

YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

Life's A Beach
Phuket's Perfect Pansea

Gilding The Lily
Pre-Spa Rituals at YTL
Hotels' Spa Villages

All Shook! Up
Savouring Shook!
Shanghai

YTL People
Yuko Kamegawa
Justin Juhun
Lim Kok Yang

Blooming Beautiful • Orchid Inspirations • Prints Charming

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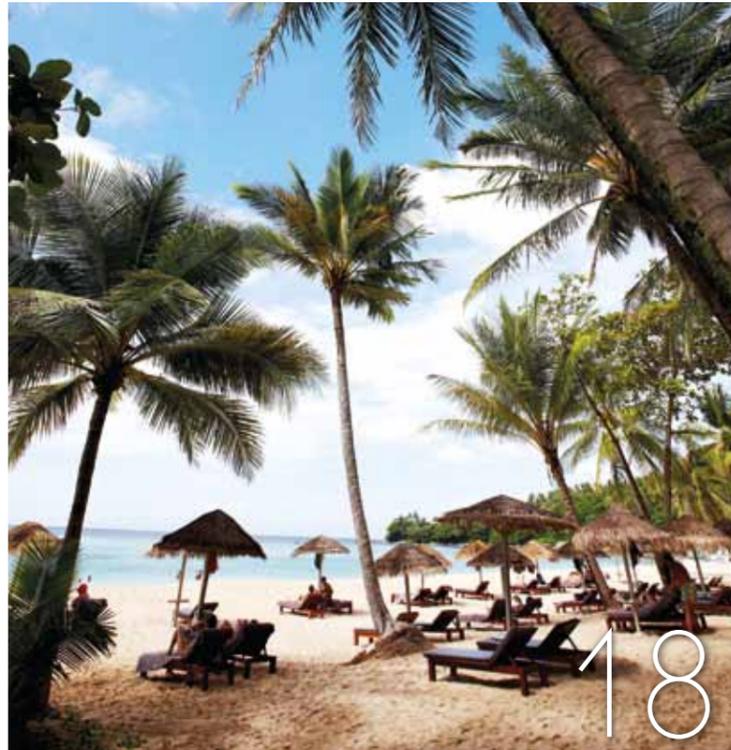
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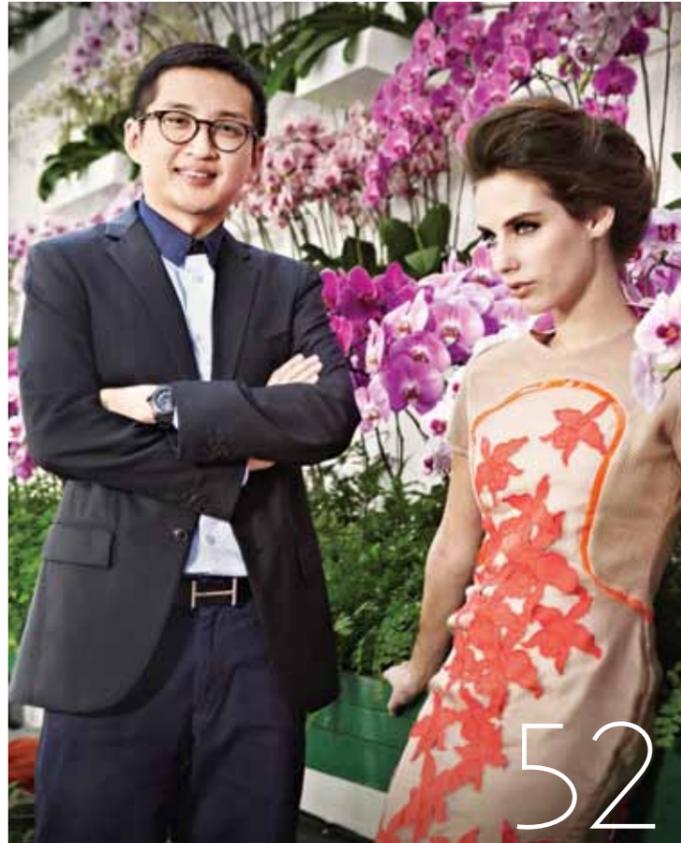
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EVOLUTION OF THE BR MILITARY WATCH

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THE
GREEN *gb* LEAF
 Niseko Village



PERFECT POWDER SKI HAVEN

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

— A YTL LUXURY HOTEL —

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GAYA ISLAND RESORT

DISTINCTIVELY BORNEO



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

It makes a strange noise.

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

Your moment awaits.

A YTL LUXURY RESORT

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YTL HOTELS

Treasured Places, Treasured Moments

A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



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

With The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur fully restored and reopened to its former glory, YTL Hotels is working on several exciting new projects in our quest to continuously delight our guests all over the world. We have recently formalised the acquisition of three hotels in Australia – in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane – and the group is also focusing on our new hotels in the United Kingdom. YTL Hotels has recently acquired and is the midst of redeveloping the Bath Hotel & Spa, a 99-room property in Gainsborough, in the heart of this historic city, famed for its Roman baths and heritage buildings. Once completed, it will be YTL Hotels' first luxury spa hotel in the UK which will comprise, among others, the Gainsborough Building and the Grade II-listed Abbey Church House.

On our cover this month is The Surin, our property in Phuket, Thailand, which recently reopened following a complete redesign by the world-famous Edward Tuttle. Located on Pansea Beach, which, to me, is one of the island's most private and beautiful patches of beach, I invite you to explore this sleek, modern hotel, whose beautiful design has just earned it membership in the prestigious Design Hotels association. Phuket is, currently, at the height of its peak season and offers picture-perfect cornflower blue skies set against aquamarine waters. If your schedule permits, do explore this new offering from YTL Hotels. In the meantime, we invite you to plan the rest of your 2013 travel plans around our international portfolio of properties, which range from Niseko in Hokkaido, Japan, to Gaya Island Resort, just off Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, to Tembok, Bali and, once the season opens, our Muse Hotel de Luxe in Saint-Tropez, France.

God bless and have a great year ahead.

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Healing Massage

Handed down for 4000 years, this healing massage reduces pain in tensed and stressed muscles, especially at the neck, shoulders and back areas. It restores the body's natural balance, leaving you feeling light and easy after the massage. Ideal for travellers and businessman.

60 minutes RM240 nett • 90 minutes RM360 nett • 120 minutes RM480 nett

HOT COMPRESS PACKAGE (2hours)

- Herbal Hot Compress
- Excellent Donna Massage
- Scalp Massage
- Served with Ginger Tea & Refreshment

Usual Price: RM530

PRICE: RM390

PROMOTION PACKAGE



FLOWER BATH PACKAGE (2hours)

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

Usual Price: RM580

PRICE: RM390

PROMOTION PACKAGE



SCRUB PACKAGE (2hours)

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

Usual Price: RM550

PRICE: RM390

PROMOTION PACKAGE



NECK & SHOULDER MASSAGE

- 40 minutes RM150 nett

FOOT MASSAGE

- 40 minutes RM120 nett
- 60 minutes RM150 nett

MANICURE

- 45 minutes RM90 nett

PEDICURE

- 45 minutes RM90 nett



* Best Exotic Spa Experience Award

(Harpers Bazaar 2012)

* Best Massage in Kuala Lumpur

(Time out Magazine 2010)

* Things to do in Kuala Lumpur

(Lonely Planet)



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Please contact: + 603-2142 4899 for more details and bookings. Address: S20 & S27, Pamper Level, Starhill Gallery, Kuala Lumpur. Website: www.donnaspa.net



A Majestic Rebirth

The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur reopens in a blaze of old world style and glamour.



For almost 30 years, the Majestic Hotel sat in silence along busy Jalan Sultan Hishammudin. Now, after an invigorating new breath of life, The Hotel Majestic Kuala Lumpur has reopened its doors as the capital's premier luxury hotel. Decorated in the Art Deco style of the 1930s, when the hotel was first opened, over a thousand specially-invited guests strolled through the glimmering hotel and into the Majestic Ballroom for its grand opening recently. In attendance was a who's who of Kuala Lumpur's high society, as





well as ambassadors, captains of industry and frequent guests of the hotel in its previous incarnation, all of whom dined from a distinctly Colonial-Hainanese menu that has remained unchanged from when the hotel was first opened. As the evening progressed, the guests had the special privilege of listening to Freddy Cole trill the ivories with his band and winding down the night as his dulcet voice serenaded them with some of his most famous songs, including *I'm Not My Brother, I'm Me, Pretend* and *I Love You*. An old-world glamour is back in Kuala Lumpur and it is, officially, here to stay.



1. Dato' Mark Yeoh. 2. Puan Sri Brigitte Yusuff & Thea Hamidah Rahman. 3. Dato' Yeoh Seok Kian, Datuk Lim Kong Wai, Dato' Sri Lim Huah Leong & Tan Sri James Foong. 4. Irene Tan & Jenny Tan. 5. Puan Sri Tong Siew Bee, Tan Sri Lim Wee-Chai & Yu-Chung Lo. 6. Jeremiah Tan Chien Yih, Puan Sri Sherina Aris & Hui Eng.



7. Datin Naimah Ayob & Dato' Azharuddin Abdul Rahman. 8. Dato' Jimmy Choo, Shawna Yap, Datuk Chean See Ooi, Dato' Yeoh Soo Min, Dato' Ir Robert Tan & TS Yap. 9. Tan Sri Rainer Althoff, Carol Gomez, Datin Shalini Ganendra & Dato' Ir Dr Dennis Ganendra. 10. Zat Coenraad & Henni Coenraad. 11. Dr Ednin Hamzah & Norchaya Talib. 12. Datin Shirley Teo & Dato' Ir Teo Chiang Kok. 13. Osman Morad & Nazi Morad. 14. Tan Sri Dr M Mahadevan & Dato' Thavalingam Thavarajah.



A FÊTE OF TIME

Ten days of Asia's grandest luxury watch and jewellery showcase, *A Journey Through Time VI – A Masterpiece of Creation*, at Starhill Gallery in Kuala Lumpur, culminated with the 'Watch of the Year Awards Presentation'. Renowned watchmakers and collectors from all across the world gathered at this glittering event to celebrate the best of haute horlogerie as they were treated to the finest cuisine, wine and entertainment in Starhill Gallery's Shook! Restaurant. It truly was a night to remember.



1. Datin Ng Lai Heng and Dato' Dr Ong Hong Peng.
2. Arianna Teoh, Nitin Goenka and Steffanie Chua.
3. Denis Asch and Dr Frank Müller.
4. Charmaine Low, Steve Clerici, Beatrice Huchthausen and Guillaume Tetu.
5. Dr Bernard Cheong and Dolly Cheong.
6. Steve Holtzman and Marc Rogivue.
7. Harry Lim, Andrea Fonseka and Paul Stadlin.
8. Nurain Mohidin and Zarah Murad.
9. Melvin Chong and David Keel.

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



01



02



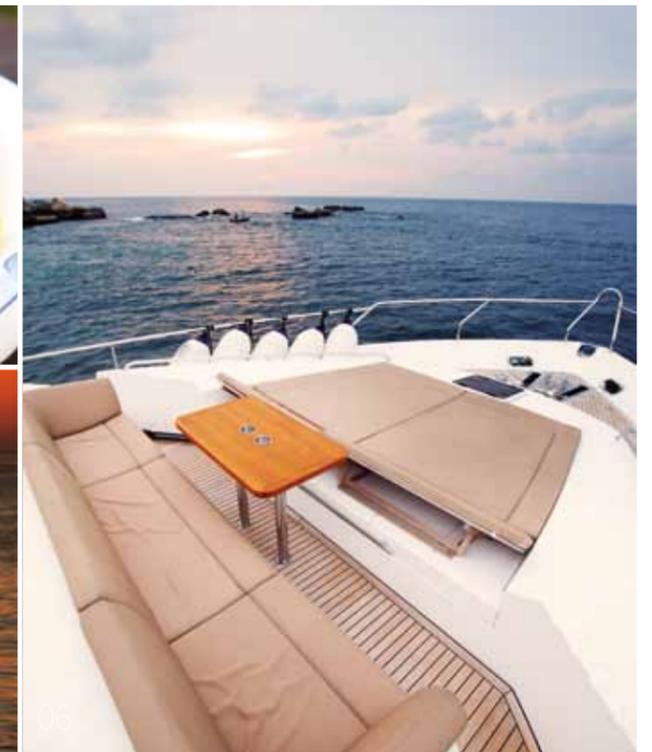
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04



05



06

01

Highland Sling

Staying at the **Cameron Highlands Resort** is all about enjoying highland life – rambling nature trails, cool misty air and all that the great outdoors has to offer, minus sweltering tropical heat. When night falls, things can get a little nippy. Our proposal? Prop up the **Highlands Bar** by nursing at least one of its signature **Strawberry Daiquiris** – a potent but tasty blend of rum, triple sec and the local highland berries of choice. At just RM30 a pop, it's a delicious way to end any day here.

02

Snow Fun

The **Hilton Niseko Village**, set at the foot of the majestic Mount Annupuri in Hokkaido, Japan, is the perfect place to indulge in the therapeutic pleasures of *onsen* (natural hot springs). Currently at the height of its peak winter season, the resort offers both indoor and outdoor *onsen*, whose sodium-rich water is said to be highly curative and a boon for joint pains. Some of the suites also boast of their own private dipping pools – a godsend for the bashful.

03

All In The Family

One of the central gathering spots in newly-relaunched **The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur** is its bar. A dark-panelled watering-hole adorned with mirrors and brass and with a gilded cupola to bask under, mosey on over to knock back colonial-era cocktails like *stengahs* or gin *pahits*, while listening to **The Solianos**, arguably Malaysia's most renowned musical family, who will entertain nightly as a quartet.

04

Nyonya Flavours

If you've fallen in love with the flavours of traditional Peranakan or Baba-Nyonya cuisine, make it a point to sign up for Chef Chia Kuan Pow's (more popularly known as Chef Poh) Nyonya cooking classes. With a maximum headcount of four, the classes are conducted at **The Majestic Malacca's** poolside and guests will learn easy methods (and Chef Poh's invaluable tips) in preparing classic favourites like *ayam pongteh* and prawn and pineapple curry.

05

Paddle Up

The waters off **Gaya Island Resort** in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, are a wonder to splash about in. Calm and collected, it's an ideal way to try out stand-up paddle surfing, a most popular activity among the resort's guests. The knee-deep waters are also tranquil – perfect for toddlers and children to join in the aquatic activities. For those who wish to explore a little deeper and further, loan one of the resort's kayaks for more water-centric fun.

06

Sail Away With Me

YTL Hotels' latest luxury offering is not on terra firma, but on the water. The new **Straits to Luxury Experience** is a private, unique and unabashedly indulgent 5D/4N nautical adventure aboard an 85ft luxury yacht. Beginning from **Pangkor Laut Resort**, a pampered party of up to eight guests will sail north, up the Straits of Malacca, to Phuket, stopping by islands like Ko Rok Nok, Ko Kai and Ko Phi Phi along the way. Available from now until April only. ■

For more information on YTL Hotels' events and promotions, go to www.ytlhotels.com

Fancy Panseã

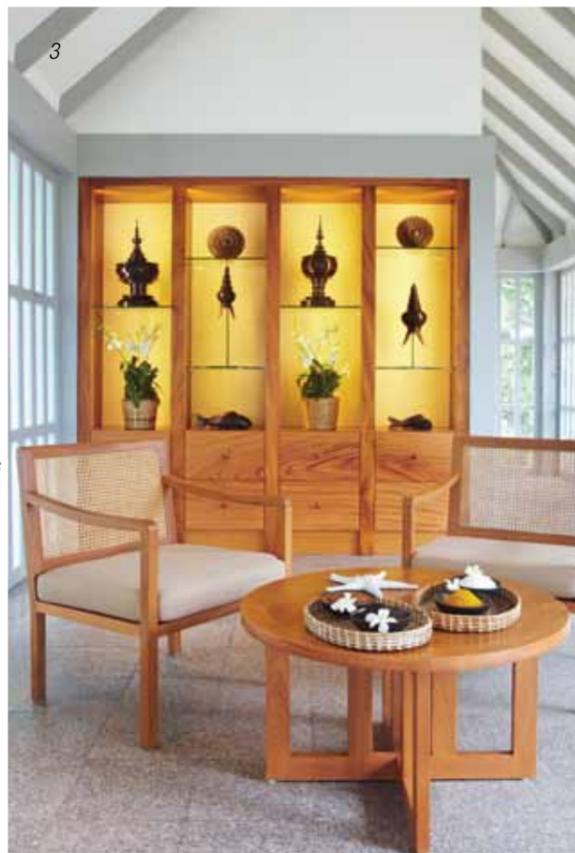
With only two resorts on this exclusive patch of Phuket beachfront, it's safe to say Pansea Beach is the island's most perfectly-placed (and formed) slice of tropical paradise. Now, with the opening of The Surin, the area looks set to score higher marks among the global jet-set than ever before.

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

Surrounded by coconut groves and fronted by the blue-green hues of the small but perfectly-formed Pansea Bay, The Surin, formerly known as The Chedi, recently emerged from an extensive rebranding and renovation exercise lovelier than before.

Located on Phuket's west coast and flanked by Bang Tao Bay to its north and Surin Beach to its south, The Surin sits prettily on Pansea Beach, a small but beautiful beach that is quite cut off from the rest of Phuket's heaving sands, due to its location, and remains an almost private playground for the guests of the area's two resorts. Named for the village in which it's located, whose name, in turn, is derived from the Hindu god Indra's Thai name, The Surin enjoys the cachet of being one of Phuket's two (the other is its neighbour – the celebrated Amanpuri) most luxurious hotels, both conveniently located side by side on the island's most exquisite and exclusive patch of beach.

Having emerged bright and beautiful from a recent THB300million refurbishment, The Surin



1. The Surin sits on Phuket's exclusive and exquisite Pansea Bay.
2. Restorative solutions from The Surin Spa.
3. A grey and white palette predominate the refurbished resort.
4. Local longtail boats will take you to dive sites off Phuket.



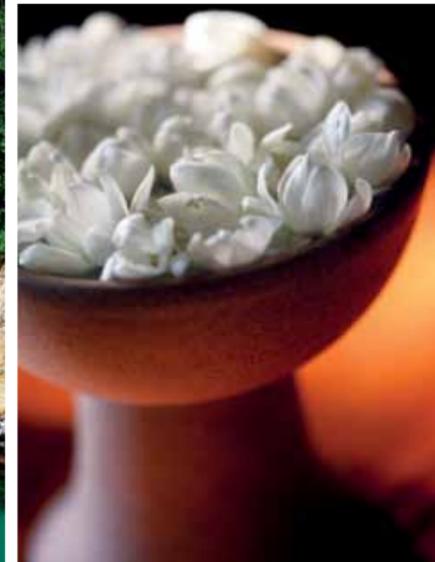
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6



7



5. Complimentary afternoon tea is served by the poolside on selected days. 6. One of Phuket's most luxurious hotels, The Surin has emerged even lovelier after its refurbishment. 7. Sumptuous Thai silks by Jim Thompson add a touch of luxe to The Surin's bedrooms. 8. Spend your day at The Surin soaking in the sun on the beach side hammock.

Thompson in beaten bronze and muted gold were used, adding a subtle touch of luxe. Tuttle also did away with certain walled areas, choosing, instead, to flood the entire resort with natural light, creating a luminosity that wasn't there before.

"If you've been to the previous resort, you would be able to notice the difference immediately," says Antonio Saponara, The Surin's General Manager. "But, at the same time, Ed wanted to maintain a certain integrity from The Chedi's previous design brief, which was to blend well with nature. After all, the property sits on a former coconut plantation and he wanted a resort that would look beautiful, as it gently slopes down from the coconut-studded hills into the golden sands of Pansea Beach." The end result is certainly spectacular. The Surin, with its slightly Caribbean-looking cottages and marvellous light-filled spaces, all centred around the spectacularly inviting black hexagonal swimming pool tiled with lustrous anthracite, is also connected by a series of elevated walkways, zigzagging in between the tree tops. "Ed has spent much of his life on Pansea Beach," continues Saponara, "so his special affection for the area is obvious and shows in his work. You could say, this bay is an extension of his home."

owes its sharp new look to the celebrated architect Edward Tuttle, the talent behind the Amanpuri as well as The Surin's former incarnation, The Chedi. The refurbishment, conducted over the space of a year in two separate phases, saw The Chedi's tropical island ID (think dark woods and thatched roofs) transformed into a sleek and modern look. For his new vision of The Surin, Tuttle drew from a predominantly grey and white palette, as well as a penchant of natural materials. Granite and stone were used extensively and, interestingly, for the roofs of The Surin's new cottage-like accommodation, cedar wood shingles coloured a pale slate grey, which makes it blend beautifully with the texture of the surrounding coconut tree trunks. For the main areas like the reception and the bed headboards, sumptuous Thai silks by Jim



8

"A small but beautiful beach that is quite cut-off from the rest of Phuket's heaving sands, due to its location, and remains an almost private playground for the guests."



9



10



11



12

A total of 103 beautifully-appointed cottages are scattered about the resort, each boasting its own private veranda and secluded sun deck. Not all rooms are created equal, however. Sun-worshippers, who desire to be as equally close to the beach as they are to the pool, should make it a point to book Room 105, a stunning and exceedingly well-placed beach studio suite.

The Surin also provides an interesting assortment of activities for the restless guest, including a shiny new Technogym-equipped fitness centre, two floodlit tennis courts and free scuba trials on selected days. On the beach, there are new catamarans, Hobie Cats as well as surf boards, ideal for the windsurfing season, which runs from mid-April to June. For those who prefer a calmer way of passing time, private yoga lessons may be arranged as well. For the culturally-inclined, excursions may be made to the nearby temple of Wat Manik in Choeng Talay as well as to the Gibbon Project, a rehabilitation and rescue centre for gibbons in Khao Phra Theaw National Park.

The waters off Phuket are also a marine enthusiast's dream and dive expeditions can be arranged by the resort. "The closest

dive site is Koh Wae,” shares Saponara, “and it’ll take you just 15 minutes by the local *ruea hangyao* (longtail) boats. It’s a rocky outcrop and offers a good chance to see things like turtles and rays. There are also two World War II airplanes that were sunk in the area a few years back to form an artificial reef. It’s now a popular secret dive spot among divers who know.”

Guests who prefer to stay on terra firma might prefer to spend their time on the island’s golf courses, which include the world-famous Blue Canyon Country Club and the Red Mountain Golf Club. “We are also in the midst of the super yacht season,” he adds, “and many of them like



13 The Bar at the Beach Restaurant.
14. The Surin Spa’s treatments are derived from traditional Thai and contemporary restorative approaches. 15. Colourful Phuket has something for everyone. 16. Lomtalay offers Thai cuisine as well as splendid views of the Andaman Sea.



14 coming to Pansea Bay, where they drop anchor and sometimes even check into the hotel in order to spend a few nights on land.” Saponara discreetly adds that Pansea Beach (and its two hotels) are also magnets for the global A-List and it’s not uncommon to bump into a bevy of big names, be it a Premier League footballer or a Muscovite oligarch.

There is a popular saying which admonishes us not to grow up too quickly, lest we forget how much pleasure the beach can afford. All I can say is, at The Surin and its bijou patch of perfect Pansea Beach, there’s little chance of that happening. Ever. ■



SAVOURING THE SURIN

One of the main highlights of visiting Thailand would be to sample its exotic, delicious cuisine. Guests of The Surin can, thankfully, indulge in a variety of exquisite meals without having to leave the property. Here are some tastes and textures to treat your palate to during your stay.

- If you’re looking for something thirst-quenching yet infused with local flavours, try the **Tomyum Iced Tea at The Beach Bar**. Flavoured with lemongrass, shredded Kaffir lime leaves and perked up with a squeeze of fresh lime, it’s the best way to cool down, Thai-style (barring a stubby of Singha, of course).
- Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, head to the poolside to indulge in **complimentary afternoon tea**. Nibble on tropical fruit, cakes and pastries as well as fresh-made *khanom krok* – a delicious Thai snack made with coconut cream, flour and assorted fillings like scallions, taro and carrot.
- It can get quite hot under the Siamese sun. Cool down with the resort’s assortment of **iced treats**. We can’t get enough of the sorbets, in flavours like lime, pineapple, passion fruit and pomelo Campari.
- If you’re not too familiar with the array of **exotic fruit** available in Thailand, start with your in-room fruit basket. Begin with the approachable charms of bananas and mangos, before moving on to *poodza*, an oval green fruit known locally as ‘Thai apples’ or jujubes, and *ma-prang*, sweet Marina plums.
- When the sun begins to set, head to The Beach Bar for sundowner cocktails, accompanied by a selection of its **evening tapas**. Available between 5pm and 10pm at just THB140 per plate, choose from *pow pia thod* (glass noodles and vegetable spring rolls served with plum sauce), potato and pea samosas with mint chutney, calamari with green curry mayonnaise, *mamuang ped yang* (roasted duck wraps with mango and hoisin sauce) and more.
- If you’re dining at the **Lomtalay restaurant**, do order the *haw mok thalay* – southern Thailand’s version of seafood soufflé. Delicious!
- When you’re digging your toes into the sand while watching the sun set, order The Surin’s popular **Sunsetini** – a blend of vodka, lemon and cranberry juice – or the **Surin Sling**, vodka with cranberry and strawberry liqueur.
- No visit to Thailand is quite complete without ending a meal with sinful but luscious **mango sticky rice** for dessert. Available at all The Surin’s dining outlets.

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Justin Juhun, resident naturalist at Gaya Island Resort, has big plans where nature is concerned.

Text Helen Oon

Justin Juhun is one of those rare human beings who is totally at one with the dark, mysterious jungles of Sabah. The resident naturalist at Gaya Island Resort, his affinity for the wilderness, he says, stems from the fact that he "was born with an instinct for nature", as he invites me on his nature walk. As a city slicker from the 'wilds' of Surrey in England, whose idea of 'jungle trekking' is a stroll in the many manicured gardens of England, it is a daunting offer.

Although it is the rainy season, it has been dry since I arrived in Gaya Island Resort, off the coast of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. We start the jungle trek through a flight of steps roughly hewn into the clay soil, leaving the comfort of the resort behind for the green domain of the forest. The morning sun streams through chinks in the verdant



rainforest, casting dappled lights on spiky rattan plants and giant ferns, while giving life to saplings on the damp forest floor as they struggle to reach the sunlight. Liana vines curl and twist like angry serpents over their captured victims, clinging on to trees in loops and spirals connecting the rainforest trees, like suspension bridges helping arboreal animals to travel through the forest without touching the ground.

Justin explains that the intricate ecosystem of the forest, where each and every living thing in the jungle has a purpose, is interdependently connected like a jigsaw puzzle. Termite mounds cluster around big trees as supports, some peppered with holes – tell-tale signs that anteaters have raided the nests. Out of the corner of his eye, he spots a sudden movement: it is a brown lizard clinging on to a tree and camouflaged against the dark bark, while, further down the track, we spot a green lizard blending perfectly with the surrounds.

The lizards may be safely camouflaged against predators but they cannot escape the sharp eyes of a veteran junglewallah like Justin. Nurtured by his father, who has a

keen interest in rescuing injured wildlife or abandoned wild pets, Justin developed a strong passion for nature at a very young age and taught himself the ways of the forest and sharpened his observation of the jungle denizens and their habitats. He chose a career path in the hospitality industry, which gave him the opportunity to venture into conservation. His first foray came in 1996 when he worked on an orang utan rehabilitation programme, educating the public on the plight of the highly-endangered species and their habitats, which are threatened by deforestation for development and palm oil plantations. He has since been involved with reforestation projects, wildlife rescue and husbandry and mangrove studies.

Justin joined Gaya Island Resort when opened its doors in July 2012. Being the resident naturalist is a dream job for him as he is given full freedom to draw up guidelines and implement a nature agenda as part of YTL Hotels' Pure Activities in Nature, a set of

programmes to immerse guests in the cultural heritage and natural environment of the region through a journey of four activity paths named Discovery, Vigour, Creativity and Balance. The Guided Nature Walks fall under the Discovery section, where Justin conducts educational nature walks for in-house guests on a botanical and wildlife journey in the forest reserve which embraces the hills around the resort, forming a spectacular emerald backdrop teeming with exotic wildlife and plants endemic to the region.

The walks are tailored to levels of fitness and age groups, and vary in distance and physical challenges. Justin's enthusiasm and in-depth knowledge of the forest is enthralling as he points out various names of plants and their uses. For those lucky enough to chance upon some animals or birds on these walks, Justin will impart his knowledge on their names, characteristics and natural habitats. "My nature trails are intended to educate the guests and let them discover the wonders of the rainforest and provide close encounter with the beauty of Gaya Island's flora and fauna, and to indirectly influence them to appreciate the importance of conservation," he says. Even on my own stroll around the resort, I spotted a few monitor lizards basking lazily in the sun, while birds with colourful plumage fleet among the trees, belting out sweet melodies. One moonlit night, after my barbeque dinner on the beach, the resident wild boar, affectionately called Timmy by the staff, makes an appearance, hoping to be fed a morsel or two.

Justin has big plans for Gaya Island Resort. YTL Hotels' mission statement

"My aim is to own my own flora and fauna conservation entity one day, by reclaiming the degraded forest in Sabah and bring it back to life through reforestation and reintroduction of wildlife."



has always been to give back to the community wherever it sets up a resort, while preserving as much of the natural environment as possible. Justin says: "I am working on a Seven Wonders of Nature project to identify wildlife species, gather statistics, provide training for the junior naturalists, educate the resort staff and planning the whole conservation efforts and undertaking proboscis monkey studies." The Seven Wonders of Nature are exciting future plans for the resort, and will include a nocturnal walk to observe creatures of the night, as well as a firefly twilight walk to witness thousands of fireflies lighting up



the forest trees. There are also plans to set up a butterfly park by planting indigenous trees to attract butterflies, encouraging flying squirrels to inhabit certain trees in the jungle by installing nest boxes on them, and creating a sanctuary for injured or confiscated birds of prey.

Also, much to his delight, Justin discovered a large group of proboscis monkeys living deep in the forests of Gaya Island. He intends to build a wooden platform near their habitat, where guests can observe the monkeys. All these plans, including a marine conservation project, are subject to approval by the Sabah Wildlife Department. As Gaya Island Resort forms part of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, which falls under the auspices of the Wildlife Department, YTL Hotels sees a need to contribute to the conservation of its forests, wildlife and marine ecology. Surveying the beauty of Gaya Island around him, Justin contemplates: "My aim is to own my own flora and fauna conservation entity one day, by reclaiming the degraded forest in Sabah and bring it back to life through reforestation and reintroduction of wildlife." From his track record so far, he is on the right path to being an eco-warrior extraordinaire. ■

My Harp's Delights

Harpist Yuko Kamegawa delights listeners at The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur with her effortlessly elegant way of making music.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Yong Keen Keong** Art Direction **Yvonne Low** Hair & Makeup **Yasmine Sek**

The sound of a harp is very special," shares Yuko Kamegawa, The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur's resident harpist. A fixture in the hotel's elegant Lobby Lounge, Kamegawa's music can be heard regularly, delighting guests as they take afternoon tea or nurse a few well-crafted drinks from the bar. A native of Kobe, the Japanese Kamegawa has lived in Malaysia for a decade already and has spent much of her time playing at various YTL properties, beginning with the JW Marriott and before moving on to The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur.

Displaying an innate talent for music, Kamegawa started learning the piano at the age of two – an age when most children can barely toddle around, let alone make music. "I loved the piano but I also had my heart set on learning the harp. It was tough finding a teacher where I lived, but my parents eventually succeeded, so I began lessons while in junior high school."

Playing from Tuesdays to Saturdays at The Ritz, Kamegawa is a delight to listen to, as she gently works her fingers over her Aoyama harp, a beautiful instrument crafted by Japan's only harp factory, founded in 1897 by Jitaro Aoyama. "It's not the most well-known brand," volunteers Kamegawa, "but it's a great favourite amongst musicians."

Kamegawa's repertoire is extensive, ranging from classical to semi-classical music as well as songs she composes herself. "I love music that has the ability to heal and soothe, and

I have managed to compose quite a few, several of which I play regularly at the Lobby Lounge. I also play by ear quite a lot as harp scores aren't the easiest things to come by. I also normally observe the crowd at the Lounge before playing as it gives me a better idea of what the audience might enjoy. But, as a rule, I like classical music during the afternoon and lighter, more popular songs after 5pm." Formerly with The Ritz-Carlton, Osaka, Kamegawa had initially come to Malaysia on holiday but ended up falling in love with the country and staying on. Sharing that she recently got married to a Malaysian last year, she adds, smiling: "This is my home now."

"I've been playing the harp since I was 13 years old," she continues in her soft voice. "It really is a difficult instrument to learn, let alone master. It is a skill which you constantly need to practise. But my mother did point out that, ever since young, I loved two things especially – music and fairytales. It's lovely now, doing what I do; it's like a fulfilment of both." ■

"My mother once said I've always loved two things in life – music and fairytales. With the harp and doing what I do now, it's like a fulfilment of both."

YUKO'S PLAYLIST

- *La Source*, Hasselmans
- *Passacaglia*, Handel
- *Rhapsodie Toumier-Feerie*, Grandjany
- *Sonates*, Naderman
- *Moon River*
- *What A Wonderful World*
- *Unchained Melody*
- Anything by the Canadian composer and musician, Andre Gagnon

Southern Comfort

The winner of television's first US Masterchef programme, Mississippi-based culinary prodigy Whitney Miller visits Lot 10's Hutong in Kuala Lumpur for a taste of Malaysian street food.

Text



In the culinary industry, Miller also finds time for motivational speaking. Having authored *Modern Hospitality: Simple Recipes with Southern Charm*, with a foreword by Gordon Ramsay, she's currently working on her second cookbook, while travelling the world and spreading the good food gospel to her ever-increasing base of fans and viewers. *YTL Life* meets the talented chef during her walkabout of Lot 10's street food haven, Hutong.

What would you consider to be your signature dish?

I'd have to say it would be my seafood dishes. It's hard to pick just one but, if I had to, it would be my shrimp and grits.

Most memorable meal to date?

It would be the Sunday lunches at my great-grandmother's house, where most of my family and I would gather for a huge spread that could include anything from seafood gumbo to roast, rice, gravy and biscuits.

What makes a meal memorable?

I always say that, if you put love into your cooking, the end result will always taste great.

Favourite kitchen tools?

I love my knife collection. I have many knives that have been given to me as gifts!

What about ingredients?

I use fresh garlic, good quality extra virgin olive oil and sea salt on a regular basis.

When did you realise cooking was a passion?

I've loved cooking ever since I was a little girl, since I was able to walk properly, helping my mum out in the kitchen. I loved watching her cook and always wanted to help. I also vividly remember helping my great-grandmother make her famous biscuits from the time I was seven years old.

Who do you think are the great innovators of modern-day cuisine?

One person I think who represents southern US food in a unique and creative way would be Hugh Acheson.

What's your idea of comfort food?

Simple, flavourful food is comfort food. It can be a simple bowl of tomato soup, a grilled cheese sandwich or even chicken curry and *naan*!

It's not every day you hear of a 20-something being inspired by her 97-year-old great-grandmother, but that's exactly what kick-started television chef and personality Whitney Miller's passion for the culinary arts. Having won the inaugural *US Masterchef* show, where she was also its youngest contestant, she went on to earn a degree, with an emphasis in nutrition, from the University of Southern Mississippi. Now a regular jet-setting chef, travelling the world for food shows and cooking demonstrations alongside celebrity chefs like Paula Deen and Guy Fieri, the southern United States-born beauty has showcased her skill and talent in cities as diverse as Cape Town, Shenzhen and, most recently, Kuala Lumpur. Often cited as a great inspiration for children and youth to discover the wonders of gastronomy and potential careers



Chef Whitney Miller samples a small portion of Malaysian street food's dazzling variety during her visit to Lot 10's Hutong.



Where are your favourite street food cities, though?

If in the United States, I'd go to New York, where its food trucks are really popular. My favourite is the Wafels and Dinges food truck, where I'd always order the 'de-throwdown' waffle, which is a Brussels waffle with Spekuloos spread, whipped cream and powdered sugar sprinkles on top.

What's your take, so far, on Asian street food?

I love it, particularly the noodle dishes! The flavours are just so bold and I love the spiciness of it all.

What's your impression of Lot 10's Hutong, now that you're seeing it in the flesh?

I have to say 'wow'. I was a bit overwhelmed with the selection of all the food – but in a good way. I enjoyed the sheer variety of the food on offer and it was all available in a convenient and fun location. I loved reading the signs on the various eateries that detail their origins and told their stories. The history of food interests me a lot.

What have you tried so far?

I really enjoyed the prawn noodles and *satay*. I was also told, after sampling so many dishes from the eateries at Lot 10 Hutong,

that I'd only tasted about five per cent of Malaysia's cuisine. I was like, 'What? Wow!'. I do agree that if you want to sample the best variety of Malaysia's flavourful street food on offer, go to Lot 10's Hutong!

What will you take away from your Hutong experience?

Possibly the various cooking methods I've seen. I'll try and use some of them in my own kitchen. I have to tell you I was really intrigued by the charcoal cooking.

Did you get to try durian?

I did but I can't say it's on the list of foods I'd ever want to eat again. It was the smell that made it so difficult for me to distinguish the fruit's taste!

If you could take one of the stalls back to the United States, which one would you pick?

I'd take them all back because I'd love to be able to share my experience with my friends and family. I know the shaved ice stall would be really popular where I live because we have something similar on offer. It's hot and humid in southern United States and we cool off with shaved ice as well, but without all the different flavours and toppings like I sampled at Hutong. ❏

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Borneo



SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI
Bali, Indonesia



TANJONG JARA RESORT
Malaysia



THE GREEN LEAF NISEKO VILLAGE
Hokkaido, Japan

Saint-Tropez ♦ Niseko Village ♦ Shanghai ♦ Pangkor Laut ♦ Tanjong Jara ♦ Bali ♦ Phuket ♦ Borneo

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A diver surrounded by butterfly fish; One of the many different species of fish living in the waters off Bali.



In Another World

A geological quirk offers divers some of the richest sites around Bali. Dip into a fascinating and, sometimes, bizarre world, where transparent eels and the quirky sunfish known as the *mola-mola* reside.

Text & Photography **Simon Pridmore**

When you sail off into the sunset in an outrigger sailboat from the shores of the Spa Village Resort in Tembok, Bali, on the island's north-east, you are cruising over waters that lie on the cusp of geological and biological change. In the past, at times of low sea levels, this coastline marked the very tip of a massive Eurasian Continent, and you could have walked all the way from Bali to Paris without getting your feet wet.

However, even when the world's oceans were at their lowest, the depth of the chasm between Bali and Lombok, the next island

in the chain, meant you could never have gone any further east without harnessing wind or mechanical power.

Wallace's Genius

In the 19th century, the great naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace spent time on the islands of what is now Indonesia and remarked how different the species of bird and animal living in the west of the archipelago were from those that inhabited the east. His findings led him to draw a line on a chart that ran through the Makassar Straits between Borneo and Sulawesi, crossed the Banda Sea and continued down through the straits between Bali and Lombok. To the west of the line, in Bali, Borneo and beyond, animal and bird life was predominantly Asian. On the other side, in Lombok, Sulawesi and further east, the animals and birds were strikingly different, mainly species that originated in or resembled those found in New Guinea and Australia. Brilliantly, he deduced that the reason was geological rather than biological: "I believe the western part to be a separated portion of continental Asia, the eastern the fragmentary prolongation of a former Pacific continent." Of course, we now know that he was absolutely right.

During his trip, Wallace also came up with the notion that natural selection was the driving force behind evolution. At the same time, Charles Darwin was on the *Beagle*, sailing the seas on the other side of the Pacific and drawing similar conclusions. But that is an entirely different story.

A Very, Very Big River

What Wallace could not know – something, in fact, that no-one noted until almost 100 years later – was that one of the factors preventing species crossing Wallace's Line was an enormous body of moving water. Fossil and historical records show that elephants, orangutans, bears, tigers and other Asian mammals never managed to bridge the gap, getting only as far as Borneo and Bali. Even those that tried to swim over, or were caught on driftwood after a flood, faltered, as anything that enters the water on one side of the line is swept far away from land long before it can reach the other.

In the Pacific Ocean to the north-east of the Indonesian archipelago, the sea level is about 20cm above average. In the



Clockwise, from top: A Moray eel peering out of its nest; A fisherman going out to sea in the local jukung; Bright schools of fish seeking sanctuary in coral; Fishing off the coast of Kuta in Lombok.



Indian Ocean to the south, the sea level is 10cm below average. This 30cm drop between the oceans creates water movement on a massive scale, a phenomenon known as the Indonesian Throughflow or Pacific-Indian Throughflow. The most direct path between the oceans and the one taken by a large portion of the Throughflow, as you may have guessed, runs right along the Wallace Line between Borneo and Sulawesi and then down through the straits between Bali and Lombok.

Visualise it as a very, very big river pouring through a canyon between continents. Ocean current flows are measured in units called sverdrups, with one unit the equivalent of one million cubic metres of water moving past a given point per second. The flow of the Amazon is about half a sverdrup, while the combined flow of all the rivers in the world is double that; the section of the Indonesian Throughflow that courses past the eastern tip of Bali is estimated to be 2.6 sverdrups – two and a half times the total of the world's rivers!

Creatures Great and Small

Thus, a vast amount of water is drawn from the Pacific Ocean and sweeps through tropical seas, across the equator and past the

islands of northern Indonesia. As it travels, it picks up an enormous quantity of marine larvae, eggs and juveniles, and deposits them wherever it encounters land. It is no surprise that most of the legendary Indonesian scuba diving destinations lie along the route taken by the Throughflow. The calm bays of black volcanic sand in the area around Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, for example, are astonishingly rich in rare species. Enterprising dive operators need only sink a stripped motorcycle frame or a dozen broken bottles set in a block of concrete and they soon become a gathering point for small fry seeking sanctuary. These tiny fish attract predators such as frogfish, lionfish, scorpion fish, eels, and other rare and fascinating creatures and they, in turn, attract scuba divers and snorkellers.

Dive guides who work in the area often report larger sightings too, such as dugongs and a host of cetaceans. There are sightings of bizarre and highly-unusual marine life: last year, an amateur diver captured a long and entirely transparent eel on video, which is now a YouTube sensation.

Diving the Throughflow

Beyond the calm water of the bays, the Throughflow provides dramatic drift diving along unusual seascapes. Towering barrel sponges lean at 45° angles, as if in the presence of a powerful wind, and, in places, pinnacles and walls are scoured of their usual natural coating. But, in the valleys and other places where the topography provides a little shelter from the onslaught of the current, the enormous profusion of corals and fish life can take your breath away. In one bay, for example, just a few metres from the lines of colourful fishing boats that decorate the beach, you can find hectares upon hectares of multi-coloured staghorn coral, as glorious a sight as any of Bali's rice field terraces. Drifting over these fields of pointed sculpture in pastel shades, populated by clouds of damselfish which rise and fall as you pass, is a true magic carpet ride.

Cool Water

The Throughflow passes by the south-east coast of Bali too and, close to the village of Candidasa, a series of small islands, some not much more than jagged shards, are home to some of Bali's richest dives. Schools of jacks, rainbow runners and barracuda use the dramatic rock formations for shelter from the current and reef sharks circle around, watching for weakness and waiting to strike.

Further south, attempting to block the southern end of the Lombok Straits like an ill-fitting plug, is Nusa Penida, the exposed part of an undersea ridge that connects Bali with Lombok. The Throughflow races by on both sides of this island, offering healthy coral, lots of big animal sightings and exhilarating drifts. Sometimes, however, the ride can be a little too wild and

“Beyond the calm water of the bays, the Throughflow provides dramatic drift diving along unusual seascapes. Towering barrel sponges lean at 45° angles.”

conditions can change rapidly and vary dramatically. One day, you will drop in on a site and be entertained by a dozen manta rays which sweep in from the deep to feed on plankton in calm, bottle green water. On another, the same site will be empty of fish, and the ocean will merely throw you around in a soup of spume and spit you out into the southern ocean on a fast ride to the horizon.

Seasons have an effect on the speed of the Throughflow, with August, when the south-east monsoon is at its zenith, usually the strongest month. This also coincides with *mola-mola* (oceanic sunfish) season around Nusa Penida. The arrival of these bizarre creatures may be linked to the increased strength of the current, but this time of year also sees an upwelling of colder water in the south of the Lombok Straits and that may be significant too. The reliability of *mola-mola* sightings during this period has created a small boom in the local diving industry. Be warned, however, if you are thinking of joining the crowds: water temperatures can drop to the high teens; but, when you are face to face with an oceanic sunfish measuring four metres from tip to tail, you will probably not even notice! ■



HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE THROUGHFLOW

The wonderful folk at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali can always arrange a sunrise or sunset cruise on an outrigger sailboat and, especially in the mornings, you may also spot dolphins. Snorkelling equipment is available at the resort and a guide map on the beachfront shows you where the action is and gives you some tips and tricks on how to snorkel skilfully and safely. If you are a certified scuba diver, the resort can arrange for guided dive tours anywhere along the coast.



Clockwise, from left: The *mola-mola* season around Nusa Penida attracts a large number of divers; A lionfish, one of the many denizens of the waters around Bali and Lombok; Mount Agung towering over Bali island.

Inspired by Art and Nature

Designer Alexandra Champalimaud and artist Emi Shiratori explain how they were inspired in the creative redesign of the Green Leaf Niseko Village.

Text **Catherine Shaw**

Niseko's spectacular scenery, record-breaking snow and a clutch of new stylish hotels have transformed the tiny alpine village in Hokkaido, Japan's premier ski destination. Leading the style setters is the Green Leaf Niseko Village, an award-winning contemporary ski lodge that boasts one of the most convenient ski in and out locations in Niseko – as well as 200 chic rooms, a sleek bar and lounge, therapeutic spa, traditional *onsen*, as well as world-class ski and dining facilities.

The new look for the popular 200-room hotel was unveiled in 2010 and is courtesy of the renowned New York-based Champalimaud Design, whose stellar reputation for creating distinctive classic interiors with a modern edge comes from its creative work on some of the world's leading hotels, including

The Berkeley and The Dorchester in London, The Carlyle in Manhattan and the Bavarian Inn & Chalets in Taos, New Mexico. The firm recently completed the renovation of the Hotel Bel-Air in Los Angeles and is currently renovating the Waldorf Astoria New York and Le Richemond in Geneva. Last year, the firm's President and Principal Designer, Alexandra Champalimaud was inducted into the Interior Design Hall of Fame, while her work for the Bel-Air also won the International Hotel Award for Best Interior. Born and raised in Lisbon, and with a degree in the decorative arts from the prestigious Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva Foundation, Champalimaud also won the International Property Awards' Best Luxury Hotel Design – Japan for her creative redesign of the Green Leaf Niseko Village in 2011.

“Each room is akin to a viewing platform, looking out onto the birch and conifer forests in the foreground and a snow-capped Yotei in the background.”

She says that maximising the Green Leaf’s unique setting, with its spectacular views of Mount Yotei, was core to the successful design concept. “Working within the site and structure was very important to allow us to interpret the hotel’s unique qualities and to create a modern social space that would be the ideal experience for its global clientele.” In an inspired move, the designer turned to local artist Emi Shiratori to create a series of unique art installations in high-profile spaces within the hotel. “I was displaying some of my work inside the nearby Hilton Niseko Village Hotel,” recalls the artist. “The designer saw my work and gave me this amazing opportunity to work on-site, creating special paintings for specific parts of the hotel. It was the first time I had ever done anything like this, so it was a very exciting experience.”

Shiratori’s quirky yet elegant, organic aesthetic worked perfectly with the hotel’s new look, a blend of classical European alpine style with an intriguing mix of modern whimsical touches. For example, at the heart of the hotel’s distinctive contemporary new look is the hip Tomioka White lobby lounge, which draws a glamorous crowd, thanks to its welcoming vibe, cosy leather sofas, signature fireplace and a bar serving innovative cocktails, saké and

fine wines. Here, the artist has created a 14m hand-painted mural at the entrance, depicting the forest and animals of Niseko. “I paint freehand so I feel it is an artwork with a live touch,” explains Shiratori. “Working freely within a hotel means creative decisions sometimes had to be made on the spot to suit a particular space, but I found that challenge really stimulated my creativity and imagination. Working on a large wall as part of a room used by guests is completely different to creating a painting in a studio; the inspiration comes differently.”

“We like it when art is melded into the interior design and not simply framed images hung on a wall,” says Champalimaud. “What is so exciting about the art at Green Leaf is that the actual building – walls, doors, ski lockers – becomes the canvas for the artist to express her vision while creating a dynamic additive layer to the interior design.” Shiratori, who draws her artistic inspiration from “meeting with new things, particularly good music, a mountain and a seascape of morning glow”, was born in 1979 in Sapporo. A talented graphic designer and illustrator, she is well-known for her vivid hand-drawn organic shapes and lines. Currently based in Hokkaido, she works on a wide variety of projects, including projects related to music, weddings and even regional development. She also teaches at the Hokkaido Art and Design College.

Shiratori’s bold, undeniably Japanese graphics also feature in the hotel’s spa, which was named one of the 40 Best New Spas in The World by *Condé Nast Traveler*. The locally-famous Higashiyama *onsen*, or hot spring, and a dedicated manicure and pedicure studio offers therapeutic care for all ages. To reflect its



2. Rooms in the Green Leaf Niseko Village look out to the birch and conifer forest.
3. Celebrated designer Alexandra Champalimaud.
4. The warm-coloured walls give the bathrooms a cosy feeling.
5. Animal graphics help guests identify their rooms.



6



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6. Shiratori was excited by the fact that the entire hotel became her canvas. 7. Tomioka White lobby lounge. 8. Art blends gracefully with hospitality. 9. Local artist Emi Shiratori created a series of unique artworks within the hotel.



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natural and serene ambience, Shiratori created an illustration based on a swan and a fish diving into deep waters. "It was based on a digital sketch and we had to bring in specially-made cutting sheets, but the result is just as I pictured it," she says. "I feel very strongly that the island of Hokkaido is particularly comfortable with nature. We are living, and feeling unconsciously, the power from childhood. There is flow and circulation in nature, even if it is not visible. When I first realised this, I understood that I am also part of the flow and, so, when guests see my work, I have helped nature flow in a small way."

"We wanted to work in different creative ways, like adding Shiratori's unique artworks to create a modern social space that attracts a youthful and global clientele," explains Champalimaud. The artwork blends perfectly with the lobby bar's Scandinavian-inspired cantilevered fireplace, flanked by eccentric white ceramic light sconces moulded from deer antlers – each lit, playfully, at the tip. A zinc-covered bar and 200 sq ft hand-painted Fromental wall covering from France, sourced by Champalimaud, provide further strong design statements in the lounge, while cowhide armchairs, deep Chesterfield sofas and reclaimed old growth walnut coffee tables make the space ideal for post-ski relaxation.

Half the hotel's spacious rooms enjoy close views of Mount Yotei. Champalimaud said: "Each room is akin to a viewing platform, looking out onto the birch and conifer forest in the foreground and a snow-capped Yotei in



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the background. It's a spectacular intimate view." Here, Shiratori has decorated guestroom doors and key holders (and ski-lockers) with delicate images of animals indigenous to Hokkaido. "There are so many places inside the hotel, so I wanted the animal graphic to help guests identify their own rooms," she explains.

Champalimaud's guestroom design also took artistic inspiration from over 190 stunning original prints by acclaimed Japanese artist Soichiro Tomioka that feature prominently in most rooms. The overall result is an elegant and rustic aesthetic, manifesting signature Champalimaud touches, such as large cuts of live-edge teak and walnut, and rich, warm fabrics, which play nicely with classic modern furniture like Herman Miller shell chairs. "I like to design spaces that are well proportioned, beautifully detailed, layered, open, fluid and easy on the eye," says Champalimaud. "I use iconic art, creative sculpture and the exceptional pieces of furniture as anchors to my expression of style. Taken together, these elements create memorable spaces that are seemingly effortlessly, places in which people simply want to be." ■

The mountain-lodge style (noted as one of the Best New Hotels by Travel & Leisure and one of the top 41 Places To Go by The New York Times) remains open for the winter season until the end of March 2013.

GETTING THERE

The nearest airport to Niseko is the New Chitose Airport with direct flights between most major domestic and international airports. The flight from Tokyo (Haneda) is around 90 minutes. Niseko is about two hours by car and 3½ hours by train from New Chitose Airport.

GETTING AROUND

A regular hotel shuttle service enables easy access to neighbouring ski areas, *onsen* and dining establishments. The Niseko United Shuttle conveniently links each of the four ski resorts and is free to holders of the Niseko All Mountain Pass.

USEFUL LINKS

Niseko Town Official Website:
www.town.niseko.hokkaido.jp
 Hilton Niseko Village:
www.niseko-village.com
 Green Leaf Hotel:
www.thegreenleafhotel.com



Yuletide Homicide

Nothing makes for more fun than solving a murder mystery over your traditional Christmas celebration.

Text Flavia Galeotti Photography Yong Keen Keong



It was an uncharacteristically warm weekend in Cameron Highlands. Hotel guests lolled around in the Jim Thompson Tea Room of the Cameron Highlands over tea trays brimming with confections and sweetmeats, while a curious group of 46 invited guests – an eclectic assortment of editors, up-and-coming local celebrities, entrepreneurs and thespians – wandered about, clutching envelopes with character profiles and manila pages riddled with clues close to their chests, while eyeing their holiday companions suspiciously. This was the opening scene of the Curious Twist in Christmas Tradition murder mystery gathering.

The afternoon began with a hunt through the hotel for Weapon and Action Cards (which allow your assigned character to actively participate in the game or to trade with other characters). Many did this alone and kept their finds secret, so they did not become suspect in any of the murders that followed in the evening. Even characters were kept secret until the pre-dinner cocktails at the al fresco Gonbei Bar, where the evening kicked off.

There was a little bit of history involved, as we were transported back to 1967 to celebrate the Cameron Highlands Resort winning the Best Resort Awards (an entirely fictional but probably well-deserved award, nonetheless). In attendance were prominent contemporary figures like Saloma, Cher, Diana Ross (yours truly) and even a surprise appearance by Thai Silk King Jim Thompson. Among these celebrities were lesser mortals with suspicious names like Adam Oublier, Samantha Cheet, and Victoria Morte, all complete with elaborate back stories and complex character relationships, and dressed to impress. The hour-long cocktails gave enough time to establish our friends and foes before the cast of sordid characters adjourned to the Dining Room for the evening. And a spot of murder.

Divided into two smaller groups (an evening with almost 50 characters would confuse even the most diligent Sherlock Holmes)

and the rules of the game repeated one last time, dinner officially began. Shortly after the appetiser, Jim Thompson was murdered, with his body found splayed at the foot of the grand staircase, followed, in quick succession, by Amanda Madd, found in the billiards room slumped across an armchair, pitifully clutching a pool stick.

Everyone retreated to the Dining Room to continue with the first course, over which they discussed suspicions, blackmailed other characters, extorted Curious Dollars in exchange for vital information, and traded Weapons and Action Cards (during which the previously murdered characters also sat in: Jim Thompson – played by Matthew Bellotti – with a very convincing 'I'VE BEEN KILLED' tag hung around his neck, while Amanda Madd – played by Chelsia Ng – was reincarnated into the game as Priscilla Presley).

As the evening progressed, we learned more clues and observed evidence from the crime scene, and tried to deduce who the culprit was. A few more murders were committed, in considerably less dramatic fashion, before the evening was done. For good measure, of course.

After dessert, we were left to nominate who we thought were the perpetrators of the first murders, as well as nominate our choices for Best Performer, Super Sleuth and Best Costume, all of whom received a certificate as their prize. There was also an award for the Wealthiest Player, for the beguiling character who eased money away from his fellow players.

Before the evening was through, we learned that Jim Thompson was poisoned by a double-crosser after a murky business deal gone awry, before he was fatally pushed onto the spear of an animal trap. Amanda Madd was murdered by the butler after she tried to end their affair and met her untimely demise when he smothered her with a pillow. Of course, the butler did it!

To celebrate a game well-played, we were ushered to the Highlands Bar and treated



1. Mariana Escamilla and Ross Sanders in Gonbei Bar. 2. Michael Elfving, Xandria Ooi, Chelsia Ng and Josh Lim enjoying pre-dinner cocktails before the drama began. 3. The table is set, and the seats are taken – it's time for a murder.



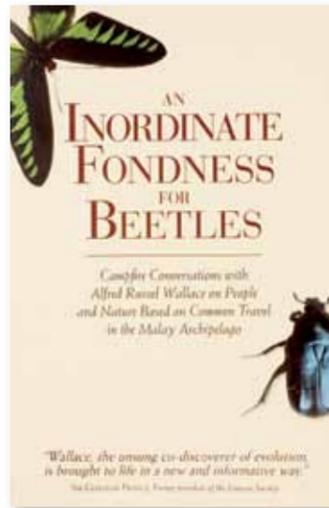
to a casual Bowmore single malt whisky tasting of the 10-, 12-, 15- and 18-year variations. The evening wound down with excited discussions of the game and getting to know each other out of character – an enjoyable ice-breaker to introduce otherwise complete strangers to each other, and an

inspired way to kick off the Christmas Tree Lighting Tradition weekend. ■

The Cameron Highlands Resort will launch its Signature Murder Mystery Dinners in the first quarter of 2013 as a small party and corporate getaway offering.

Not-So-Light Entertainment

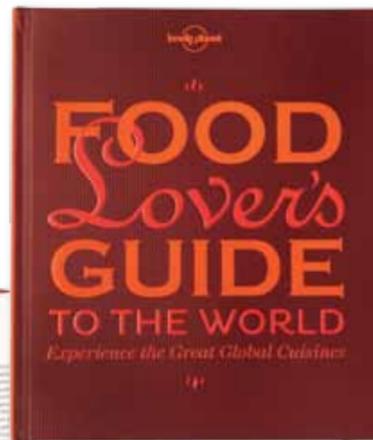
From Ronald Knapp's beautiful hardcover book on the sumptuous homes of the Peranakans or the Straits Chinese, to Lonely Planet's new guide to the great cuisines of the world, this issue is all about eclectic reads.



What: An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles. (EDM)

Who: Paul Spencer Sochaczewski.

Why: If you enjoyed reading our little article on the richness of marine life in the Indonesian Throughflow on page 28, chances are you'd enjoy Sochaczewski's half-travelogue, half-bio on the great Alfred Russel Wallace's Victorian-era explorations through Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. From Malaysia's Batang Ai National Park in Sarawak to Indonesia's Aru Islands, the author explores themes close to Wallace's heart – women power, man's relationship with other species, mysticism – with his unique wit, humour and sometimes outrageous personal tales.



What: Food Lover's Guide to the World. (MPH)

Who: The talented Lonely Planet folks are taking us on another global adventure again – this time, with a distinctive gourmet twist. From traipsing across China to feast on *xiao loong bao* (little basket buns that are synonymous with Shanghainese cuisine) to tasting the robust flavours of authentic Korean cuisine where the ubiquitous spicy sauce known as *gochujang* is a staple in most dishes, this book is guaranteed to be a mouth-watering read.

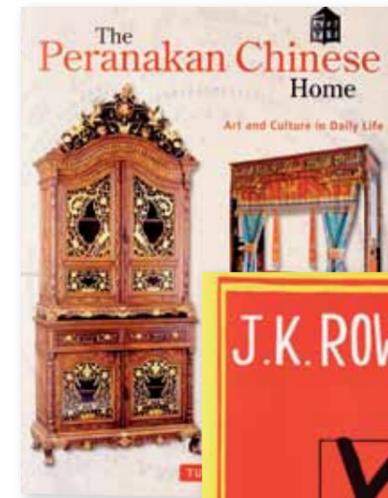
Why: There are eating suggestions for all the unique dishes listed, according to country. So, if you are, for example, planning your pilgrimage to Lhasa but have no time to research on where to find the best *momo*, this book will sort you out beautifully. There is a popular Polish aphorism that admonishes people to 'eat, drink and loosen your belt'. Here, it might be wise to extend it to reading as well.



What: The Peranakan Chinese Home. (Periplus)

Who: Roland G Knapp.

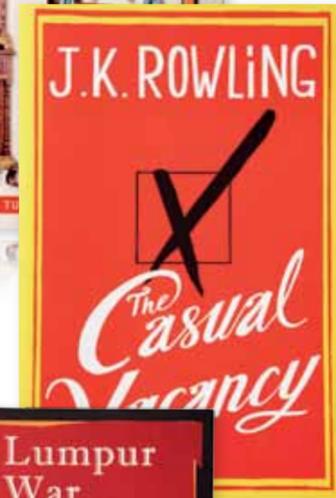
Why: A distinguished Emeritus Professor at the State University of New York, Knapp has authored several award-winning books on Asian aesthetics and architecture. Hence, his latest book promises to be an equally visual and informative delight. The Peranakans were also renowned for their great love of beautiful objects and highly-refined tastes and sense of aesthetics. Knapp evocatively captures the living style of the Baba-Nyonyas in several insightful chapters, from the main living areas to the ancestral hall, as well as a particular captivating read on Peranakan symbolism and iconography.



What: The Casual Vacancy. (MPH)

Who: Harry Potter's creator, aka JK Rowling.

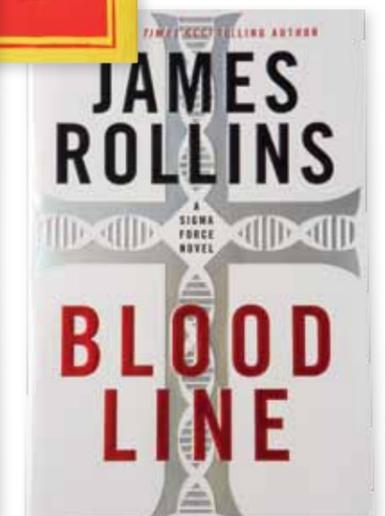
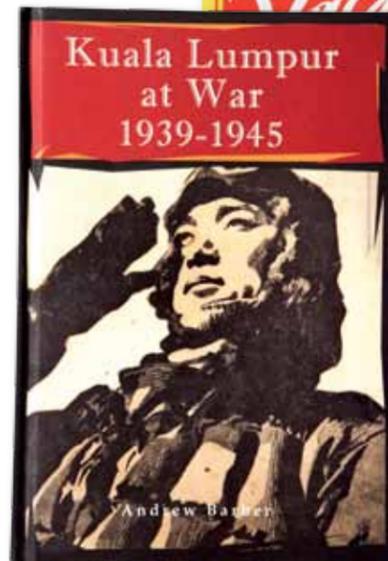
Why: Published just last year, *The Casual Vacancy* is a tragicomedy and marks the successful author's first publication since the celebrated Harry Potter series. This is also her first novel for adults. Set in a suburban English town called Pagford, the story revolves around class, politics and social issues. Rumour has it that it is also being adapted into a television drama for the BBC, slated for release sometime next year. All the more reason to hurry up and read it, then.



What: Kuala Lumpur at War. (MPH)

Who: Andrew Barber, a former British diplomat and Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Why: The recent reopening of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur did much to remind people of the events that unfolded during the height of its popularity; from the founding of Malaysia to the grimmer events of WWII, Andrew Barber's new read offers an interesting view of a young city during the tumultuous years when the Japanese army first entered Kuala Lumpur in 1942, to the occupation itself and the impact the return of the British had on the country and its people.



What: Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2013. (MPH)

Who: The globetrotting Lonely Planet team.

Why: If you haven't yet firmed up your 2013 travel plans and aspirations, this nifty little book might just do the trick. Filled with inspirational travel ideas and experiences, it's time to draw on the collective knowledge of this crack team and start planning your year's worth of memories, adventures and unforgettable experiences. Our top inspirations from its pages? Travelling to Corsica to sample its famous *charcuterie*, as well as a list of the world's top spots in which a spot of hunting for buried treasure may be well-indulged.



What: Blood Line. (MPH)

Who: James Rollins, a *New York Times*-bestselling author who holds a doctorate in veterinary medicine and resides in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Why: If you're into conspiracy theories, fanciful fiction, historical mysticism and Dan Brown-ish writing, you might just like Rollins' tale of Templar knights, Somali pirates and the eternal quest for immortality. Perfect if you're planning a week on a sun-lounger someplace wonderful. Pangkor Laut Resort or The Surin comes to mind. ■



Designer Khoon Hooi at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's orchid conservatory.

Fashionistas have long been familiar with Khoon Hooi's name. The Malaysian designer has been delighting the well-dressed brigade for over a decade now, with creations that always embody his signature elements of elegance, femininity and romance, tempered, always, by just the right touch of avant-garde edginess.

Having recently shown his Spring/Summer 2013 collection to rapturous applause at the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre, the designer's muse this season was undoubtedly nature-inspired. A total of 80 different looks made their debut down the runway, each paying tribute to the exotic beauty of the orchid flower in their own way, be it in the form of print, colour or silhouette. "Nature has always been a great source of inspiration for me," says the diminutive designer. "Last year's Spring/Summer collection was all about *ikat* (a traditional woven fabric synonymous with Borneo) but I chose to look to flowers this season."

Narrowing it down to orchids, Khoon Hooi shares it was during a visit to Kuala Lumpur's orchid park at the Lake Gardens that inspiration struck. "I thought they were just so distinctive and exotic-looking, and it certainly helps that it's such a representative flower of Malaysia as well. I like to design for the season and, to me, Spring/Summer is always about colour, while Fall/Winter dictates a heavier look."

Khoon Hooi's choice of palette for the season was as eclectic as it was varied. From cool ice green that resembled fine jadeite to canary yellow, shots of bright blue cobalt and eye-popping hits of neon, the collection featured lissom, flowing dresses in fluid forms, as well as dramatically-structured outfits accentuated by bold statement touches.

Saying it with Flowers

The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's stunning new orchid conservatory proves to be the perfect backdrop against which to showcase celebrated Malaysian designer Khoon Hooi's Spring/Summer 2013 orchid-inspired collection.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Ting Yang Shan** Art Direction **Sheila Cheah** Assistant **Yvonne Low** Model **Alisa P** Hair & Makeup **Carven Soo & Joey Wan**



“Nature has always been a great source of inspiration for me... I chose to look to flowers this season.”



Imagine a neon pink belt fashioned entirely out of plastic orchids or, perhaps, a sharp black suit embroidered with an orchid motif on its back. Waist-enhancing peplums as well as flirty dresses adorned with orchid prints also earned their fair share of attention on the runway, each one displaying the designer's unabashed love of playing up a woman's curves, thoroughly emphasising the allure of the female silhouette. The designer also made clever use of the scuba diver's best friend – neoprene – by pairing it with mesh as well as a medley of natural and synthetic fabrics to stunning effect.

A graduate of the Malaysian Institute of Art in 1993, Khoon Hooi launched his eponymous label just six years later and, since then, has chalked up several honours and accolades, including being named Designer of the Year during the 2010 Mercedes-Benz Stylo Fashion Festival and receiving the International Recognition Award by HRH Princess Sriwanwaree Nareeratana during the 2007 Bangkok International Fashion Week. He has also attracted the attention of the authoritative *Women's Wear Daily*, regarded by the industry as one of its undisputed 'fashion bibles', which featured the Malaysian designer within its pages after spotting his creations during New York Fashion Week six years ago.

Currently based in Kuala Lumpur and with his standalone boutique located within the city's upscale Starhill Gallery, the Perak-born designer has always regarded fashion as his life-calling. "People have asked me before what I would be doing in life if not designing clothes; but I've never ever entertained the thought of doing anything else. I love fashion... I always have, always will." It goes without saying, then, that the feeling is more than mutual. ▣

Khoon Hooi is located on the Explore Floor of Starhill Gallery, Kuala Lumpur.

A Flowering for Spring

From orchids and daisies to a storied fragrance, the new year is a time for pampering and renewing yourself.

Exotic Beauty

From the legendary Yves Saint Laurent to Malaysia's very own designing talent Khoo Hooi, the exotic beauty of the orchid flower has never failed to captivate and inspire. In this light, the house of **Guerlain** also chooses to pay tribute to this inimitable blossom with its *Orchidée Impériale* molecular extract – a new, incredibly-effective product that concentrates the age-defying properties of three legendary orchids – the gold orchid, *Vanda coerulea* and *Vanda teres*. Formulated based on research culled from the Guerlain Orchidarium, a research centre unique in the world, expect a beauty experience unlike any other.



Memoirs Of Hadrien

Inspired by Belgian-born French novelist and essayist Marguerite Yourcenar's critically-acclaimed work, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, **Annick Goutal Paris' Eau d'Hadrien** scent, created in 1980, remains as relevant as ever. Timeless and universal, it is a scent ahead of its time, created for both a man and a woman, and infused with the freshness of Sicilian lemons, cedar and cypress.



Snow White

If you wish to keep your porcelain winter complexion well into spring, take note of **La Mer's** new Blanc de la Mer Whitening Collection, developed by the same team of scientists at the Max Huber Research Labs. Designed to work synergistically with the fabled *Crème de la Mer*, the new collection aims to give skin back its youthful translucence by way of a gentle yet potent two-step, two-zone face mask, which supercharges skin with whitening and hydration benefits.



Flower Power

Still on the whitening theme, **Burt's Bees'** new *Daisy White* regimen is also targeted towards helping women achieve brighter, more luminous skin. Infused with daisy extract, harvested from wild daisy flowers in Macedonia, it has been proven that this ingredient also helps diminish pigmentation and discolouration, as well as working to even out skin tone. Choose from a variety of products, including cleanser, toner, serum, eye cream and moisturiser.

Prints harming

From stripes, checks and florals to ethnic Chinese prints, pattern is clearly the new black this season.

Photography Kim Mun Styling Andrea Wong Assistant Jia Seng
Hair & Makeup Joey Yap Model Lana/Base Model Management
Location Tanjong Jara Resort

SUNNY STYLE

Yellow printed silk blouse and high-waisted blue printed skirt, **Shiatzy Chen**. Gold drop earrings with coloured stones, **Louis Vuitton**. Black heels (worn throughout), model's own.



***BRONZED
BEAUTY***

This page: Striped blouse with ribbons on sleeve and striped pleated maxi skirt, **Kenzo**. Gold necklace with coloured stone cubes and drop earrings with coloured stones, **Louis Vuitton**.

Opposite page: Knitted one-shoulder dress, **M Missoni**. Chain-link belt with crystals, **P.A.R.O.S.H. at Antoinette**. Gold embossed foldover clutch, **Louis Vuitton**. Python bracelets and brown leather bracelet, **Fendi**.



***OUTONA
LIMB***

Printed asymmetrical-sleeved silk kaftan with embellishments, **Khoon Hooi**. White-rimmed sunglasses, **Fendi**.



CASUAL CHIC

This page: Orange draped top and silk printed pants, **Khoon Hooi**. Metal woven bangles and brown leather bracelet, **Fendi**.
Opposite page: Patchwork print silk shirt dress and suede rope belt, **P.A.R.O.S.H. at Antoinette**. Tortoiseshell sunglasses with red top, **Fendi**. Gold necklace with coloured stone cubes, **Louis Vuitton**.



COOL SHADES

This page: Reversible green checked dress with red lining, **Kenzo**. Python bracelet, leather bracelets and two-tone sunglasses, **Fendi**.
Opposite page: Black and white printed strapless long dress, **Khoon Hooi**. Geometric printed patent leather belt and floral printed cotton scarf, **Kenzo**. Two-tone bangle in galuchat, **Fendi**.



STEPPING OUT

Geometric printed silk blouse, orange pants and geometric printed shoulder bag, all by **M Missoni**. Gold-rimmed sunglasses, **Louis Vuitton**.





beautiful life //

Let It Blossom

Spring is in the air! Celebrate the season of rebirth and renewal with haute-off-the-runway looks from the Roman house of Fendi and jewels to covet from grand names in Switzerland and Spain.

Fly Away With Me

Louis Vuitton recently unveiled its first-ever television commercial – a whimsical story that takes viewers on an adventure; first through the Louvre museum's celebrated galleries as well as an encounter with La Joconde, and then rising above the Cour Carrée. Set amidst the old world opulence of the former palace, the heroine, played by supermodel Arizona Muse, stars in this exciting new communication chapter for the legendary maison.



Structured Style

The Roman house of **Fendi**'s new looks for Spring/Summer 2013 is a celebration of diversity – from structured tops to feathery trims, splashes of colour and geometric detailing, each look cuts a decorative swathe of style. To truly get into the spirit of spring, don't miss the dresses fashioned out of oranges and yellows, and decorated with sunburst-like motifs. A tribute to spring? Summer, more likely.



The Colour Of The Sea

Those with an eye for fine jewellery will be, no doubt, bedazzled by celebrated Spanish jewellery brand **Carrera y Carrera**'s pieces from its Aqua collection. Inspired by water – the essence of life – vivid London Blue topazes and diamonds are set in stunning white gold and display a style that is both organic and fluid.



Inspired Gems

Family-owned jewellers **Gübelin** recently opened its first-ever boutique outside of Switzerland in Kuala Lumpur's Starhill Gallery. Based in Lucerne, the renowned name in fine Swiss jewellery offers only the most refined pieces, as can be seen in its Madagascar collection, which is inspired by the pebbles on the island's beaches, polished smooth by an eternity of pounding ocean waves.

Scents of Success

From humble beginnings to a world-wide presence, Diptyque recently celebrated half a century of indulging our senses, becoming, along the way, synonymous with luxury candles and scents.

Text Flavia Galeotti

There is, perhaps, no candle-maker in the world more famous and more sought after than Diptyque. Since its foundation in 1961, the brand has grown in leaps and bounds, and continues to be the last word in the world of luxury candles and personal fragrances. Diptyque's story was started by three artistic friends, Desmond Knox-Leet, Christiane Gautrot and Yves Coueslant, in the now-famous address 34 Boulevard Saint-Germain in Paris. What was originally meant to be a shop for uniquely-patterned fabrics took an interesting turn after the trio started a range of coloured candles to match their textiles. They became a surprise hit, encouraging them to venture into scented candles before, ultimately, expanding into perfumes and home fragrances.

Knox-Leet, the painter of the group, hand-designed the brand's iconic oval labels in the early days of Diptyque. Meant to mimic the shape of 18th-century medallions, it was a pattern originally featured on the *Prétorien* fabric he designed in 1963. Since then, the logo has gone through many variations to match the personalities of the items it adorns, like the black background and small etched illustrations on the eaux de toilette and eaux de parfum bottles. The 'dancing letters', as they are known, are also particular to the labels on the candle jars. Spelling out the name of the scent, the floating typeface adds a touch of whimsy and fun to the otherwise deep and heady aromas Diptyque is famous for.

The candles themselves go through an extensive artisanal process. Before they even begin to take shape, the high-quality natural ingredients are sourced and blended to create the potent scents. They are then mixed into a pure vegetable and paraffin wax, which can burn for an average of 50 to 60 hours. Lastly, lead-free cotton wicks are hand-glued to the bottom of the glass before it is filled to the brim with the creamy wax mixture. As the wax sets, the wicks are straightened by hand and trimmed to a length of 3mm to 4mm.

Diptyque's first official scented candle appeared in 1963. *Cannelle* (French for cinnamon), a warm and spicy aromatic candle, was followed in 1968 by the brand's first eaux de toilette, *L'Eau*, a unisex fragrance inspired by a 16th-century potpourri recipe and the scent of pomanders. Now, its range of candles and perfumes has diversified to over 50 different scents in five main notes: fruity, floral, herbal, woody and spicy.

Since the beginning, Diptyque's goal as a textiles boutique was to share outstanding items and inspirations the founders discovered over the course of their far-flung travels. This philosophy has carried over to their fragrances, where memories from childhood and exotic locales are accurately recreated using the finest natural materials they can source. The *Philosykos* fragrance was inspired by a summer holiday in



Clockwise, from top: Diptyque's range comes in more than 50 different scents; A selection from Diptyque's range of scented candles; The original Diptyque boutique in Boulevard Saint Germain; The *Volutes* fragrance is inspired by the founder's childhood memory.

Greece, where Knox-Leet cut wild fig leaves, storing them in a box for safe keeping. After several years, the forgotten box was reopened and the leaves smelled as if they were just freshly cut. This chance



discovery went on to produce one of Diptyque's most popular fragrances.

To mark its 50th anniversary, Diptyque made the unconventional decision to create a fragrance to capture the essence, so to speak, of the first boutique. Named *34 Boulevard Saint Germain*, the fragrance features fresh, green and spicy accords, and is made from 40 raw materials, including blackcurrant, fig leaves, fresh rose pepper and citrus, Egyptian geranium and tuberose, and eucalyptus. The candle is housed in a special oval-shaped, hand-made porcelain jar, and can burn for approximately 70 hours. The scent has been so well received that it was awarded the 2012 Interior Scent Collection of the Year Award by the Fragrance Foundation.

The original boutique remains at the same address it began in over half a century ago. A lot of the decor from the early days has endured, adding a vintage charm to the increasingly sleek and modernised brand image. Spread across the world, demand for the luxurious products from Diptyque has exploded as it continues to push the boundaries of fragrances. With Gautrot and Coueslant still at the helm, the philosophy of Diptyque will certainly be perpetuated for the foreseeable future. ■

Diptyque products are available at Fashion Avenue Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, and Isetan KLCC.



spa life //



Rituals of Wellbeing

Special pre-spa rituals, designed to prepare body, mind and soul, precede every treatment at YTL Hotels' Spa Villages. The next time you prepare to embark on a restorative and rejuvenative journey at any of the four Spa Villages in the Malay Peninsula, here is an idea of how you will be thoroughly prepared in order to reap the full benefits of the treatment ahead.

Text **Diana Khoo**

Asia is rich in healing rituals – each culture boasting a unique tradition of wellness and rejuvenation. Utilising the wealth of natural ingredients that abound in the region, explore a distinctive way to feel and look one's best at the network of Spa Villages to be found within YTL Hotels. Here, we present four on the Malay Peninsula that ensure all guests begin their spa journey properly prepared – spirit, mind and body – with their own unique pre-spa rituals, each an experience in itself.

Pangkor Laut Resort

One uniquely luxurious resort, one private island – getaways can hardly get better than this. Spanning 120ha and enveloped in lush tropical rainforest, Pangkor Laut Resort on Pangkor Laut island is a retreat from which you'd never want to leave. Located on the west coast of Malaysia, the resort is also home to YTL Hotels' flagship Spa Village – the first of the group's unique spas – set within its own luxurious grounds on the island, in a quiet bay and offering total seclusion and tranquility. Guests who come to experience the spa will be treated to a luxurious pre-spa pampering session that lasts for around 45 minutes, designed to perfectly set the mood for the treatments ahead.

First, you will be led to a special pavilion where your feet are delicately washed with water and flowers, before an invigorating foot-pounding session, a traditional practice that dates back to the days of feudal China, when concubines with lotus feet had their bandages unwrapped and the soles of their feet pounded with wooden mallets to aid blood circulation while activating reflex points and channelling meridian energy. After a cup of chilled lemongrass juice sweetened with orange and honey, proceed to the next chapter of the pre-spa treatment – the Bath House Ritual, where a series of unique bathing experiences await the spa-goer. Refresh yourself from the tropical heat by enjoying the cool delights of a Malay bath, designed to resemble a traditional village stream, complete with waterfall, before moving on to a session of inhalation therapy. Lean your face over a series of steam boxes, each filled with different herbs to calm, uplift, de-stress and detoxify, and breathe in deeply to reap its full benefits.

Clockwise, from top left: Natural ingredients are a key element in Spa Village treatments; Spa Village Pangkor Laut; Preparing a tea bath at Spa Village Cameron Highlands; Mandi bunga at the Spa Village in Tanjung Jara Resort.





Clockwise, from top left: Facial steaming forms part of Spa Village Pangkor Laut's Bath House Ritual; Nyonya-style interiors at The Majestic Malacca; Tea therapies at Spa Village Cameron Highlands; Playful koi lead the way to the Spa Village Cameron Highlands.



A Japanese interlude beckons next. Your therapist will guide you to the Japanese Bath House where, behind *shoji* screens, you will be invited to scrub yourself down with a *goshi-goshi* cloth to get your blood circulation up, before soaking your cares away in the heated *rotenburu* rock pool while sipping on ginger tea. Once you have had your fill of the warm, relaxing waters, you may then move on to the final chapter in Spa Village Pangkor Laut's Bath House Ritual, where you will be treated to the exfoliating pleasures of a thorough Shanghainese-style back scrub, the perfect precursor if a sybaritic massage is what awaits you when the treatment proper finally begins.

Cameron Highlands Resort

Surrounded by mist-swathed hills and undulating tea plantations, Cameron Highlands has long been a haven for those seeking respite from the tropical heat, even from the days of the British Empire. Discovered by William Cameron, a British colonial government surveyor, in 1885 and later developed as a hill station retreat, the highlands is now a teeming hill resort, dotted by farms, flower nurseries, strawberry gardens and, most famous of all, tea plantations.

Inspired by its surrounds, the Spa Village Cameron Highlands gently introduces guests to its signature tea baths as a prelude to treatments. Utilising the richness of Cameronian tea, guest can

“Explore a distinctive way to feel and look one’s best at the network of Spa Villages to be found within YTL Hotels.”

luxuriate in the warm bath, complete with tea bags to relax the eyes while reducing puffiness and the appearance of eye bags and dark circles, steeped with fragrant green tea leaves – boosting the skin with anti-oxidant polyphenols while readying the mind and soul with its calming fragrance and therapeutic effects.

The Majestic Malacca

Founded in the 14th century by a fugitive Sumatran prince named Parameswara, Malacca is a town that’s steeped in history. Having gained entry in 2008 into UNESCO’s World Heritage List, a walk through Malacca offers living insight into the country’s past. With its strong cultural heritage and indelible influences left, in part, by a mixture of conquerors and traders, including the Portuguese and Dutch as well as Chinese, Indian, Arab and Javanese merchants, it is hardly surprising that the Spa Village at The Majestic Malacca offers an equally captivating journey of wellness and rejuvenation.

Quite possibly the only spa in the world which bases its therapies on Peranakan (Straits Chinese) culture, the Spa Village at The Majestic Malacca blends Chinese, Malay and Baba-Nyonya healing traditions into a uniquely rejuvenating experience. Walk past traditional *pintu pagar* (saloon-style swing doors) to begin Spa Village Malacca’s signature hair ritual, inspired by a Nyonya bride’s elaborate beauty preparations for her upcoming wedding. Comprising a hair wash with floral water, followed by a shampoo,

combing and scalp massage, this is said to help dispel negative energy as well as getting the bride-to-be to look her radiant best.

As you enjoy the treatment, look up to the ceiling, where traditional black and white Malay movies are screened – a perfect throwback to this property’s unique atmosphere and heritage. Finish off with a zingy lime and floral rinse. As you leave to begin your treatment, take away a beautiful memento in the form of a sandalwood comb, presented in a ceremonial *ang pow* (red packet), the traditional envelope in which gifts of money are presented to a newly-wed Baba-Nyonya couple – the perfect keepsake of a luxuriant day.

Tanjong Jara Resort

Living up to its ‘Unmistakably Malay’ credo, the Spa Village at Tanjong Jara Resort, set along the Terengganu coastline on Malaysia’s east, is renowned for its Malay healing techniques, which evoke the resort’s all-encompassing philosophy of *sucimurni* – a way of life that emphasises purity of spirit and wholesomeness. Surrounded

by lily ponds and fragrant frangipani trees, the Spa Village Tanjong Jara, just a stone’s throw from the golden sands of the beach and with the crashing South China Sea waves faintly audible, it is the perfect place in which to experience the Malay art of healing and wellness at its best.

Every treatment begins with a cup of honey-sweetened Akar-Akar tea, a herbal remedy comprising of betel leaf, turmeric, ginger and tropical almonds, as well as *mandi bunga*, a traditional Malay floral bath whose origins can be traced to the royal courts of the Malay sultans. This significant water ritual remains an important element in Malay culture, performed at significant occasions, from the investiture of a new king to coming-of-age ceremonies as well as weddings. It is also practiced by local healers whenever the need to *buang soei* (to rid the body of negative energy) arises.

Wrapped in a beautiful batik sarong, sit yourself down on a stone slab as your therapist proceeds to pour icy-cold water, scented with kafir lime leaves, yellow alamanda, pink plumeria, rose petals and chrysanthemum, over you in seven ritual steps, each time with a blessing pronounced, be it for health, prosperity and beauty as well as a host of other good things. The seventh step, however, is reserved for you alone – yours to make a wish for whatsoever you may desire. And, once you are ritually-purified by water, your journey at Spa Village Tanjong Jara is finally ready to begin. ■

Cor, It's Kuih Time!

One of the many little pleasures one experiences while staying at The Majestic Malacca would be to enjoy a pre-bedtime snack of colourful Nyonya cakes – a lovely gesture that forms part of the hotel's nightly turndown ritual.

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



her family's meals, the happier everyone will be'. In many Peranakan families, *kuih* recipes are also handed down from mother to daughter, although, sadly, this is now a dying tradition as modern Nyonyas eschew the assuredly laborious process, preferring, instead, to buy their *kuih* from reputable makers. This is hardly surprising as the *kuih*-making process is extremely tedious, involving long hours of preparation and steaming – the preferred method as opposed to baking.

Opposite page: Baba Charlie Lee has been making Nyonya kuih for nearly 30 years;

Clockwise, from above: Making the casing for Lepat Kacang; Bunga telang is used to add a vivid blue hue to some of the kuih; Pulut Inti; Kuih Koo Merah or Angkoo.

At The Majestic Malacca, guests are always treated to a few pieces of *kuih* as part of the hotel's turndown ritual. And whatever shape, size or flavour of *kuih*, it's a certainty they all come from the kitchens of one of the town's most famous *kuih*-makers, Baba Charlie. Working out of a bungalow in the Tengker area, Baba Charlie Lee, 50 and a third-generation Baba, has been making a dazzling assortment of Nyonya *kuih* for close to three decades already. A former

“Baba Charlie Lee, 50 and a third-generation Baba, has been making a dazzling assortment of Nyonya kuih for close to three decades already.”

It's impossible to travel through the Nusantara region without coming across lavish assortments of bite-sized colourful cakes and pastries. Known collectively as *kuih* (the plural of which is *kuih-muih*), these little sweet or savoury treats may be enjoyed at any time of the day or served as a tea-time snack or dessert. In Malaysia, *kuih* is a broad term that encompasses several kinds of sweet and savoury snacks, and these may range from a flaky egg roll to traditional

melt-in-your-mouth cookies in the shape of caterpillars. But the most well-known form of *kuih* is the steamed rice flour or glutinous rice flour cakes that have been elevated to an art form by the Malay and Peranakan Chinese communities.

Having arrived and integrated into Malaysian society since the 15th century, the Malaccan Peranakans (of whom the men and womenfolk are referred to as 'Baba' and

'Nyonya', respectively), in particular, have embraced *kuih-muih* wholeheartedly into their cuisine and culture. Often referred to as Nyonya 'cakes', preparing these delicacies used to be the realm of women. Young Nyonyas were often schooled extensively in the culinary arts, as it was understood this was a crucial skill demanded by prospective mothers-in-law, who upheld the belief that 'the more skill and effort a woman can put into preparing

engineer who inherited the business from his mother, he has succeeded in growing Baba Charlie's Nyonya Cakes into one of the leading names in Malacca. "My mother taught me how to make *kuih* while she herself learnt from my grandmother," he shares. "We often start as early as 6am and the process goes on right till late afternoon." Key ingredients in *kuih* usually include pandanus or screwpine leaves, coconut, *gula Melaka* and rice flour, while the distinctively vivid blue hues detected in some *kuih* are courtesy of the essence of *bunga telang*, a local flowering vine that's also known as the blue-pea or, scientifically, *Clitoria ternatea*.

The choice of *kuih* that Baba Charlie's offers is astounding, with no less than 25 varieties to choose from at any one time, including the popular pineapple tart as well as *onde-onde* and coconut *apam balik*. So, any time you are in Malacca, be sure to pop by for a treat or three. Or just wait for your butler at The Majestic Malacca to bring up his nightly basket of treats. ■



SWEET AND COLOURFUL TREATS
Here's a quick guide to some of the *kuih* available at Baba Charlie's Nyonya Cakes.

Lepat Kacang – A triangular *kuih* wrapped in *attap* leaves, these are made with glutinous rice, soybeans and coconut.

Kuih Dadar – Also referred to as *Kuih Ketayap* by the Malays, these thin green crepes are filled with caramelised grated coconut.

Kuih Bingka Ubi – A rich baked tapioca cake with pandanus custard.

Apam Balik Kelapa – Folded-over coconut pancakes.

Rempah Udang – Glutinous rice cakes filled with caramelised grated coconut and spicy dried prawns, steamed in banana leaves before being finished on a grill.

Kuih Ko Swee – Dark brown in colour due to the use of palm sugar, these rice flour cakes are wonderful topped with grated fresh coconut.

Kuih Lapis – A traditional layer cake made using rice and tapioca flours, coconut milk and pandanus.

Kuih Koo Merah / Hitam – More commonly seen in red (the Hokkiens refer to them as *angkoo*), this is a common cake served during a baby's first Full Moon feast. The Malaccan Nyonyas also offer a black variety (*kuih koo hitam*). The fillings may include red bean paste or peanut paste.

Pulut Seri Kaya – Glutinous rice flour cakes topped with pandanus or *kaya* (coconut jam), identifiable by green or yellow caps, respectively.

Pulut Tekan – These plain glutinous rice cakes are given their blue hue due to the use of *bunga telang* and are enjoyed with *kaya*.

Kuih Bongkong – These banana leaf parcels contain very soft rice flour cakes filled liberally with *gula Melaka*. Silky, sinful and sweet!

Onde Onde – Little coconut-flecked pandanus balls filled with liquid *gula Melaka* that explodes with a pop in the mouth when eaten.

Kuih Abu Sagu – Sago cakes coloured with *bunga telang* and made with shredded coconut and *gula Melaka*.



Clockwise, from above: Onde Onde; Apam Balik Kelapa; Rempah Udang are finished on a grill; Baba Charlie's parents during their traditional Peranakan wedding ceremony in Malacca in 1959; At The Majestic Malacca, guests are treated to some *kuih* as part of the turndown ritual.

Baba Charlie's Nyonya Cakes is located at 72, Jalan Tengkeri Pantai 2C, 75200 Malacca. Open from 10.30am to 3pm, and closed on Thursdays. For more information, tel: +6 06 284 7209.





All Shook! Up

The Shook! outlet in Shanghai's Swatch Art Peace Hotel offers a spectacular array of different cuisines from around the world - all under one roof.

Text **Catherine Shaw**

Shanghai is a veritable smorgasbord for gourmards, with a sensational array of restaurants leaving diners often torn between enjoying classic Chinese, avant-garde French and everything in between. Step forward Shook!, an innovative international dining concept imported from Starhill Gallery in Kuala Lumpur embodying an already phenomenally popular approach to enjoying different culinary experiences in one sitting.

The gourmet restaurant – in the fifth-floor penthouse and rooftop of the Bund's newly-renovated Swatch Art Peace Hotel – is renowned for its spectacular array of different cuisines from around the world. "It is the perfect way to experiment with confidence and to enable a party of people to indulge in many different styles and cultures of food in one sitting," explains Shook! Executive Chef Matthew Ona, who, enticed by the innovative culinary concept, took helm of the restaurant in mid-2012.

"I like to think of Shook! as a platform of dining without borders; it is designed to create unique experiences. We like to take past experiences from around the world, like Japan, France and, of course, our home base of Malaysia, and combine them in a menu that celebrates the diversity of Shook! It's not everywhere you can say 'I'm going to have sashimi and, after that, have cassoulet, followed by coconut mango dessert!'" says Ona.

"Shanghai is very much a young city, so we don't go overboard on anything molecular or faddish. We focus, instead, on the absolute best quality, going back to the purity of these dishes and making it very approachable. I can change as much as the seasons do, which makes it very exciting," says the Minneapolis-born chef. "Of course, some dishes quickly become classic favourites, like our Organic Black Pig Belly appetiser that is served with homemade *kimchi*, a miso brown sugar glaze and a hit of chilli from Sakura Ebi and Mitsuba."

Ona puts his passion for transforming dining into a culinary experience down to his extensive travel after graduating from the



Roasted sea bass fillet.

Culinary Institute of America in New York and California. He worked in many restaurants across the breadth of the United States, earning classification as a Certified Executive Chef and Certified Culinary Administrator from the American Culinary Federation along the way. In California's Napa Valley, Ona worked in the renowned Chef Thomas Keller's three Michelin-starred French Laundry restaurant, before going on to become executive chef of Napa Valley's award-winning Peju Provence Winery.

Matthew's culinary journey then took him to the Bahamas, where he served as executive chef at Romora Bay Resort and Marina in Harbour Island. He also attended the highly-praised Tokyo Sushi Academy, where he received accreditation for the classic style of Edomae-Style Sushi preparation. His classic Salmon Tartar reflects his training, adding crushed cilantro, avocado and an oven-roasted tomato ginger miso rose sauce to salmon tartare to give diners a hint of Japanese flavours. Other Japan-inspired dishes from the raw selection include a Tasting of Sashimi and Sushi and Makimono Rolls.

"The Bund in Shanghai is such an amazing place to be right now. And you look around Shook! from the dining room to the kitchen, and it's all of the highest specification and serious design. The centrepiece open kitchen is surely any chef's dream to be at the helm of, and that's really gets me excited," says Ona. "I want to bring that excitement and buzz to both the food and to the diners. Shook! is about having fun, experiencing little Asian twists on classic Western dishes that will raise an eyebrow and get people talking. It's exciting to see people trying things they haven't before."

"As a restaurant, Shook!'s unique location is something we have started to reflect in our interiors and menu. One example is our new butter plate, which is designed to resemble an artist's palette with green herb butters alongside red sun-dried tomato butter. The colours are so vibrant and it's a wonderful way of bringing the hotel and restaurant together."

Along with a mod-Chinoiserie main dining area, Shook! also comprises the chic Time Bar and The Gallery, a multimedia banquet hall ideal for private receptions for up to 250 people. The striking interiors are courtesy of Orbit Design, a renowned interiors firm based in Bangkok specialising in food and beverage outlets. Quirky, stylish touches include a statement Swatch watch-inspired chandelier, lacquer finishings and shoji-style screens. There are a variety of table settings, from private enclaves to open dining, with 84 seats in the restaurant and 40 around the bar. On the sixth floor, Shook! Rooftop Terrace offers al fresco lounging and stunning views of the Huangpu River and Pudong, with two domed towers, the Corner Tower and the Blancpain Room, ideal for intimate candlelight dinners and private events. ▀



SWATCH ART PEACE HOTEL

The former Palace Hotel (now the Swatch Art Peace Hotel) is one of the city's oldest and most venerated hotels fronting Shanghai's Bund, a mile-long embanked riverfront lined with grand stone-fronted neo-classical and Beaux Art buildings. Located on the Nanjing Road/Bund intersection, it once occupied the south building of the renowned art deco Peace Hotel next door and was famous for hosting a number of important events, such as the International Opium Commission meeting in 1909 (the first international conference to discuss the world's narcotics problems). Chiang Kai-shek and Soong Mei-ling also celebrated their engagement there in 1927.

The elegant hotel is today the face of an intriguing reinvention by the Biel-based Swatch Group, whose flagship Breguet, Omega, Blancpain and Swatch boutiques enjoy pride of place on the street level. The six-storey, red-brick Victorian façade of the building has been faithfully restored to its former glory, while inside is a bold mix of heritage décor, contemporary design centre and seven modern art-inspired guest suites with uniquely quirky interiors by Paris-based designers Jouin Manku.

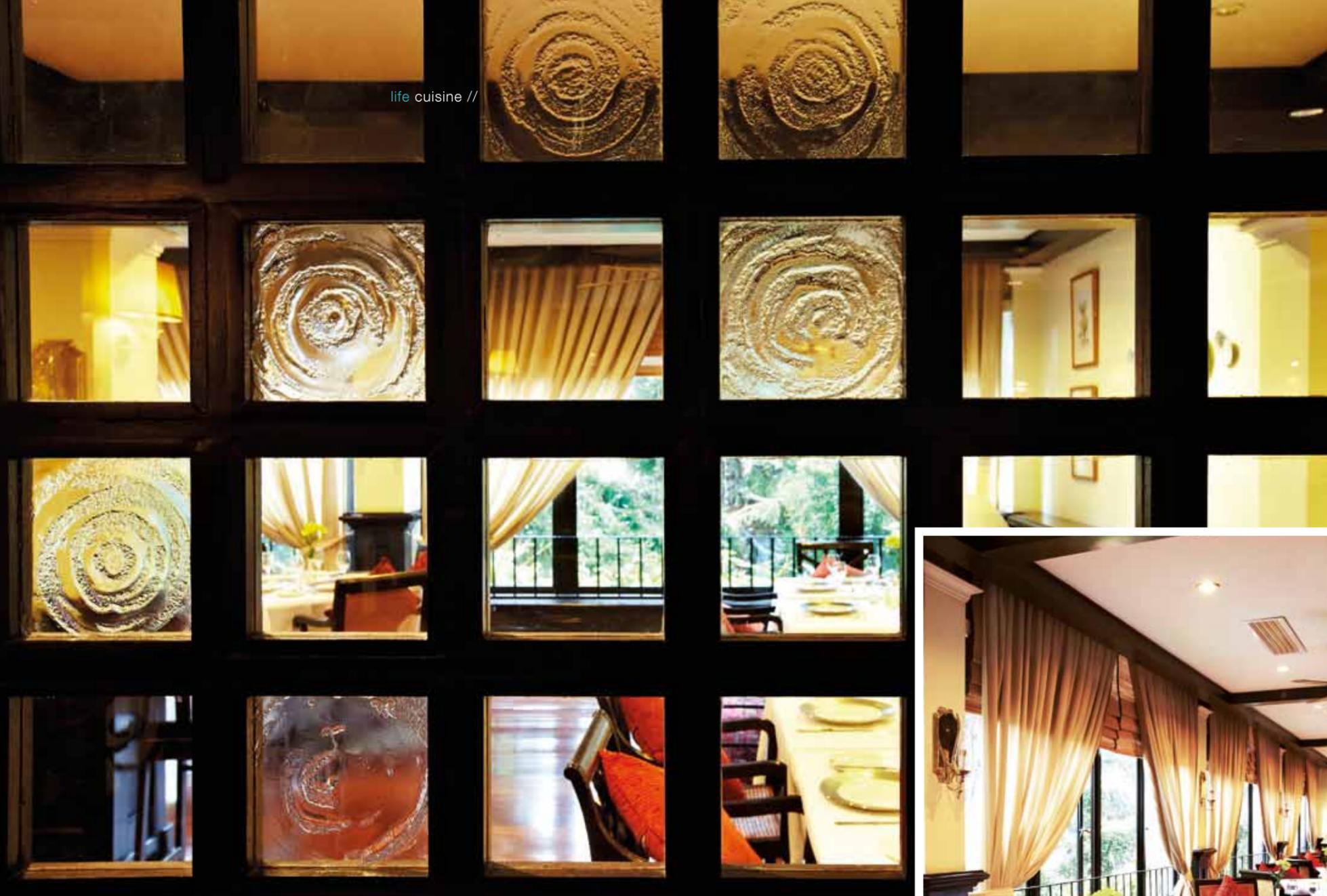


Above: Classic salmon tartar.

Left: Wild berry pancakes.

Facing page: Chef Matthew Ona had previously worked with the renowned Thomas Keller of the three Michelin-starred French Laundry in Yountville, California.

life cuisine //



Chef Lim Kok Yang's hearty and warming dishes are perfect for the cool climate of the highlands.

A Flavourful Path

For Lim Kok Yang, Chef de Partie of Cameron Highlands Resort, life's all about the enjoyment of food.

Text Diana Khoo Photography Yong Keen Keong



At just 28 years of age, Cameron Highlands Resort's fresh-faced Chef de Partie, Lim Kok Yang, has already been cooking for close to a decade. "I love what I do but I actually became a chef because of my sheer love for food," he smiles. "I then decided it was the right career path to follow and, here I am today." Having started with Chinese cuisine, Chef Lim has since gone on to perfect his skills in a variety of other cuisines and cooking techniques, with Indian and Malaysian being new favourites. "I can do a good *roti canai* now," he laughs, "and, of course, the breakfast staple of *nasi lemak* too!" Not a stranger to the world of YTL Hotels, Chef Lim was previously based on the idyllic island of Pangkor Laut and has also worked at Luk Yu Tea House in Kuala Lumpur's Starhill Gallery, prior to his highland posting. "Ever since I was a child, there was nothing I liked better than to eat and enjoy new, delicious flavours. Now, I cook and I get to provide others with that same enjoyment. I can't imagine a better career for myself!"

Chef's Choice

Chef Lim's favourite kitchen tools and ingredients.

Favourite ingredients: Soy sauce, basil and thyme.

Favourite tools: My chef's knife and, of course, my wok.

Best meal experience: I love steamboat as it's the best way of bringing people together over a meal. I try to indulge at least once a month, especially with my family.

Favourite food and wine pairings: I think beef and red wine is the ultimate pairing. I like most red wines paired with Chinese-style stir-fried beef.

The dish that reminds him most of home: Home-style dishes which my mum makes, particularly her *loh chee yoke* (pork with oyster sauce).

Childhood ambition: I wanted to be a policeman when I was younger but I loved to eat as well, so that made me decide to want to learn how to cook!



Onion Soup (Serves 5)

Ingredients

- 6 white onions, sliced
- 3 tsp olive oil
- 2 litres beef stock
- 10g galangal
- 1 stalk lemon grass
- 5g fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 small piece of cinnamon stick
- Salt to season

Method

1. Sauté sliced onions with olive oil until well browned.
2. Add in the beef stock, bay leaf, galangal, lemon grass, thyme and cinnamon stick.
3. Simmer and add salt to taste. Serve hot.



life cuisine //

“Hot onion soup, followed by Hainanese-style chicken chop and a comforting apple crumble equal to a perfect Cameron Highlands meal.”

Chicken Chop (Serves 4)

Ingredients

- 1kg boneless chicken leg, cut into 4
- 50g plain flour
- 120g crushed cream crackers
- 1 egg

Method

Season the chicken with salt and pepper, then coat it with crushed cream crackers and deep-fry it over a medium heat until golden brown and thoroughly cooked.

Shallot Sauce for Chicken Chop

- 180g A1 Steak Sauce
- 180g HP Sauce
- 220g sliced shallots
- 45g flour
- 50g green peas
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 pinch of sugar

Method

1. Sauté the sliced shallots over a medium-low heat.
2. Add in flour, A1 Steak Sauce, HP Sauce and the chicken stock.
3. Reduce it and season with sugar.
4. Add in the green peas before serving.



Apple Crumble (Serves 4)

Crumble Recipe

- 80g flour
- 60g icing sugar
- 60g soft butter
- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of cinnamon powder

Method

In a bowl, mix the flour, icing sugar, salt and cinnamon powder into the butter with your hand until it has a breadcrumb-like consistency.

Apple Filling

- 3 green apples
- 25g brown sugar
- 35g ground almonds
- 10g raisins
- 5g corn flour
- 75g butterscotch

Method

Peel and core the apples and roughly dice them into chunks. Put the apple chunks into a pan, add ground almonds, raisins, butterscotch and corn flour, and cook gently over a low flame. Check that the fruit is cooked. The apples should be soft but not overly so.

Sugar Dough (Tart)

- 40g butter
- 25g icing sugar
- 1 small egg
- 70g flour
- Pinch of salt

Method

Mix all the ingredients together and rest in the fridge for two hours. Roll out and cut into shapes and bake in a preheated 160°C oven for six to eight minutes.

Butterscotch

- 10g unsalted butter
- 20g brown sugar
- 15g heavy cream
- 2 drops vanilla essence
- Pinch of salt

Method

1. Melt butter and brown sugar over medium heat and stir with wooden spoon until uniformly wet.
2. Add in heavy cream and keep on stirring in low heat for about 10 minutes.
3. Strain and add in vanilla essence and salt.

Final Assembly

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
2. Add the apple filling into the tart.
3. Cover with the crumble and bake it for approximately 10 minutes until the crumble is golden and the apple filling is hot. ■

Island In The Sun

In the midst of its peak season from now until mid-April, where the skies are cornflower blue and the blue-green sea a total delight to dip into, there are few better places to soak up the sun in South-East Asia than on the exotic Thai island of Phuket. Laurent Myter, Executive Vice President – Resorts for YTL Hotels and a former resident of the island, shares with *YTL Life* his favourite things to see and do while there.

Life's A Beach

For me, Pansea Beach is the most beautiful beach in South-East Asia. If ever you're in Phuket, don't miss out on enjoying the simple pleasure of this perfect natural paradise. You can't get much better than this.

Aroy Thai

Once your palate develops a taste for Thai cuisine, it can prove positively addictive. My wife Vipa is Thai, so I'm fortunate to be able to indulge in it more often than not. One of the best places to try top-quality Thai food would be at The Surin's Lomtalay Restaurant. Its name means 'sea breeze' and it also offers one of the most panoramic sunset views over Pansea Bay. Dinner with a view? Why not! There are also special-themed beach barbecue buffets (weather permitting), which are great fun as well. Nothing beats a dinner of delicious charcoal-grilled meat and seafood as well as a tantalising array of Asian and Mediterranean appetisers while digging your toes in the sand. Check out the blackboard outside Lomtalay for the next session.



Clockwise, from above: Beach buffets at The Surin are not-to-be-missed; Explore the island perched on a pachyderm; Phuket's limestone sea caves beg to be explored; Cool off in style with a tropical tiki cocktail at The Surin.



Elephant Trekking

Exploring the jungle on the back of a gentle elephant is a great way to enjoy nature at its best. There are several places in Phuket where you may experience this unique tour. Elephant-trekking is also an activity where the whole family may participate in and children, especially, will find it great fun.

Canoe Explore

Sea-kayaking around Phang Nga Bay is a not-to-be-missed experience. This should, ideally, be a day-trip and the staff at YTL Hotels' The Surin would be more than happy to make the arrangements for you. There is an amazing network of crystalline limestone caves to be explored, especially the *hongs* – collapsed cave systems in the interiors of the small islands and accessible only through the sea caves via canoe at low tide.



Left: Ka Jok See, a Phuket institution, has to be experienced in the flesh to be believed. Above: Learn how to prepare Thai favourites like creamy seafood curry at cooking lessons helmed by The Surin's Chef Eiad.

Thai Flavours

It's hard not to fall totally in love with the exotic flavours of Thai food. From the ubiquitous *tom yam* soup to tangy *som tam* (papaya salad), it's even better if you pick up a few culinary tips so you can replicate the experience at home. There's the cooking class at the world-famous Blue Elephant in Phuket town but, if you don't wish to leave the luxurious confines of The Surin (and why would you?), sign up with Chef Eiad for a privileged insight into the world of Thai food and cooking. Classes are held every Sunday as well as on other days with prior arrangement.



Eat, Drink, Party

You can't come to Phuket and not eat and dance at Ka Jok See. I think there's no other place in the world like Ka Jok See – a restaurant which serves delicious local food in Phuket's interesting old town and housed in a traditional Sino-Portuguese shop house; you have to experience it to believe it. As the night progresses, the restaurant morphs into one giant house party, where all guests are invited (and expected) to dance the night away. There's no signboard and reservations are a must.





From the colour and rituals of Phuket's annual Vegetarian Festival to the simple bustle of Choeng Talay's weekly markets, there's much to delight the senses on the island.

Veggie Night

One of the biggest events on the island's annual calendar, the Phuket Vegetarian Festival is traditionally held for one week in October in the town or, to be precise, during the ninth lunar month of the Chinese calendar. It's a colourful festival, accompanied by many sacred rituals and displays, like fire-walking. Most of the streets are closed to traffic during this time and there are hundreds of stalls offering pure vegetarian food. It's a colourful time!

To Market, To Market

Thai markets are colourful and a great way to soak up the local vibe. The Thai word for 'market' is *talad* and there are a few weekly markets in the Choeng Talay area to explore. From fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs to rainbow-hued t-shirts and beachwear, there are also always food stalls selling the most delicious-looking cooked food and snacks.





Lend a helping hand by visiting the famous Gibbon Rehabilitation Project.



Laurent Myter, Executive Vice President - Resorts of YTL Hotels, lived on Phuket for quite a few years in his days as a hotel general manager.

Lending A Hand

A visit to the world-famous Gibbon Rehabilitation Project at the Khao Phra Theaw national park is a must. This project works to rehabilitate white-handed gibbons back into their natural habitat and to help end the illegal use of gibbons as pets and tourist attractions. Over 30 years ago, these gibbons were poached to extinction and the project is aiming to repopulate the last remaining forest on the island through gibbons rescued from captivity. ■

Explore The World of YTL Hotels...



THE MAJESTIC HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Sometimes the resurrection of a hotel can herald a second Renaissance for an entire city district, explaining why in Kuala Lumpur all eyes are on The Majestic Kuala Lumpur.

Located on a wide boulevard once known as Victory Avenue, the property was built in the 1930s and, during its hey-day, ranked as one of South-East Asia's grandest hotels. Re-opening in December 2012, The Majestic Hotel is poised to reclaim this former glory; its pièce de résistance will be The Majestic Wing, whose neo-classical details have been meticulously restored. An annexe, housing the majority of the plush rooms, was designed to complement the historic building. A spa has been designed in Art Deco fashion.

Beautifully balancing old and new, The Majestic Hotel is Kuala Lumpur's most exciting hotel debut.



+60 3 2785 8000
www.majestick.com



GAYA ISLAND RESORT
MALAYSIA

Set within the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, off the coast of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Borneo's latest luxury retreat sits gracefully on Gaya Island, the largest of the five islands in the marine park. Golden beaches and lush tropical rainforest beckon sun-worshippers and those wishing to commune with nature, while the island's waters teem with marine life, including bamboo sharks and enormous barrel sponges. Reconnect to a PURE world, the resort's activities programme that vivifies the senses.

One hundred and twenty luxurious hill villas and one two-bedroom suite invite you to embrace island living, while the resort's two distinctive restaurants, Feast Village and Fisherman's Cove, as well as a Spa Village allow for stylish indulging.

+60 3 2783 1000
www.ytlhotels.com



THE GREEN LEAF NISEKO VILLAGE
HOKKAIDO, JAPAN

Located in the heart of Niseko Village in Hokkaido, the newly unveiled The Green Leaf Niseko Village is the premium contemporary resort in Niseko, appealing to guests who want to enjoy a seamless experience of stay, snow and ski. The 200-room, ski-in, ski-out resort is perfectly-placed for all activities and offers a variety of dining options, including the Lookout Café and the hotel's rooftop bar, Altitude. Alternatively, relax in the forested *onsen*, a therapeutic natural volcanic hot spring guaranteed to soak away tension and time.



+86 (21) 6321 0021
www.thegreenleafhotel.com



HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE JAPAN

Set at the foot of the Niseko Annupuri Mountain, the Hilton Niseko Village is the perfect base from which to enjoy a huge variety of outdoor activities throughout the year. Ski on powdery slopes during the winter season and enjoy family-friendly facilities such as the Niseko Ski Village ski school, Niseko Kids ski programme, a luxurious spa, and five restaurants.

There are also two 18-hole championship golf courses nearby (one designed by Arnold Palmer), a tennis complex, an equestrian centre and a unique nature-based activity area called 'PURE', complete with tree-trekking and beginners golf.

+86 (21) 6321 0021
www.hiltonniseko.com



CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT MALAYSIA

Set amidst tea plantations and rolling hills, this tranquil hideaway promises visitors all the splendour, romance and nostalgia of Cameron Highlands' grand colonial heritage.

Cameron Highlands is Malaysia's largest hill resort and is largely unchanged since its colonial heyday, this 'little corner of England in Asia' is still dotted with Tudor-style cottages, a place where scones and afternoon tea will not seem out of place.

The resort, with its tall French doors, timber-beamed ceilings, plantation shutters and a fireplace, add old-world charm to the surroundings. It also houses a Spa Village as well as an 18-hole golf course and 56 luxuriously-appointed rooms and suites, which weave in wondrous colours and textures of Jim Thompson's famous silks.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.cameronhighlandsresort.com





PANGKOR LAUT RESORT
MALAYSIA

Pangkor Laut is a privately-owned island located three miles off the west coast of Malaysia along the Straits of Malacca. This piece of paradise has been two million years in the making, and it is here you'll find one of the world's premier award-winning resorts nestling in the shade of forest giants as old as the land.

There are no other resorts – just secluded bays curled around pristine beaches, evening skies woven with colour and a deep sense of serenity reserved exclusively for guests. A combination of luxury, natural beauty and age-old wilderness woven together to produce an environment where peace and magically-memorable moments are the currency.

Of the island's 300 acres, only a fraction has been developed to house the resort and its eight estates. Wooden buildings blend seamlessly with the forest, as if nature had been the architect dictating how walls curve around foliage, and roofs open up to allow trees to continue on their journey to the sky.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.pangkorlautresort.com



THE ESTATES AT PANGKOR LAUT RESORT
MALAYSIA

In a small, secluded cove near Pangkor Laut Resort rests the eight wonders that comprise The Estates. Each of these individually-crafted enclaves is reminiscent of the traditional South-East Asian way of living of days gone by, when an 'estate' was made up of a number of special purpose buildings placed amidst gardens of astounding beauty.

Comprising two, three or four bedrooms, each Estate offers a private infinity-edge pool, as well as pavilions in various adaptations of Malay architectural traditions.

There is also a private vehicle and driver assigned to each Estate should guests decide to leave the seclusion of their villa to dine at one of the resort's restaurants or to go for a treatment at the Spa Village.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.pangkorlautesates.com





THE MAJESTIC MALACCA
MALAYSIA

The historic city of Malacca is steeped in a rich tapestry of multicultural influences reflected in its heritage architecture, diverse lifestyles and eclectic cuisine.

Located on the banks of the river which, in yesteryear, teemed with Chinese junks and spice-laden vessels from all over the world, The Majestic Malacca provides a glimpse into the splendid saga of an extraordinary empire.

The Majestic Malacca is an integral part of Malacca's colourful history. The original serene mansion, dating back to the 1920s, remains at the heart of the hotel, whilst a new building has been created, mirroring the original architecture, to house 54 spacious rooms and suites.

From the original porcelain flooring, teakwood fittings, intricate artwork and antiques, to the finely crafted Nyonya cuisine, every aspect echoes the history of the region, and offers a beguiling journey through this enchanting heritage.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.majesticmalacca.com



TANJONG JARA RESORT
MALAYSIA

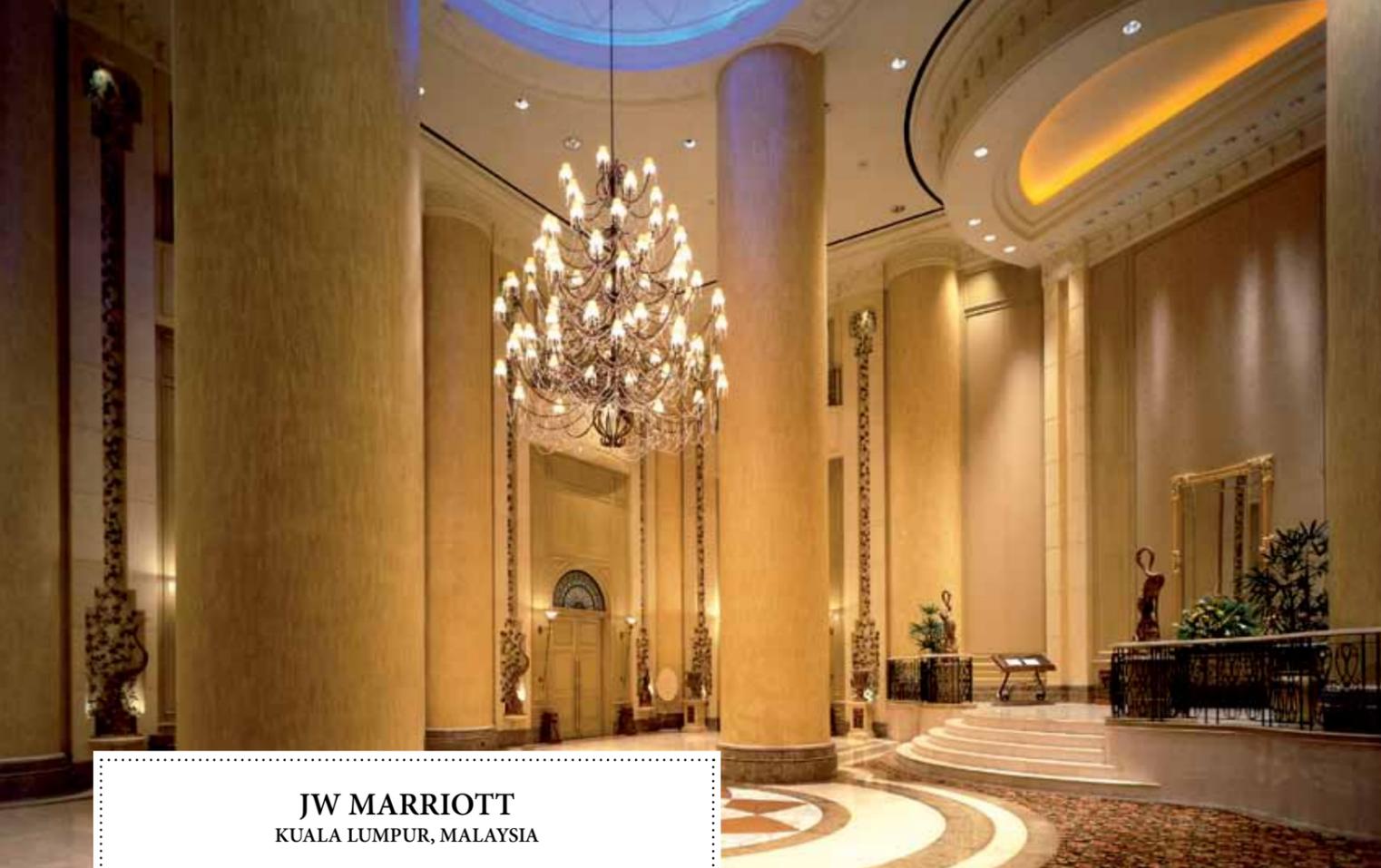
Located on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia, Tanjong Jara Resort is a sanctuary of luxury and well-being steeped in age-old Malay traditions. Designed to reflect the elegance and grandeur of 17th century Malay palaces, Tanjong Jara is a 99-room resort embodiment of the gentle Malay art of service and hospitality.

The philosophy of the Resort is as unique as the Resort itself. Based on the Malay concept of *Sucimurni*, which emphasises purity of spirit, health and well-being, Tanjong Jara encourages true rejuvenation of both body and spirit.

Tanjong Jara is an opportunity to withdraw from the pressures of this ever-changing world by offering a chance to immerse oneself in a sanctuary of serenity and beauty.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.tanjongjararesort.com





JW MARRIOTT
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Guest rooms at JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur offer the ultimate in comfort and convenience, designed with the discerning business traveller in mind. An ample work area, with adjustable desk lighting and ergonomic chair, provides a comfortable environment for executives. Desk-mounted electrical outlets, two-line speaker telephones with call-waiting facility, fax modem and voice mail make for easy communication around the world.

Accommodation comprises 561 guest rooms with 294 Deluxe Kings, 172 Deluxe Twins, 25 Executive Deluxe Rooms, 19 Studio Suites, 32 Junior Suites, 2 Executive Studio Suites, 2 Executive Junior Suites, 8 one-bedroom Suites, 3 two-bedroom Suites, 2 VIP Suites, a Chairman's Suite and a luxurious Presidential Suite.

Marriott Marquis Platinum and Gold card members and guests occupying suites enjoy access to the JW Lounge, with its complimentary breakfast, light refreshments and evening cocktails.

Tel: +60 3 2715 9000
www.ytlhotels.com



THE RITZ-CARLTON
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Discover the exclusive Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur and experience a place where ancient rivers converge and a modern city beckons guests to explore the sights, sounds and flavours of Malaysia. Located downtown in the Golden Triangle business district, this distinctive five-star luxury hotel in Kuala Lumpur is conveniently accessible to upscale shopping, dining and entertainment. At The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur, guests can indulge in soothing spa treatments, delectable cuisine or simply relax in the exceptional comfort of their rooms and take in the best the city has to offer.

The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is the city's first award-winning full-butler hotel, featuring 365 guest rooms and suites. The fresh style of The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur is influenced by a variety of themes reflecting Malaysia's diverse artistry of ethnic cultures. The dark-toned woods with angular designs reflect masculinity, while details like brass inlays add a touch of elegance. Rich earthy tones in the carpet and wall coverings are used to create a cosy, warm home-away-from-home ambience, while hidden modern technologies add a modern yet subtle flair.

Tel: +60 3 2142 8000
www.ytlhotels.com





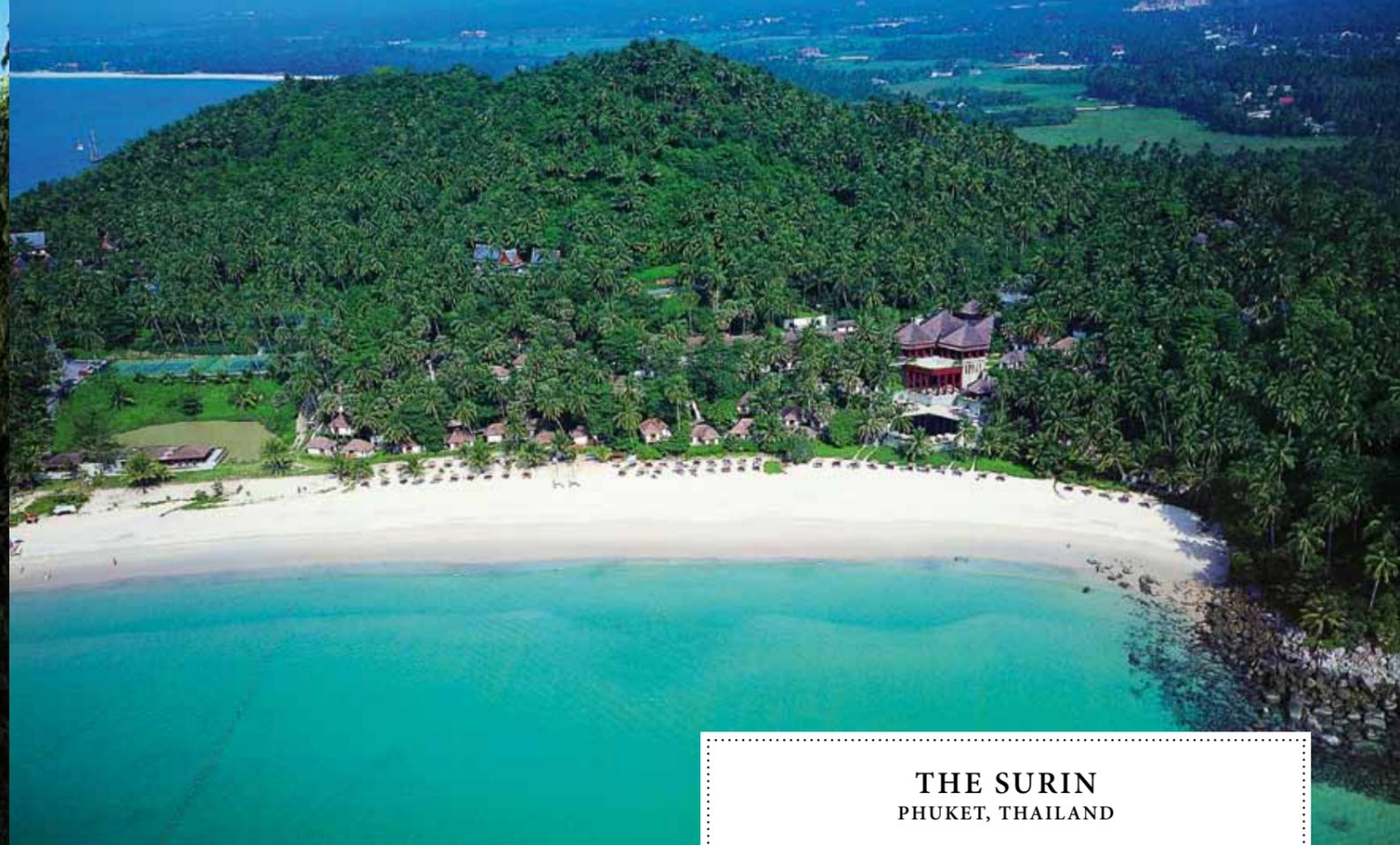
VILLA TASSANA
PHUKET, THAILAND

Set amidst a tropical forest on a craggy cliff overlooking the beautiful emerald green of the Andaman Sea is a gem in the YTL Hotels' portfolio of luxury holiday destinations. Located just 15 minutes away from Phuket International Airport on the island's quiet, undeveloped north-western coastline, Villa Tassana offers guests a vacation of modern sophistication married with Thai hospitality.

Spread over a generous 2,800 sq m, the villa features three large bedrooms with ensuite bath and dressing areas, a 15m swimming pool, separate living and dining pavilions, a kitchen and a maid's room. For those looking to get away from it all, Villa Tassana is staffed by one dedicated attendant and a chef specialising in delicious home-style Thai dishes.

Guests can also enjoy the first-class spa and sports facilities located at the nearby Trisara Hotel. There are three excellent golf courses nearby, including the exclusive Blue Canyon course, and a range of luxury motor yachts you can use to explore Phuket's many bays, islands and dive locations.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.ytlhotels.com



THE SURIN
PHUKET, THAILAND

The Surin Phuket is an exclusive beach retreat for discerning travellers, families and couples seeking relaxation and indulgence in a serene beachfront setting. The Surin Phuket is located on the tranquil Pansea Beach on the west coast of Phuket Island, Thailand and a member of Design Hotels.

Offering a total of 103 hillside and beachfront cottages and suites all discreetly built into a carefully conserved landscape, amidst coconut trees and gently sloping down to meet a small coral reef. The Surin, Phuket offers a contemporary Thai experience in timeless simplicity and modern sophistication.



Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.ytlhotels.com



SPA VILLAGE RESORT
TEMBOK, BALI, INDONESIA

Dawn rises and an indigo curtain of stars is drawn back from the sky, exposing a dramatic landscape of soaring peaks that sweep down across grassy lowlands to the black volcanic sand that kisses the blue of the Bali sea. You are in Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali and the day has just begun.

Inspired by the award-winning Spa Village Pangkor Laut, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali embraces the same healing ethos of celebrating local culture, honouring the ancient remedies of the region and infusing each visit with the essence of the surrounding scenery.

Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is a place of peacefulness and calm, combining the therapeutic value of its beautiful location with an ancient and rich cultural heritage. Reflecting the spirituality of ages, the environment here is soft and serene; its people go about their days in a caring manner that brings calm to the harried and peace to the stressed; here, at Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali, it is possible to recapture one's sense of self.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.spavillage.com



EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS

The Eastern & Oriental Express is more than a train service: the quarter-of-a-mile in length train is a haven of comfort, style and luxury, and the perfect vantage point from which to tour the region. The Restaurant Cars, Saloon Car and Bar Car are located at the centre of the train, while the Observation Car, with its open deck area, is located at the rear.

The interior walls of the compartments are panelled with cherry wood and elm burr, and decorative marquetry friezes and intricate design inlays. The delicate embroidery work was done in Malaysia, and the bespoke carpets hand-tufted in Thailand.

Chefs onboard the E&O Express are internationally-renowned for their tantalising variety of Eastern and European dishes, using the finest seasonal ingredients. While guests dine at night, the steward transforms the compartment from a living room to a luxurious bedroom.

www.easternandorientalexpress.com





MUSE HÔTEL DE LUXE
FRANCE

Bardot would no doubt approve of Saint-Tropez newcomer, Muse Hôtel De Luxe, just minutes from the Place de Lices by car, situated on the stunning Ramatuelle *route de plages* and set amongst an ecological landscape of terraced gardens.

Fifteen ultra chic suites (10 featuring private plunge pools) are dedicated to famous muses such as 'Edith', after Edith Piaf, 'Catherine', after Catherine Deneuve, and 'Lauren', after Lauren Bacall. Each suite sports a unique interior but all blend seamlessly with cool stone floors and marmorino wall finishes. Thoughtful touches include a 42" Loewe plasma screen with over 100 channels, a PlayStation, iPad and iPhone.

Designed with pure lines, a cool elegant reception area and outdoor water cascades, the hotel is a reflection of architectural simplicity, immediately stamping its original and stylish signature on the Saint-Tropezienne landscape.

Tel: +334 94 430 440
www.muse-hotels.com



BRAY HOUSE
ENGLAND

An elegant private home dating back to the late 17th century, Bray House has been restored and transformed into an elegant, high design boutique home stay. Featuring an eclectic mix of interiors spanning the Art Deco period of the early 1900s, Bray House is a unique experience of the gentrified English lifestyle, complete with bespoke service and intimate atmosphere.

Designer furniture, vintage accessories and vivid splashes of colour create an atmosphere that marries the modern and the classic. Each of the bedrooms has its own theme: a lullaby of white in one, and a symphony of Tuscany red in another. Bray House also features a private courtyard and a natural spring found in the garden.

The idyllic village of Bray, near Windsor, is quintessentially English, with its period houses, traditional pubs with beamed ceilings and fireplaces, and a beautifully-restored church dating back to 1293.

Tel: +60 3 2715 9000
www.ytlhotels.com



1. Spa Village Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

This unique retreat offers the world's most sophisticated therapies integrated with traditional healing practices of the region. Paying tribute to Malaysia's fascinating cultural diversity and rich healing heritage, this most stylish of spas seamlessly blends ancient and modern practices, using natural local ingredients to deliver blissful relaxation and rejuvenation.

2. Spa Village Pangkor Laut Malaysia

The Spa Village at Pangkor Laut Resort is a unique, ultra-exclusive retreat that extols the healing tradition of Malaysia's diverse history of people and cultures and wealth abundance of exotic natural resources. The abundance of Malay, Chinese, Indian and Thai practices make this the ideal tranquil setting for complete rejuvenation of body and soul.

3. Spa Village Malacca Malaysia

The Spa Village Malacca is the world's only spa to base its therapies on the healing heritage of the Baba-Nyonya or Peranakan culture – a unique combination of Chinese and Malay influences. The spa is spread across the first two floors of the new wing and provides a serene environment in which one can rest, recuperate and rejuvenate in the care of some of the world's best therapists.

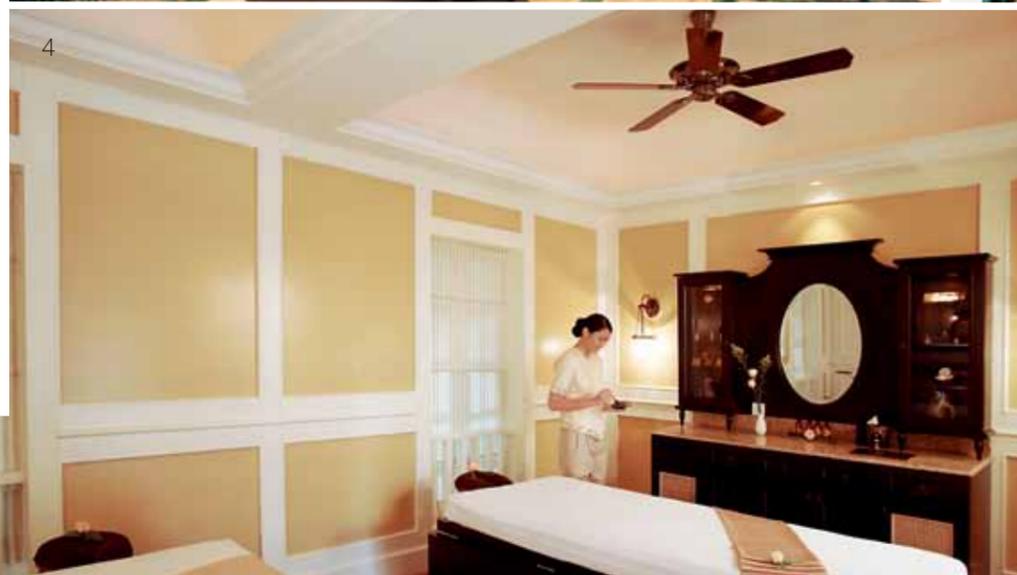
4. Spa Village Cameron Highlands Malaysia

Cameron Highlands Resort features the third wellness centre of the award-winning Spa Village brand with a wide range of sophisticated treatments and healing therapies inspired by the restorative properties of tea. Each guest luxuriates in a signature tea bath before every treatment. Cameron Highlands Spa Village offers tranquil indoor and outdoor treatment rooms, tea bath rooms and a fully-equipped gymnasium.

5. Spa Village Tanjong Jara Malaysia

At Spa Village Tanjong Jara, time-tested health and beauty traditions are revived in the most comforting surrounds. Guests can benefit from a comprehensive programme of therapies, created using unique ingredients from indigenous herbs and plants, along with the skills of resident Malay healers.

Tel: +60 3 2783 1000
www.spavillage.com





FEAST VILLAGE
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

Feast to your heart's content in our Feast Village, a dramatic and stylish dining haven with a village charm. Here, you will find 11 uniquely-designed restaurants serving a mix of world-class cuisine and providing a display of culinary skill embodied in a chic and contemporary atmosphere.

Restaurants and bars at Feast Village include Fisherman's Cove, Luk Yu Tea House, Pak Loh Chiu Chow, Tarbush, Spice of India, Starhill Tea Salon, Shook!, Jake's Charbroil Steak, KoRyo Won, Enak, and Village Bar.

The design of Feast Village is inspired by nature. Walls are asymmetrical and serve not to separate, but rather to provide peaceful enclaves where people may relax.

Rice paper from Japan combines with slate and *ikat* from Indonesia, granite from China, silk from Thailand and timber from Myanmar to create the essence of Asia from a design perspective, making Feast Village truly one-of-a-kind.

Tel: +60 3 2782 3855
www.starhillgallery.com



SHOOK! SHANGHAI AT THE SWATCH ART PEACE HOTEL
CHINA

Perched on a space of symmetry and proportion, Shook! Shanghai features the skills of four epicurean chefs with four distinct cuisines. A show kitchen – dubbed the 'Ferrari' of kitchens – is where its signature dishes are created around the senses. The menu flirts with seasonal trends with whispers of Chinese, Japanese, South-East Asian and modern Western cuisines, yet flexible enough to transport you anywhere your heart and palate desire. Another highlight at Shook! Shanghai is the showcase of the world's finest wines and champagnes, including rare vintages from 1945 through to 2000. Shook! Shanghai also houses The Time Bar and The Swatch Art Peace Hotel Terrace on the roof top, overlooking a stunning backdrop of the Pudong skyline.

+86 (21) 6321 0021
www.shookrestaurantshanghai.com



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MUSIC Maker

A graduate of the Juilliard School of Music and brother to Nat King Cole, jazz maestro Freddy Cole was in Malaysia recently to perform at the gala opening of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur. He talks to *YTL Life* about life, sport and his musical family.

I was blessed to have started playing the piano since the age of five, and it is inspiring being able to play music while travelling the world and meeting great folks. There's something about going up to the band stand, hitting the music and, in a moment, forgetting everything – problems, what happened that day – and just focussing on the music.

Growing up in a musical family is no different from that of other families. Yes, my brother is Nat King Cole but all my brothers are musicians. My sister plays the piano but music was always something we had in the house. We had loving parents and, the moment we all get together, music is the last thing we talk about.

If I could go back in time, there's nothing I would change. I had a wonderful childhood and now I have a good life and a good family. My parents were the best and that's all there is. I had a great time growing up.

My entire family are sports fans – football, baseball, basketball, you name it. We go to games together as well and football is definitely a favourite.

I listen to music all the time, mostly jazz, though. Every day, when I travel, when I stay in a hotel... I also can't sleep unless I have some music playing. That's me.

This is my first experience staying at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur and I like it. I've been having a good time so far, sleeping in mostly. It's quiet and comfortable and, if you stay in many hotels around the world, like I do, that's what you look out for: a quiet atmosphere, comfort, politeness... and this hotel has all of that.

To get away from it all, I like going to the golf course. That's where you'll find me hanging out... simply beating the ball around, hitting it again and again.

I'd injured my hand before, while pursuing a professional career in football. But I believe getting hurt then turned out to be a blessing in disguise because it gave me strength and will to go on doing something I was probably called to do. That's the way I see it. **X**

Freddy Cole jazzing up the stage during a recent performance at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.



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