest chair lift. On a clear day, you can see all of Niseko and Mount Yotei from this run. The powder at the top of the mountain is a plus too!





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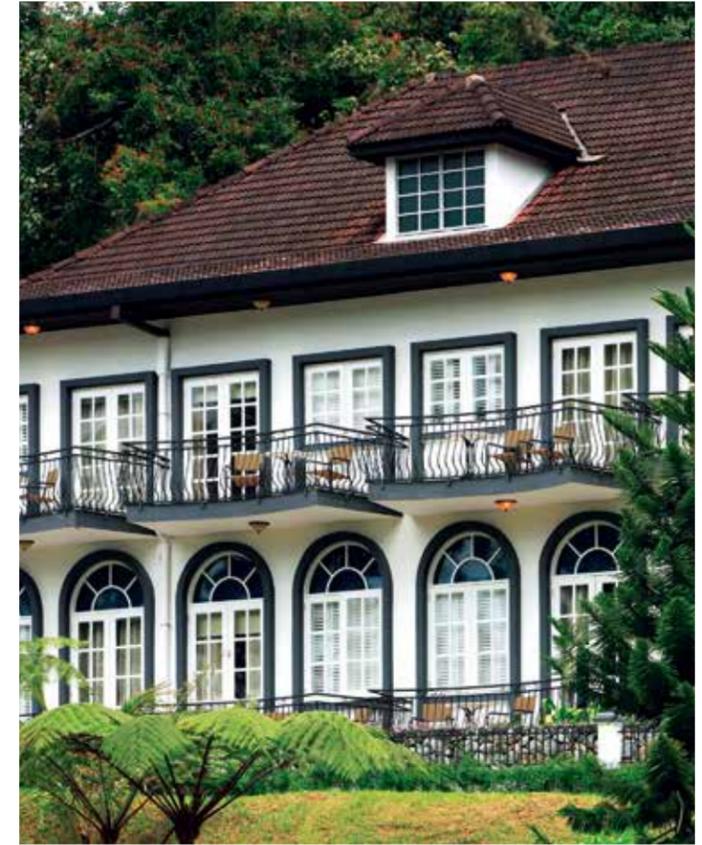
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EMBODYING THE ESSENCE OF MALAY CULTURE AND TRADITION, TANJONG JARA RESORT ON THE EAST COAST OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA OFFERS THE PERFECT EXPERIENCE OF MALAY HOSPITALITY. FRONTED BY THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND SURROUNDED BY THE LUSH GREEN BEAUTY OF THE LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE, TANJONG JARA OFFERS YOU AN EXPERIENCE OF MALAYSIA LIKE NO OTHER.  
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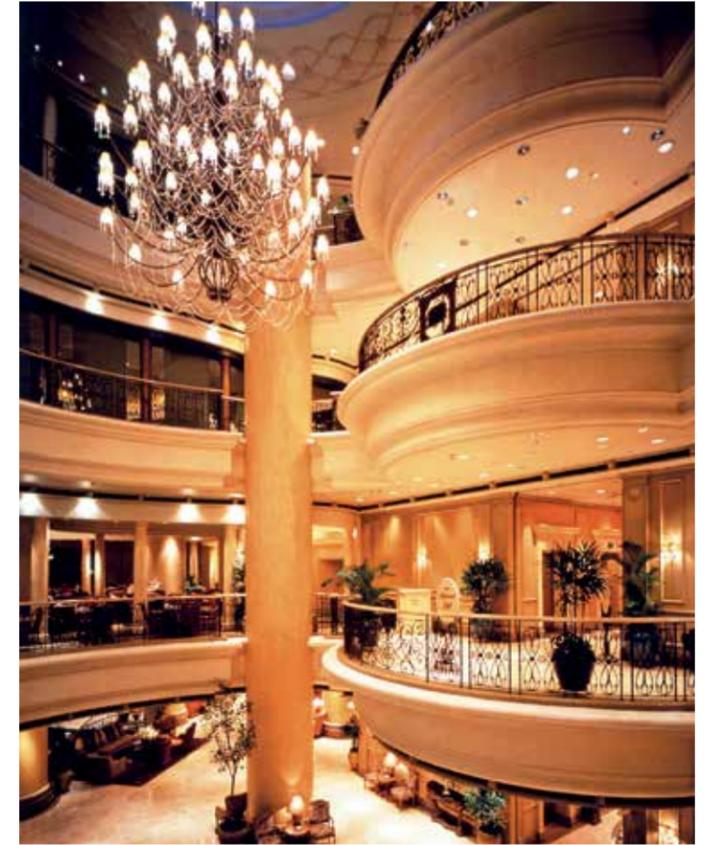
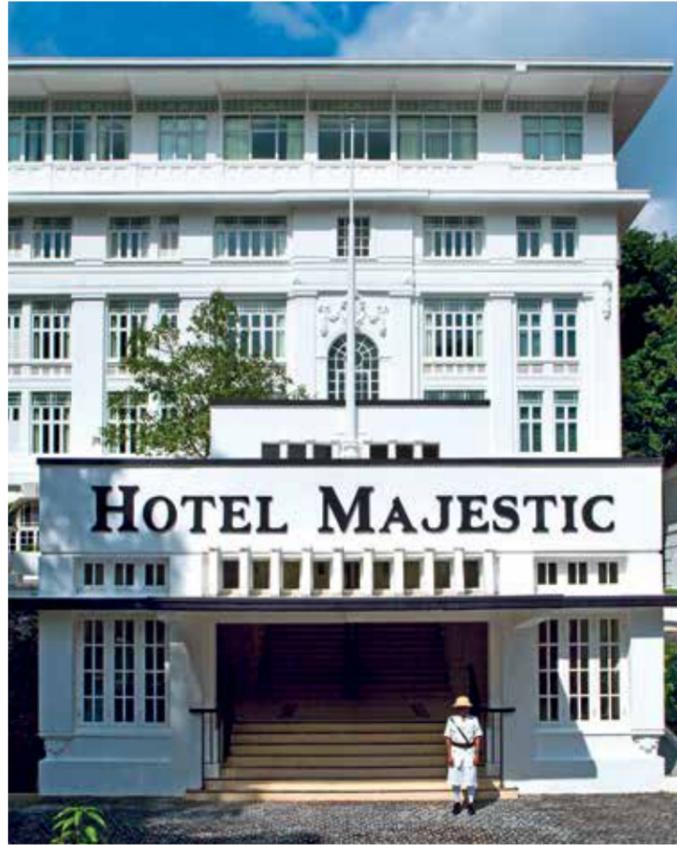
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THE RITZ-CARLTON  
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FULLY RESTORED TO ITS FORMER GLORY, THIS ELEGANT PROPERTY WHICH DATES BACK TO THE 1930S, IS AN ART DECO MONUMENT THAT BLENDS HISTORY WITH WORLD-CLASS HOSPITALITY. DINING OPTIONS INCLUDE HAINANESE FAVOURITES AT THE COLONIAL CAFÉ OR AN INTERACTIVE DINING EXPERIENCE AT CONTANGO, WHILE THE ROOMS ARE A BLEND OF CONTEMPORARY STYLE AND OLD WORLD ELEGANCE. WWW.MAJESTICKL.COM

REGARDED AS THE CRADLE OF MALAYSIAN HISTORY, EXPLORING MALACCA IS LIKE STEPPING BACK IN TIME, WHEN THE PORT-CITY USED TO WELCOME SPICE TRADERS, SULTANS AND WARRIORS FROM BYGONE DAYS. SOAK UP ALL THE MAGIC AT THE MAJESTIC MALACCA, ONE OF THE CITY'S FINEST HOTELS WHOSE STRUCTURE DATES BACK TO THE 1920S AND WHOSE INTERIORS ARE A REFLECTION OF THE CITY'S FINE PAST. WWW.MAJESTICMALACCA.COM

ENSCONCED WITHIN THIS REFRESHED AND STYLISH ALL-BUTLER HOTEL IS A CONTEMPORARY URBAN RETREAT WITH A LEGACY SPANNING 18 ILLUSTRIOUS YEARS. LOCATED IN KUALA LUMPUR'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE BUSINESS DISTRICT, THIS LUXURY HOTEL IS CONVENIENTLY PLACED FOR UPSCALE SHOPPING, DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT. IT ALSO BOASTS ITS OWN AWARD-WINNING SPA WHILE GOURMETS WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND BETTER CANTONESE CUISINE THAN AT LI YEN. THE AFTERNOON TEA EXPERIENCE IS ONE OF SHEER INDULGENCE. WWW.YTLHOTELS.COM

LOCATED RIGHT ALONG BUKIT BINTANG ROAD IN THE HEART OF KUALA LUMPUR, THE JW MARRIOTT IS IDEAL FOR ALL TRAVELLERS. FROM BUSY EXECUTIVES TO FAMILIES WISHING TO SOAK UP THE CITY'S SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND WORLD-CLASS SHOPPING, THIS WELL-PLACED HOTEL WITH ITS EXTENSIVE RANGE OF FACILITIES IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE PERFECT CHOICE. WWW.YTLHOTELS.COM

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HOTELS



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WWW.THEGLASSHOUSEHOTEL.CO.UK

**NV Niseko Village**  
*Always in Season*



THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE IS NISEKO VILLAGE'S MAIN PULSE WHERE PAVED INTIMATE WALKWAYS ARE FLANKED BY CONTEMPORARY SHOPPING AND DINING OUTLETS. JUST MINUTES AWAY FROM NISEKO VILLAGE'S AWARD-WINNING HOTELS AND RESIDENCES, THE VILLAGE OFFERS A VIBRANT EXPERIENCE AMIDST A SETTING INSPIRED BY TRADITIONAL MACHIYA ARCHITECTURE.  
WWW.NISEKO-VILLAGE.COM.

**KASARA**  
NISEKO VILLAGE  
TOWNHOUSE

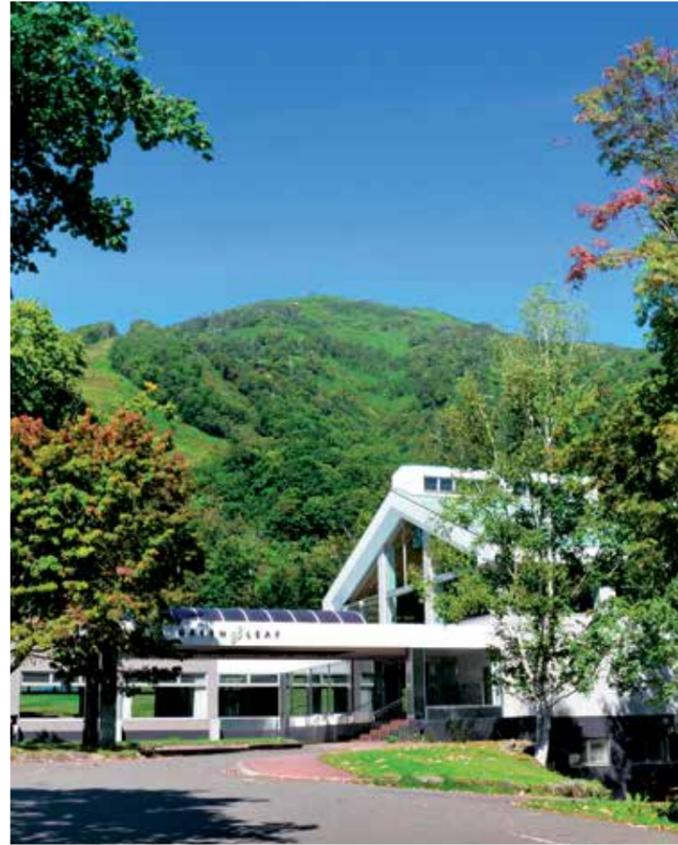


KASARA NISEKO VILLAGE TOWNHOUSE OCCUPIES A UNIQUE POSITION AT THE HEART OF NISEKO VILLAGE, WITH SKI RUNS AND LIFTS A MERE HEARTBEAT AWAY. EMBODYING AUTHENTIC JAPANESE CHARM WITH CONTEMPORARY ELEGANCE AND SENSITIVITY TOWARDS NATURE, THESE 3 BEDROOM DWELLINGS ARE AN ODE TO JAPAN'S HERITAGE TOWNHOUSES THAT WERE INHABITED BY CRAFTSMEN AND WEALTHY MERCHANTS TOWARD THE END OF THE EDO PERIOD.  
WWW.KASARA.COM



Set at the foot of Mount Niseko Annupuri, the Hilton Niseko Village offers year-round activities, from skiing during the winter season to a host of wholesome, family-friendly activities during summer. There are also two 18-hole championship golf courses, a tennis complex, an equestrian centre and a nature-based activity centre.  
[www.hiltonnisekovillage.jp](http://www.hiltonnisekovillage.jp)

THE  
GREEN *gb* LEAF  
Niseko Village



Located in the heart of Niseko Village in Hokkaido, Japan, this premium contemporary resort offers guests a convenient base to explore the countryside and the exciting summer activities at PURE. World-class shopping and dining are just steps away at the Village.  
[www.thegreenleafhotel.com](http://www.thegreenleafhotel.com)

THE SURIN  
PHUKET



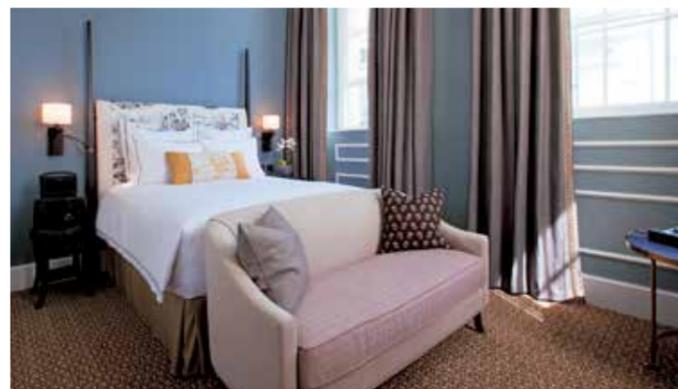
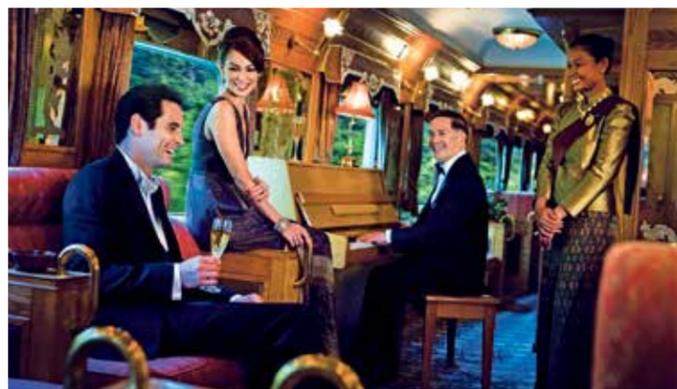
Situated on Pansea Beach, without doubt one of Phuket's loveliest and most private, The Surin offers a perfect slice of Thai beach life. Charming cottages and suites are all discreetly built into a carefully conserved landscape amidst coconut trees. From sumptuous cuisine to watersports, a world-class spa and spectacular sunsets, it combines idyllic tropical charm with all the warmth and grace of Thai hospitality.  
[www.thesurinphuket.com](http://www.thesurinphuket.com)



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SPA VILLAGE PANGKOR LAUT



SPA VILLAGE CAMERON HIGHLANDS



SPA VILLAGE MALACCA

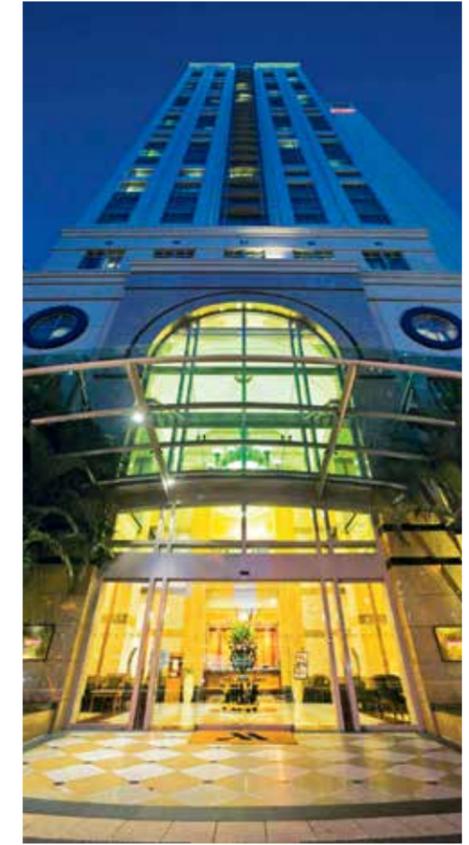
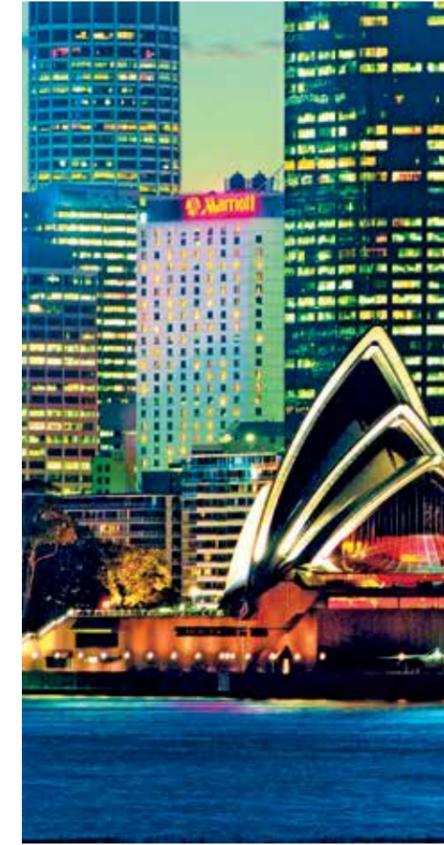
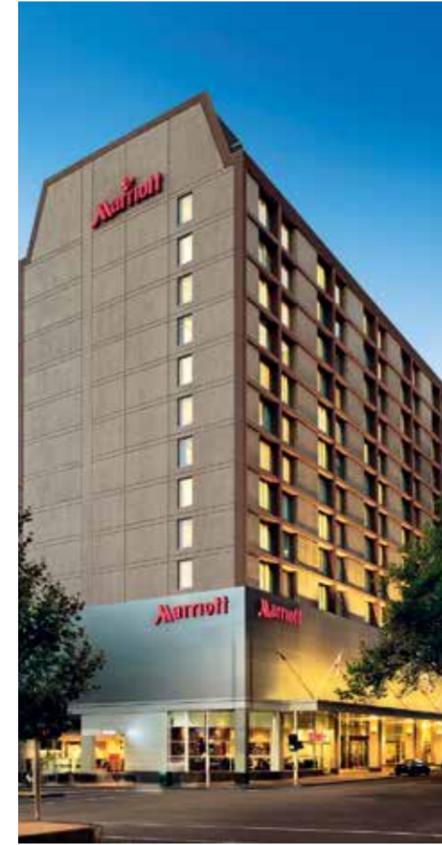


SPA VILLAGE GAYA ISLAND

A GLAMOROUS YET PRIVATE HIDEAWAY IN STUNNING SAINT TROPEZ, LIVING THE SOUTH OF FRANCE LIFESTYLE DOESN'T GET BETTER THAN AT THE MUSE SAINT TROPEZ. LOCATED IN RAMATUELLE AND SURROUNDED BY FORESTS OF UMBRELLA PINES, THIS BIJOU PROPERTY BOASTS JUST 15 SUITES, EACH NAMED AFTER FAMOUS 'MUSES'. MAKE IT YOUR BASE TO EXPLORE ALL THE SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND DELIGHTS OF THIS JEWEL OF THE RIVIERA.  
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WWW.STARHILLGALLERY.COM  
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WWW.MARRIOTT.COM

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