

YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

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Issue Twenty One

The YTL Luxury Magazine

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The Passage
of Time
Malacca - Malaysia's
Historical Heart

Island of Festivals
Bali's Celebratory Season

YTL People
Felipe Massa
Tash Aw
Alain Roux

Niseko Food Trail • Destination Weddings • Kampong Living



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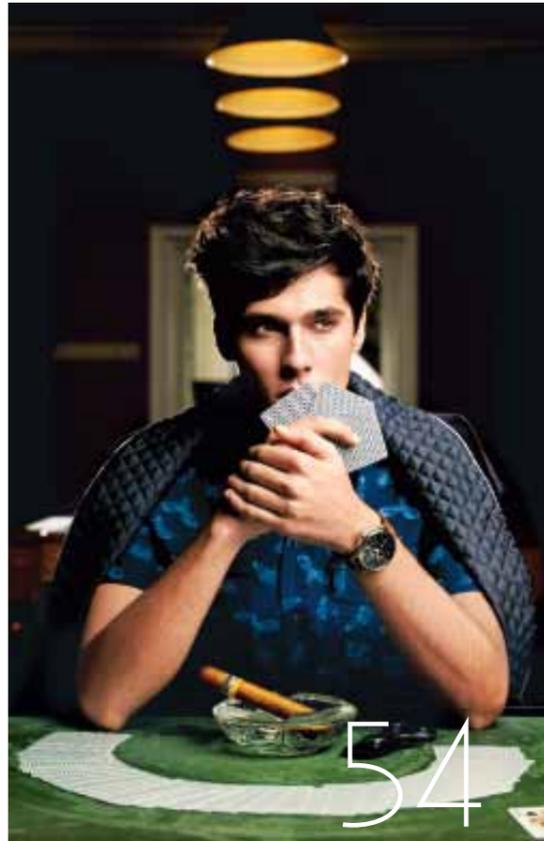
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YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

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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

It's been an exciting time for YTL Hotels, with Malaysia being the pit-stop for most of the action. I am pleased to say The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur was chosen as the venue for the prestigious Formula 1 Gala Night. Our hotels around the city also played host to a steady stream of international names, from Ferrari driver Felipe Massa to statuesque mogul Kimora Lee Simmons and singer-songwriter Kenneth 'Babyface' Edmonds, while our resort Pangkor Laut hosted culinary legend Alain Roux.

Hollywood star Kimora also launched the Starhill Gallery Luxury Channel, a new and exciting multimedia platform that provides compelling, high quality videos, trendsetting online editorials and presents an outstanding range of high-end retail products that are available in Starhill Gallery. This is a compelling additional avenue for Starhill Gallery to showcase the latest in the world of luxury retail to its discerning clientele globally.

The influential *UK Tatler* magazine presented The Swatch Art Peace Hotel with the Tatler Travel Award for 'Daring Design', giving the Shanghai landmark the ultimate recognition for its stylish, contemporary design and ethos. YTL Hotels is very proud to see our management partnership with The Swatch Group Ltd and, more importantly, our shared dreams for The Swatch Art Peace Hotel come to fruition. We are thrilled that it is now recognised as a leading hospitality icon, especially in a city as sensational as Shanghai.

We are also delighted that Gaya Island Resort has been named in *Condé Nast Traveller's* Hot List 2013 as one of the best new hotels in the world. The resort was called a revelation, as one of the first, truly smart plugged-in places to stay in Borneo.

In addition, we are pleased to announce the recent launch of *A Perennial Feast*, a new cookbook that compiles the very best of YTL Hotels' international dishes and recipes, a lovely work put together by author Kim Inglis and photographer Jacob Termansen, working with our teams of talented chefs. Enjoy the issue and God bless.



Kimora, flanked by
Joseph Yeoh and
Amarjit Chhina,
launching the Starhill
Gallery Luxury Channel.



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THE GLORIOUS RACE

The world's hottest race, the Formula One Grand Prix, returned to Malaysia with an unrivalled celebration of glitz and glamour at the SapuraKencana Petroleum Malaysian Grand Prix Charity Gala in The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.



1. Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh, Dato' Seri Jean Todt and Datuk Seri Shahril Shamsuddin.
2. Datin Mastisa Mohamed and Dato' Mokhzani Mahathir.
3. Roen Cian Nagapan, Soren Ravn and Stuart Tomlinson.
4. HM Tuanku Alhaj Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah and HM Tuanku Hajah Haminah.
5. Pedro de la Rosa and Nico Hülkenberg.

It was a night of many unforgettable sights at the recent SapuraKencana Petroleum Malaysian Grand Prix Charity Gala. Celebrating 15 years of Formula One racing in Malaysia, the gala, held at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, drew 800 people, including guests of honour Seri Paduka Baginda Yang Di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Alhaj Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah and Seri Paduka Baginda Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah, the King and Queen of Malaysia, as well as local and international celebrities, members of the F1 fraternity, and movers and shakers of the corporate world.

Guests, who were dressed to the nines, began arriving at 6pm for the cocktail reception, which was followed by a charity auction featuring sponsored items by Formula One teams and drivers, jeweller Ceres, watchmaker Cecil Purnell and YTL Hotels to raise funds for the National Heart Institute Foundation.



After the auction, guests adjourned to the life-sized facade of the Eastern & Oriental Express train, a splendid transformation of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Grand Ballroom, decorated with candles, old books, pocket watches and fresh flowers, complete with a lounge and bar to depict the luxurious onboard experience for guests travelling for the first time.



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6. Sara Maclaurin, James Maclaurin, Rocio Beltran and James Beltran. 7. Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg. 8. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. 9. Dato' Siti Nurhaliza Tarudin. 10. Dato' Mohd Ibrahim Mohd Nor, Datin Nina Juren, Dato' Sufian Majid and Datin Alissa Fitri. 11. Ian Briggs and Andrew Whitney. 12. Stephane Valsamidis and Jonathan Cecil Purnell.



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13. Kenny 'Babyface' Edmonds. 14. Kimora Lee Simmons. 15. Teri Hatcher. 16. Datuk Seri Michelle Yeoh. 17. Hwei Tan and Dato' Yeoh Soo Min. 18. Dato' Dr Hassan Arif, Ritzzawati Rosli, Toh Puan Dr Aishah Ong and Lim Siew Lian.

Guests feasted on delectable morsels as they were entertained with a classical music performance by trombonist Marques Young of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and the Sentral KL Station band. At 10.30pm, the excitement rose when 10-time Grammy Award-winning R&B singer, Kenny 'Babyface' Edmonds, took to the stage with hits like *Cool In You*, *Every Time I Close My Eyes*, *Whip Appeal* and *Fly Me To The Moon*, as well as a medley of his favourite songs including *I'll Make Love To You* and *Change The World*. He was then joined onstage by Malaysia's sweetheart Dato' Siti Nurhaliza in duets of *Fire* and *When I Fall in Love*, a harmonious unity of two legendary musicians from different parts of the world.

After the guests of honour departed, the night continued, with after-party entertainment provided by DJ Najee ensuring the evening ended on a high note.



A WEEK OF STYLE

Starhill Gallery recently celebrated seven days of fashion and style with their annual fashion celebration aptly titled Starhill Fashion Week. Kuala Lumpur's best dressed set turned up in their stylish best to view fashion collections by international names like Valentino, Kenzo and M Missoni, as well as creations by homegrown talents, including Khoon Hooi and KLutched. **W**



1. Dr Casey Chow & Ashley Chow.
 2. Charmaine Yusuf, Alia Bastaman & Ian Loh.
 3. Peter David, Priscilla Yee & Chris Chia.
 4. Chelsia Ng, Joyce Wong, Shirena Hamzah, Rozie Mastor & Serena Choong.
 5. Jeremiah Tan, Dato' Yeoh Soo Min, Dato' Jimmy Choo & Hwei Tan.
 6. Lexie Rodriguez & Joshua Ivanovic.
 7. Nikola Hassan, TS Yap, Ida Lokman & Shawna Yap.
 8. Arabyrd.
 9. Hajar Yusoff, Mani Picar & Aisyah Yusoff.

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



01



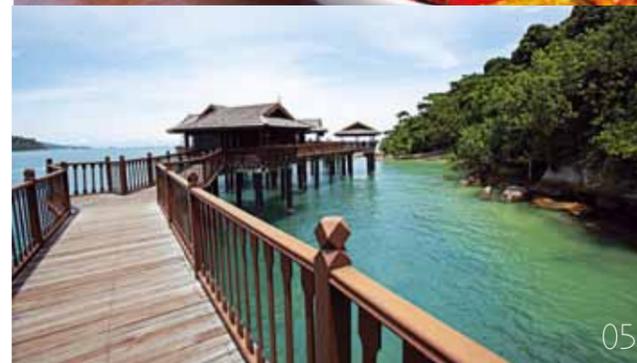
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Saying 'I Do' In Style

Ever dreamt of an exotic fairytale wedding? Well, **The Surin**, gracefully located on Phuket's near-perfect Pansea Beach and a member of Design Hotels, offers private wedding and wedding party packages for couples who want their special day set in paradise. Surrounded by the Andaman Sea and coconut groves, choose from Western or Thai-style wedding ceremonies and leave everything in the good hands of the resort's expert coordinator. Finish things off with a special flying lantern ceremony. Thai-riffic? We think so.

02

The Book of Matthew

The award-winning **Shook! Shanghai** restaurant at The Swatch Art Peace Hotel in China is now helmed by Minneapolis-born chef Matthew Ona. Bringing with him an eclectic buzz and faultless culinary prowess, your dinner experience is guaranteed to be more than memorable. Feast on a varied spread of delectables, which may include organic black pork belly with homemade *kimchi* and classic salmon tartare with sweet oven-roasted tomatoes and ginger *miso* rose sauce.

03

Zen Moments

Surrounded by mist-swathed jungle, the **Spa Village Cameron Highlands** offers a unique haven where you can escape from the world and immerse yourself in a cocoon of bliss. With a special treatment menu that is inspired by the Orang Asli and their deep understanding of natural healing ingredients, as well as the tea and strawberries the highland is so famous for, begin each spa journey with an unforgettable tea-inspired bathing ritual before proceeding to your treatment of choice.

04

Taste of Sabah

Fancy dining while your toes are digging into the sand and your only distractions would be the sea and the sumptuous feast ahead of you? Look, then, to **Gaya Island Resort's** Bajau Laut beach barbeque experience, inspired by the cuisine of Borneo's seafaring people. Dine on piping-hot coal-grilled seafood as well as traditional Sabahan accompaniments like *hinava* (a dish best likened to *ceviche*), steamed mountain rice, local sweet corn and shots of *lihing*, the famously potent Kadazan rice wine.

05

Island-Hopping

If you'd like a taste of traditional island life, consider an excursion to neighbouring Pangkor Island during your stay at the luxurious **Pangkor Laut Resort**. Hop onto a speedboat for a quick ride to Pangkor Jetty, where your guide will take you for a walk through the little town, with its colourful shops, interesting fish and seafood stalls, traditional Malay homes and local coffeshops. Shop for quality seafood products produced by local cottage industries as a tasty souvenir!

06

Be A-Mused

Kuala Lumpur's **Starhill Gallery** introduces its newly-revamped Muse Floor, which offers a haven for epicureans to indulge their passion for the culinary and lifestyle arts. Having opened in March 2013, the expansive 12,000 sq ft space, named the Starhill Culinary Studio, includes state-of-the-art kitchens, cooking classes, demonstration areas and even private dining rooms. All you need now is your imagination to create an experience to remember!

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



Old City, New World

They say that visiting Malacca means visiting Malaysia. And, with its long and eventful history, it's easy to see why. In this city, where history and modernity sit side-by-side, a curious townscape is created that draws in visitors from far and wide to marvel at the unique legacy of this former Straits Settlement.

Text **Flavia Galeotti** Photography **Yong Keen Keong & Ting Yang Shan**

Despite the well-worn cliché, Malacca truly is a melting pot of cultures and races, thanks to its historic role as a port of call in the 15th century, right through to being one of the British territories' Straits Settlements in the 19th century. The influx of various cultural influences over the centuries has created a heritage unlike any other in South-East Asia. Remnants of the past, both big and small, stand strong in Malacca City as it progresses into the 21st century; like the inconspicuous chimney stacks of wood-burning stoves from the old days that mingle among satellite dishes on shop house rooftops, or the 1920s mansion with the large courtyard that now marks the entrance of The Majestic Malacca.

This balancing act of integrating the old with the new is carefully but beautifully done, such that, in 2008, the city was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site (along with George Town, a sister Straits Settlement in Penang) and, in 2010, was recognised as having reached the benchmark of a developed state. In a further effort to preserve this heritage, the city was declared

Murals depicting Malacca's colourful history decorate the backs of shop houses along the Malacca River.

a smoke-free zone in June 2011, where 'no smoking' signs dotted about the narrow streets gently remind both residents and visitors alike to kindly refrain from smoking.

From what was initially a small fishing village, Malacca has come a long way and, even in the passing centuries, the practice of mixing and assimilating old traditions and cultures with new ones has been commonplace throughout.

Humble Beginnings

Take a stroll along the Malacca River (or a leisurely cruise, if you prefer to travel in comfort) and murals painted on the plain rear walls of shop houses, opposite the river from **Kampung Morten**, illustrate the colourful and lively history of Malacca.

Scenes depicting the arrival of Sumatran prince **Parameswara** start Malacca's visual history guide. Legend has it Parameswara named the city after the Malacca tree he sat under where he witnessed a mouse-deer defend itself against his hunting dog by pushing it into the river. The prince took this as a sign of the powerless overcoming the powerful – he had previously fled a Majapahit attack on Singapura (modern-day Singapore) – and appointed himself the first Sultan of Malacca, taking the name of Iskandar Shah and going on to establish Malacca as a port that led it to its critical role of trading spices and precious goods between Arabia, China, India and Europe. Thanks to the strategic location of the port in the Straits of Malacca, its easy access and ideal weather fluctuations that brought in new traders and dispatched the finished business, the city positively flourished.

Another illustration is of **Admiral Zheng He**, a pivotal figure in the trading relationship between China and Malacca, and there is also a depiction of the arrival of **Princess Hang Li Po** of the Ming Dynasty to be married to Sultan Mansur Shah. Elephants, junks, Portuguese carracks, Chinese envoys and scenes of combat decorate the exterior of the first stretch of shop houses, all testament to the important moments of Malacca's early years.

Beyond this, further down the river, is another collection of murals, representing the different facets of contemporary



“From a small fishing village, Malacca has come a long way, mixing and assimilating old traditions and cultures with new ones.”

2. The Majestic Malacca, where the past meets the present in modern-day Malacca. 3. The hotel originally began life as the private residence of a successful businessman. 4. There are still pockets of Malacca that are a throwback to a simpler and slower pace of life. 5. The original ceramic tiles that are still in use in The Majestic Malacca.

multicultural Malacca, and Malaysia as a whole: taking up a wall from floor to roof, a traditional Indian dancer strikes a pose next to a serene Peranakan beauty and a grinning lion head, golden *kuih bahulu* is plated alongside vivid green *ketupat*, representatives from Sabah and Sarawak in traditional dress gaze out at passers-by, while a Rafflesia flower is proudly in full bloom. This piece, initially commissioned for city beautification, is a treat for the eyes and a popular point of attraction. Almost like a 21st century re-imagining of the elaborately decorated old Chinese shopfronts



“Influences of the Dutch, Portuguese, British and Peranakan cultures permeate each facet and detail of the hotel.”

6



6. A house on Heeren Street, now known as Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock, where Malacca's wealthiest families used to live.
7. Hand-beaded shoes, a perfect match for the Nyonya kebaya.
8. Malacca's iconic Christ Church was completed in 1753.

7



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life on the cover //

that populate the old city of Malacca, the past is honoured and infused with the present, and saved for posterity.

Over time, Malacca's importance as a trading port was recognised by many foreign powers and, as such, was colonised by the Portuguese, Dutch, British and Japanese before Malaysia gained independence. These governing powers left their imprints on the developing city port in one form or another – whether as architecture, cuisine, language or clothing – the remains of which can be seen to this day.

Perfect Harmony

One of the most recognisable landmarks in the old city is the iconic red **Christ Church** building. Initially built by the Dutch to replace St Paul's Church, and used by the Portuguese as a Catholic church, the new Bovenkerk was completed in 1753 in traditional Dutch architectural style. When the handover to the British East India Company occurred in 1838, the church was re-consecrated as Christ Church and painted red in 1911. To date, it is the oldest functioning Protestant church in Malacca – such is the longevity of historical buildings, despite constant development and on-going progress. And yet, across the Malacca River, is the contrasting **Jonker Street**. Famous for being the place to shop while you walk, antiques and handicraft shops are wedged in between clothing boutiques, bars and restaurants, while stalls line up the roadside to sell bric-a-brac and cheap but tasty street food.

The old and new in Malacca always seem to complement, rather than compete against, each other. Either by merging together to become an updated version of what it used to be (like The Majestic Malacca), or by coexisting side-by-side.

The concept of coexisting without conflict is not something new in Malacca. On what is formally known as Jalan Tukang Emas, or Harmony Street (alternatively called Temple Street), sit three of the oldest places of worship in Malacca. **Kampung Kling Mosque** is a curious blend of Sumatran architecture adapted to a mosque built in 1784, where the minaret resembles a pagoda and there are sloped eaves rather than a domed roof. The **Cheng Hoon Teng Temple** practices the three doctrinal systems of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, and was built in 1645. The **Sri Poyatha Moorthi Temple** was built in 1781, after the Dutch colonial government gave Thavinayagar Chitty the plot of land. Each representing the three main races of Malaysia, these holy places have opened their doors for centuries without incident. The spirit of 1Malaysia was (and still is) alive and well in the old Malacca city, long before it was pioneered in our 21st century.

An Oriental Touch

Due to the strong trading ties between China and Malacca, many Chinese immigrants married local Malays and settled down for a new life in the sultanate. From these unions grew the unique Baba Nyonya culture, a distinct blend of Chinese and local Malay customs that can also be found in the other former Straits Settlements of Penang and Singapore.

Out of this marriage of cultures (so to speak) came the famous hybrids of cuisine and clothing: Nyonya cuisine contains equal elements of Chinese cooking mixed with flavourful local spices, and created such delectable dishes as *laksa* (of which Malacca boasts the best), Nyonya *kuih* and *ayam pongteh* (a chicken stew cooked with fermented soybean paste, mushrooms and a dash of *sambal*), while an adaptation of the local *baju kurung* by the Peranakans gave rise to the Nyonya *kebaya*, a more fitted, meticulously embroidered blouse featuring particularly traditional Chinese designs (like the phoenix and dragon, but is also otherwise typically decorated with flowers and animals) made from delicate fabric, worn over a batik skirt and matched with the painstakingly hand-beaded *kasut manik*. The Nyonya *kebaya* is largely considered to be one of the more beautiful traditional garments, with the best tailors calling Malacca home. And while the whole ensemble is generally reserved for special occasions, it has been given a modern twist worn over jeans or skirts by the more daring and fashion-forward Malaysian woman.

The appeal of the Nyonya *kebaya* is timeless, such that women have created extensive collections of vintage and antique *kebayas* for their personal wardrobe – notably Tun Endon Mahmood (the late wife of the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia), who had in her collection more than 200 *kebayas* displayed in Malaysia, Singapore, and Melbourne, Australia, after her passing in 2005.

The touch of the past is not hard to miss in a modern city like this, where, at every corner, you are faced with over 500 years of history. The idea that preserving history compromises national development is unfounded when we look at how celebrated Malacca is among Malaysians and visiting foreigners. This city is a perfect example of keeping mementos of the past, having feet firmly planted in the present, but with eyes cast towards the future. ■



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9. The refurbished Majestic Malacca has retained its vintage feel. 10. The Spa Village offers unique traditional Peranakan beauty and health treatments. 11. Get a warm welcome at The Majestic Malacca with a pot of tea, served the traditional way, in a Chinese basket.



10

THE MAJESTIC MALACCA

Two grand gateposts, inscribed with Chinese calligraphy in bold black strokes, stand sentinel at the entrance to The Majestic Malacca. The pristine white exterior, as if it were only built yesterday, belie the original age of the historical hotel. The building began life in 1929 as the private residence of businessman Leong Long Man, who left Guangzhou, China, to make his fortune with rubber plantations in Malacca. Despite his success in business, he succumbed to tuberculosis two years after moving into his mansion, which was inherited by his oldest son.

The house passed hands several times before it reached Lim Heng Fang, who established it as the Majestic Hotel in 1955. In its original incarnation, the hotel boasted an enjoyable atmosphere and 24 rooms at formidable rates, which meant that the hotel never went empty.

For almost half a century, the Majestic Hotel stayed in business, but the state government bought the land in 2000 and closed the establishment down. Sitting empty for seven years, with the threat of being demolished hanging over it, YTL Hotels stepped in to resuscitate the classic hotel with a new lease of life, reincarnating it as The Majestic Malacca. A 15-storey expansion was added behind the old building (originally where the servants quarters once stood), creating 52 rooms and suites furnished with four-poster beds draped in silks and claw-footed bathtubs

standing proudly in the middle of the bathrooms. Expect to be ushered to your room by a bellboy bearing a tea basket with traditional Chinese teapot and cups for a warming welcome.

Even with the addition of the new wing, the old building remains largely unaltered from its early days; the English ceramic tiles on the ground floor are the originals from the 1920s, which were restored to their former glory, and the louvered shutters on the exterior of the building were repainted their original green. The upper floor was cleared to make a large space and transformed into the dining area, serving the famous flavourful Peranakan cuisine.

The vintage feel of the hotel was not lost to the revamp, where influences of the Dutch, Portuguese, British and Peranakan cultures permeate each facet and detail of the hotel. A touch of the colonial 'rubber tapper's estate' ambience lingers in the foyer and tea room, a calming space to hide from the relentless heat of the outdoors.

Not to be missed is YTL's signature Spa Village, the only spa in the world where treatments are derived from traditional Peranakan beauty and health routines. Decide between the *suam-suam panas* (warming) or *shiok-shiok sejuk* (cooling) experience, or choose à la carte treatments while enjoying a blissful hair mask or a sublime oil massage with infused with spices that invigorate the skin and prickle your senses.



Village People

Enjoy the sweet simplicity of kampong life at Tanjong Jara Resort, where you can escape from the frenetic fervour of big city life and, instead, indulge in a few blissful days of village life *de luxe*.

Tanjong Jara Resort's weekly Kampong Life activity is designed to let guests experience a slice of village life.

City living can get to you. If your daily schedule revolves around the huggemugger of crowds, commutes and the ticking clock, it might be time to break away for a few days of the simple life. One of the best places to retreat to is the Tanjong Jara Resort, perched along the golden coastline of Malaysia's north-eastern state of Terengganu. The Malay culture and way of life has always formed an integral part of the Tanjong Jara experience but it truly comes to life every Saturday as the resort hosts its weekly Kampong Life activity.

At the beachfront garden, a flurry of activity takes place every Saturday evening as makeshift stalls are set up offering resort guests a taste of village life. Kitchen staff will set up woks where *keropok lekor*, a type of fish sausage and the state's most popular snack, *keropok ikan* (fish crisps) and *cucur sayur* (vegetable fritters) are fried à la minute, and cups of sweet, strong local coffee are served. For those who wish to cool down in the tropical heat, there are also cups of iced roselle juice. Nearby, a *makcik* (aunty) mans a stall offering piping-hot *akok*, a traditional



life feature //

“At Tanjong Jara Resort's beachfront garden, a flurry of activity takes place every Saturday evening as makeshift stalls are set up offering resort guests a taste of village life.”



KAMPONG LIFE 101

A quick guide to what's what.

Congkak – A traditional girl's game that is played all over the Nusantara region, using a wooden *congkak* board with about 14 to 18 holes, depending on the board. Seashells, bright red saga seeds, tamarind seeds or even marbles may be used to play. A game of mental calculation, the objective of *congkak* is to capture the seeds or shells of your opponent, whereby the person with the highest number collected is deemed the winner. If you have a handful of Malaysian coins, look for the older 10sen ones as a picture of a *congkak* board is depicted on its reverse side.

Gamelan – A traditional musical ensemble featuring a variety of instruments, usually at least one metallophone or xylophone, gongs and drums.

Takraw – Also referred to as *sepak takraw* or *sepak raga*, this is a sport that is immensely popular in the Malay Peninsula as well as the south of Thailand. Using a small rattan ball, the rules are simple: only the feet, knee, chest and head of the player are allowed to touch the ball. A type of 'kick volleyball', it is traditionally played by men.

Akok – A traditional *kuih* (local cake or pudding) that is popular in the East Coast of Malaysia, particularly in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu. Made using a mixture of hen's eggs, *santan* (coconut milk) and flour, there may be several shapes and variations of *akok* but it is always soft, spongy, egg-y and sweet. Pandanus leaves may also be used to flavour it, causing some *akok* to have a green-ish colour.

Lekor – Also known as *keropok lekor*, this is one of the East Coast's most famous nibbles. It is especially famous and popular in Terengganu. Made from fish, sago or tapioca flour and lightly seasoned with salt, these can best be referred to as Malaysian fish sausages and may be eaten boiled or fried. Best enjoyed with a dribble of chilli sauce.

Lemang – Rich and filling, *lemang* is a traditional Malay rice dish made with glutinous rice and coconut milk. Stuffed in hollowed-out sticks of bamboo lined with banana leaves, in order to prevent the rice sticking to the bamboo, it is cooked over an open fire. Found all over Malaysia, this dish is a must-have during festivals and religious feast days, particularly Hari Raya, where it is eaten as an accompaniment to meat-based curries, particularly fragrant beef *rendang*.



From ketupat-weaving to batik-painting and an open-air feast of local snacks, Kampong Life captures Tanjong Jara's uniquely Malay spirit.

Terengganu *kuih* famous along Malaysia's east coast, made from a sinful blend of flour, eggs and rich coconut cream. Guests are invited to sample the selection of sweet and savoury tea-time snacks and enjoy an impromptu picnic on ready laid-out woven pandanus mats.

"We began Kampong Life as a resort activity in 2004," shares Peter Neto, Tanjong Jara's resort manager. "We realised we needed an experience that would be different, unique and, yet, totally live up to the resort's 'Unmistakably Malay' philosophy. When we began Kampong Life, we realised then that not only did the foreign guests enjoy it, but the locals as well. Many Malaysians,

life feature //

especially those living in big cities, hardly ever get a chance to experience these simple pleasures and, week after week, Kampong Life is a highlight for our guests, regardless of nationality; so much so, during the peak season and festive holidays like the recent Chinese New Year and Christmas seasons, we run an extra session on Wednesdays in addition to the usual Saturdays. And, during the Muslim celebration of Hari Raya, we host it according to the local 'open house' concept. Guests would then get a chance to see what it'd be like celebrating in a traditional Malay home. There'd be, of course, must-have festive dishes like *lemang* and beef *rendang* while, the night before, our young guests would enjoy fireworks and sparklers."

trainer to demonstrate the fine art of coconut-plucking. Effortlessly scampering up each tree, he is trained to select only the ripest, juiciest coconuts and, with a quick twist and throw, a bright green fruit will soon land with a thud on the grass. These freshly-picked coconuts will then be served to the picnicking guests as the ultimate tropical thirst-quencher. There are also stalls where you can try the art of batik-painting as well as demonstrations of the games of *congkak* and *takraw*, both popular pastimes in the East Coast. The rhythmic beats of the gamelan can also be heard in the air and, for a magical hour, guests can lose themselves in the sweet simplicity of kampong-living, served up Tanjong Jara-style. ▣

One of the undisputed stars of Kampong Life, however, is Jara – a pig-tailed macaque who visits the resort with his

Kampong Life takes place every Saturday from 1700-1800hrs at Tanjong Jara Resort's gardens.





This page: Kim Inglis' latest book with YTL Hotels focuses on the cuisine of the group's various properties. Opposite page: Celebrated photographer Jacob Temansen shooting for *A Perennial Feast* in Saint-Tropez.



Words With The Author

No stranger to writing about the finer things in life, Kim Inglis has made a name for herself as the go-to author on all things artsy, indulgent and luxe. She sits down with *YTL Life* to share a bit about herself and her latest endeavour, *A Perennial Feast*.

Text Flavia Galeotti

Jetting off to exotic locations to analyse and write about interior design, indulge in spas and fine dining, and getting pampered in luxury hotels: it's all in a day's work for Kim Inglis. Over the last 15 years, the English writer has composed a number of books and magazine articles on such attractive lifestyle topics as these, assembling an impressive portfolio that any writer would be envious to have participated in. But, before this glamour, Inglis' career had much humbler beginnings, where she learned on the job and eventually worked her way up.

"I started off working in London as an assistant editor for the publishing company Hodder and Stoughton, making tea and then learning how to edit and write on the job," she says of her early days. "I moved to Hong Kong and was working as an editorial assistant, then becoming the executive editor of a magazine there. Pretty much all my training and

writing has been in the industry – I haven't taken courses or done journalism diplomas; it's all been through book or magazine publishing."

From Hong Kong, she returned to London as a freelancer, where she worked with different magazines and publishers, like the notable Dorling Kindersley. Then, 18 years ago, she and her husband made the choice to move to Singapore, where she continued working as a freelancer and devoted her focus entirely to writing only books on topics that inspired her. These turned out to be travel, cuisine and good interior design, to name a few.

"I've found myself in that niche because they're things I'm interested in. I'm not an expert chef or architect – I'm a writer first and foremost – but because I've done a lot of work in those fields over the years, I've gained a lot of knowledge and contacts, which has led me to write

on those particular subjects. And I love those kinds of things. It's a joy, really," she confesses.

It was this interest that got her involved with doing her first book with YTL Hotels in 2008, *Spa Village*, after the retreats run by the eponymous holistic Spa Village arm of YTL Hotels. The coffee table book highlights the spas of various hotels around Malaysia and Bali, exploring the various restorative treatments and their histories based in Ayurveda, Chinese Traditional Medicine, herbalism and shamanism, all supplemented by stunning vibrant colour photography by Luca Invernizzi Tettoni.

With the success of the first book, she was engaged to work with YTL Hotels again for another book, this time focussing on the cuisine of its various hotels around the world. But, for her, the challenge lay in the presentation and structure of the book: "I didn't just want to have names of restaurants, so I said, 'Could we perhaps change it a little bit and make it more flowing? Almost like a culinary journey'."

This suggestion resulted in the unique approach of the book, whereby readers join Inglis on a coherent tour of YTL Hotels and its restaurant around the world. She explains: "We started off with some seafood in Hokkaido and talked about scallops and fish and Japan. Then, we thought, 'It'll be snowy and cold up there; what would you then want to do? Perhaps have some English high tea.' We talked about high tea here [in



Kuala Lumpur], and, of course, high tea in the UK in the beautiful cottage they have in Bray. And then it became a meander through different cuisines, adding in the recipes. It really makes it flow from one topic to the next, like a journey from one country, to another continent, to another restaurant, to a different resort – whether you're going on a train (say, the Eastern & Oriental Express) or on a plane. We've made it into a culinary journey of discovery with an organic slant. And I think we succeeded."

A clever addition to the book was the inclusion of recipes of popular dishes from different cities and restaurants. Adaptations of the recipes used by the professional chefs, Inglis tweaked things slightly to incorporate more easily found ingredients and simpler cooking methods, giving the home cooks something to try their hand at, replicating them in the comfort of their own kitchens.

The word 'perennial' in the title was included for its meaning: enduring and long-lasting, something which Inglis felt was reflective of the YTL legacy and her way of honouring the future success of the organisation.

From this experience, Inglis has come out with an appreciation for the hard work of the chefs she met, saying: "I think being a chef and coming up with new tastes, flavours, textures and being constantly innovative is an extraordinary talent. Not to mention the stress of running a kitchen and

putting out 120 covers in less than an hour and a half. And, to be able to showcase the work of a lot of these people and have them captured in Jacob [Termansen's] photography, it's a fascinating thing that these people can produce such extraordinary dishes."

Inglis's next project will take her back to her home base in Singapore, to create a book about the city state and its direction for the future. "A lot of the stuff out there is about the old Singapore, but we want to talk about the new Singapore and what's happening now," she shares excitedly. And while YTL has not yet booked her for another project, she says, without hesitation: "I would love to do something else with them." ❏

Top: Kim Inglis chats with Celia Gumbau, co-founder of YTL Hotels' Muse Hôtel de Luxe in Saint-Tropez. Below: Jacob Termansen's photograph of Pangkor Laut Resort's Feast Village.



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Enjoy the best of The Smoke House (left) and The Majestic Spa with two special membership packages.



CLUB CLASS

Friends with benefits? You can certainly enjoy all that and then some with The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur's new membership deals at The Majestic Spa and The Smoke House, designed exclusively with genteel ladies and gentlemen in mind, of course.

If you've fallen in love with the colonial charm of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, there is a way to forge a closer bond with the historical hotel that stands gracefully along what was once known as Victory Avenue in Kuala Lumpur. Built in the 1930s and located right across from the Moorish-inspired old railway station, The Majestic used to be known as one of South-East Asia's grandest hotels and, indeed, with its recent reopening, following a massive refurbishment, it looks set to reclaim that throne once more.

From the neo-classical elegance of the Majestic Wing to the sleek

modernity of the Tower Wing, the hotel also houses a world-class spa in a separate annexe, done up in nostalgic Art Deco fashion. Inspired by the style of celebrated Glaswegian architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, it is the ideal place to enjoy colonial-inspired wellness therapies amidst soothingly-luxurious surroundings. The Smoke House, inspired by the gentlemen's clubs of 18th-century London, is proving to be the *de rigueur* hangout for the city's well-heeled gents. With exclusive areas dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure in the form of a Cohiba or, perhaps, a dram of the finest Islay malt, The Smoke House also offers a grooming room operated

by Truefitt & Hill of London, the world's oldest barbershop and groomer to the gentry.

In this light, The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur begs leave to announce two special membership packages for Kuala Lumpur's ladies and gentlemen to discover and partake of. For just a nominal sum per annum, all members are entitled to a complimentary meal for two at Contango, a 2-day/1-night stay in a Colonial Suite of The Majestic Wing and access to the gymnasium and swimming pool. Those who take up The Majestic Spa package will also receive 10 spa treatment vouchers and a 20 per cent discount off afternoon tea at The Tea Lounge (for up to four persons). Early birds will get an extra treat! Members of The Gentlemen's Club will enjoy 12 sessions of barber services at Truefitt & Hill, membership of the Leading Hotels of the World Leader's Club, a personalised smoking jacket and a 20 per cent discount off liquor and cigars at The Smoke House. ■

For more information, tel: +603 2785 8070.



Photography: J. Reza

MR NICE GUY

Formula One's Felipe Massa speaks to *YTL Life* about the importance of setting a good example both on and off the track, how his family keeps him grounded and what the future holds.

Text **Diana Khoo**

The Art Deco-embellished interiors of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, located just across from the city's Moorish-inspired old railway station, might be an unusual place to meet a Formula One racing star but Ferrari's Felipe Massa seems perfectly at home. Dressed down in a powder blue shirt and white trousers, accented with a

simple pair of grey trainers and a not-so-simple Richard Mille timepiece, he strolls casually into the hotel's Drawing Room, accompanied by his manager Nicolas Todt, son of Fédération Internationale d'Automobile (FIA) President Jean, and his good friend, Dato' Yeoh Soo Min. It's his first time staying in Kuala Lumpur's

“I spent my childhood watching champions like Ayrton Senna and Nelson Piquet, both fellow Brazilians, at the peak of their careers.”

*This page: Felipe Massa pulls in for a pitstop during the Malaysia Formula One Grand Prix at the Sepang Circuit.
Facing page: Formula One winter testing at Circuito de Jerez, Spain.*

historical heart and he appears to be loving every minute of it. “The Majestic is fantastic... beautiful,” he enthuses.

In town for the recent Sepang leg of the Formula One World Championship, Massa appears calm and relaxed, despite the qualifying sessions just a few days away. “I always make sure I prepare myself well,” Massa shares. “You need to be ready for everything here in Malaysia. It’s a nice track but Sepang is very hot and humid, which makes things difficult. And, to race in such conditions, you must be especially fit – physically and mentally.”

Born in São Paulo in 1981, the 32-year-old has made quite a name for himself in the world of motorsports. “I’ve always related to speed,” he says, smiling. “Ayrton Senna was, of course, my big hero. I watched him at the peak of his career when he just couldn’t stop winning championships. Nelson Piquet is a fellow



Brazilian as well and I spent my childhood watching all these champions. From the moment I began karting at the age of eight, I realised racing was what I wanted to do with my life. And now, doing what I do, it’s like a dream come true.” Certainly, the passion for speed seems to be hereditary. Massa’s father, Luiz Antonio, used to be an amateur Touring Car racer and he shares how he used to watch his father testing and racing cars ever since he was a young boy. “My father, who’s always been a hero to me, loved racing for fun and my passion for motorsport is all due to him. In fact, I had my very own motorcross bike since young, but it was a little bit too crazy, I think. My father then told me I was better off having four wheels to race on, rather than two!”

It’s also no secret that many little boys around the world grow up harbouring dreams of, one day, being able to race fast cars for a living. On what advice would he give them, Massa pauses for a moment before saying: “The most important quality you need would be raw talent. You also need to be simple, humble and willing to learn. Know that there’ll also be many difficult days ahead and, to get over them, it helps to have a completely open mind. Once all these are in place, you’ll find the opportunities will come.” On the subject of little boys, the Brazilian’s eyes immediately light up as his mind wanders to thoughts of his young son, Felipeinho. “He’s three now and he’s the best thing that could happen in my life,” he says, beaming. “He motivates me to do even better in my own life as fathers naturally want to give their families the very best. It’s not easy being a father but it is just the most fantastic feeling.” On the inevitable subject of whether little Felipeinho will follow in his father’s footsteps, Massa smiles and says: “He already wants to race! But, some days, he wants to be a footballer. He has a little battery-operated F1 car, which he loves! The decision is ultimately his and my role as a father is to simply help him achieve whatever he wants to in life.”



This may also explain why Massa is so particular about setting a good example whenever possible. In the often-anodyne world of Formula One racing (Mika Hakkinen comes to mind here), Massa’s gregariousness, sense of humour and openness has led to the media as well as several industry insiders referring to him as one of the most well-liked racers around. “My philosophy in life is simple: live with both feet on the ground and live for your family. I also think it’s important to be aware of setting a good example. As an F1 driver, you have your fans and followers as well, so you do need to think most things through at least twice to always give the best example you can for them. But I think it helps I live a pretty simple life off the circuit as well.”

On the grid, Massa, although still relatively young, has chalked up an impressive track record. “I’ve had so many good memories, from the time I started in F1 as a 20 year-old with Sauber.” He also cites his first victory in Turkey as more than memorable, as well as his first win on home ground. “Winning in Brazil”, says Massa, “is like a dream come true. I’m also grateful to be able to say this

list of good memories keeps getting longer and longer as the days go by, but I also make sure it serves as an inspiration to keep on achieving more.”

Back to the topic of Malaysia, Massa appears to have been infected by the local preoccupation with food. “I just got back from lunch, actually, at Starhill Gallery’s Shook! Restaurant. I make sure I have a meal there every time I am in Malaysia – I love the fish dishes, the pizza... everything’s so good!” And, on a thoroughly more Brazilian obsession, Massa admits to being tremendously excited that his country will play host to the World Cup next year. “I am definitely going to take Felipeinho to watch some of the soccer matches with me. He’ll be bigger by then, so I am sure he will understand the game a little more and enjoy it better. I’ve been a fan of São Paulo FC for a long time and I’ve always loved football. But, ultimately, it’s still a hobby for me. I enjoy watching it and playing the game but, for sure, I don’t have the talent for it. My talent is for racing and I live my dream already, doing what I love. Maybe in my next life, perhaps?” ■



Image from Marcus Wong



Far left: Dato' Mokhzani Mahathir, Chairman of the Sepang International Circuit.



On the eve of the 15th Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix 2013 at the Sepang International Circuit, The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur hosted the SapuraKencana Petroleum Malaysian Grand Prix Charity Gala Night. It was an evening that saw a melding of the eras, as the ultra-modern high-tech engineering synonymous with Formula One blended seamlessly with the colonial heritage of the Majestic Hotel.

Chairman of the Sepang International Circuit, Dato' Mokhzani Mahathir, iterated: "I think The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur is a very appropriate venue for such an event. It is a building with a lot of history. For Formula One, which has only been racing here in Malaysia since 1999, the association with such a historic building makes the event even more glamorous, meaningful and a great attraction for all those who attend the gala."

Among the stars and celebrities to grace the event were 10-time Grammy Award winner Kenny 'Babyface' Edmonds. With 11 solo albums to his name, Edmonds wowed all those who attended the night

with his sterling performances that left the audience craving for more.

Despite the luxurious glitz and glamour of the Gala Night, it not only set the stage for an adrenaline-fuelled grand prix to come, but also allowed the guests an opportunity to contribute to the needy by aiding the Institut Jantung Negara (National Heart Institute) Foundation. To this end, the sponsors of the event, including Cecil Purnell, Carlsberg, YTL Hotels, Sime Darby Auto Performance, Ceres, Diptyque and Standard Chartered Bank, held an auction of their products, with the proceeds going to the Foundation.

Reflecting upon the generosity of the gala's guests, Dato' Mokhzani said: "I am proud and humbled to receive such positive feedback on this charity gala, with all the sponsors playing a big part. We are looking to play our part on and off the track and I believe this will provide the foundation with the funds to help as many people as possible." ■

DATO' MOKHZANI MAHATHIR, CHAIRMAN OF THE SEPANG INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT, SHARES HIS LOVE FOR MOTORSPORTS AND HOPES FOR F1 IN MALAYSIA WITH YTL LIFE.

When did you first discover your passion for motorsports and F1?

That was a long time ago and you can blame my father (former Malaysian Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad) for that. I got into sports cars after I saw a beautiful design at the Paris Motorshow in 1984. F1 has always been something I've followed and, when the idea of holding it in Malaysia was mooted in 1996, it was a dream come true after I was recruited into the Board of Directors and became Chairman of the Sepang International Circuit (SIC).

telecommunications, finance, banking. You meet a huge number of people from all walks of life at motorsports events.

What have been the most important milestones in Malaysia's F1 history?

Having three teams that are closely related to Malaysian companies and Malaysian - owned. That is a huge step for us as a country and host nation. It's a fantastic achievement because we are, not only the host, but also an active participant and we use both the venue and the teams to promote our country.

What do you love most about your job as Chairman of the SIC?

Meeting all sorts of people from around the world. I believe F1 especially is a fantastic platform for networking. Anywhere there's a race, I have a friend because of common interests in motorsports. People also come from all sorts of industries - oil and gas,

Where are your future hopes for Malaysian F1?

I dream of having an F1 champion of our own. I hope that, with the three teams we are actively involved in and having the race here until 2015, one day, we will see a Malaysian driver competing to be right at the front of the grid and standing on the podium.

A Majestic Gathering

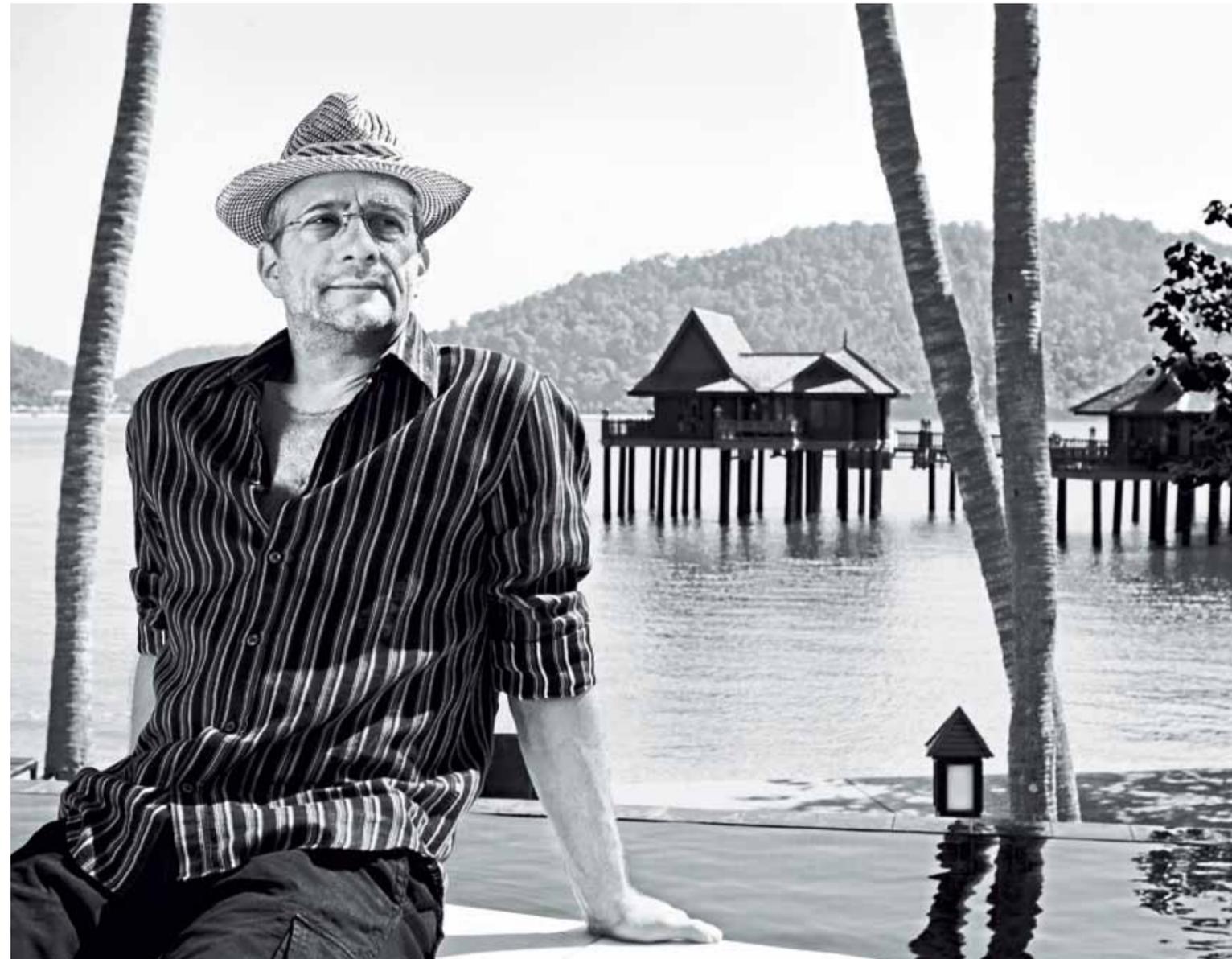
In setting the scene for the recent exhilarating weekend of the Petronas Malaysia Grand Prix, the SapuraKencana Petroleum Malaysian Grand Prix Charity Gala 2013 took centre stage at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur to, not only celebrate Formula One's 15th year in Malaysia, but also to support the National Heart Institute Foundation.

Text Weng Sheng Thong

Island Life

Descended from culinary royalty and lord of The Waterside Inn, England's three Michelin-starred dining room par excellence, the celebrated Alain Roux finds his tropical haven on Pangkor Laut island.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Ting Yang Shan**



Chef extraordinaire Alain Roux enjoys a sunny vacation at Pangkor Laut Resort.

Three miles off the west coast of the Malay Peninsula lies a small but perfectly-formed tropical island. Thick with verdant jungle that date back two million years and lined with perfect curves of white sand beach, the tiny isle of Pangkor Laut is as close to heaven on earth as they come. Spanning just 300ac and perfectly poised in the midst of the Straits of Malacca, the island is home to the world-class Pangkor Laut Resort, as well as a small cluster of just

eight luxurious-beyond-belief villas referred to, simply, as The Estates.

Located in a secluded cove, each of the eight properties is individually-crafted, reflecting its own unique design and aesthetic style. Choose from two-, three- or four-bedroom villas, complete with private infinity-edged swimming pools, where a dedicated team will ensure you want for nothing. It is within such a haven

that culinary aristocrat, Alain Roux, enjoys a rare lull in his busy life.

Having arrived on the island after a 13-hour flight from London and a three-hour journey by car and private speedboat with his wife and baby daughter, the Roux family were immediately whisked off to their private sea-view Estate, where they spent a blissful few days away from the rigours and demands of running one of the world's most celebrated

restaurants. Anyone worth their *fleur de sel* would immediately recognise Alain Roux's name. Son of another legendary chef, Michel, the 45-year-old Alain is best known as the keeper *de luxe* of The Waterside Inn – the only restaurant to have held the coveted three-star rating longer than any other restaurant in the UK and the first one outside of France to hold three Michelin stars for a whopping 25 years. In order to seek respite from the demands of his work and to unwind, Roux loves nothing better than spending quality time with his family – “away from the restaurant”, he says, with a wink. “Pangkor Laut fulfils my definition of a perfect holiday. I am able to cut off completely from work and to relax in style with my family. We are pampered and looked after in a gentle way and yet are spoilt for choice with the numerous activities available on the island.”

Playfully posing with his family at the resort's main swimming pool, just a short drive away in his Estate's appointed private



vehicle, Roux, shielding his face from the bright tropical sunshine with a hat, says: "This exclusive island is, without doubt, one of the leading luxury resorts of the world. I appreciate how it blends seamlessly within its environment, allowing us to feel so close to the surrounding natural beauty. I love bathing in the warm sea and spending time on the island's perfect beaches. There is also squash, tennis, a play area for children and a fabulous spa – if you can tear yourself away from the swimming pool! My wife and I are also charmed by the resort's beautiful sea villas, each perched elegantly atop stilts in the water, although I really do love the peace, quiet and seclusion of our private estate."

On the subject of food, a topic very close to Roux's heart, he enthused: "It's hard to choose a favourite restaurant on the island as the cuisine is fantastic. But I did think



Far left: Roux's restaurant, The Waterside Inn, in Berkshire, England is one of the world's finest dining rooms.



life feature //

have worked with Denis Ruffel, one of the greatest and most talented professional pastry chefs. He was a tough teacher but, as a man, is like a godfather to me. My experience there has impacted my entire career.

What do you normally eat, off-duty?

I love anything prepared for me by my wife. We enjoy simple dishes, usually meat or fish with one of two garnishes, and perhaps a dessert.

What are your favourite food and wine pairings?

I love champagne! I can drink it anytime and with anything and everything! Otherwise, my palate is more classic and I like traditional pairings of white wine with fish and shellfish, and red with meat and poultry.

What have been your most memorable meals?

The ones prepared at home by my paternal and maternal grandmothers. They were the most amazing home cooks and we would always gather around their large tables to enjoy delicious meals together as a family.

Necessary kitchen tools?

I cannot live without a sharp knife, a good stove and oven, plus a spoon, which I use to taste as I cook.

What's always in your refrigerator?

Fruit juice, milk and cheese.

And, lastly, what's your idea of comfort food?

Something that is light and tasty, with minimal cream or butter, as it quickly satisfies my appetite and leaves me feeling good, without the need to lie down afterwards! My favourite comfort dishes include vegetable soups, stews and traditional English puddings like Eton Mess. ■



the Chinese restaurant, Uncle Lim's, was amazing! I can tell you that I was most impressed with the talented chefs and the fresh, delicious ingredients. Staying at The Estates is particularly spoiling as we also had the exclusive services of a personal chef, which I consider sheer luxury as, while on holiday, I love taking a break from the kitchen! One of my special memories from this trip will be the private beach barbeque we enjoyed, which came with a beautiful, romantic menu."

"There are many destinations in the world I would still love to visit," adds Roux, "but certain places to which I will never hesitate to return have always included New York, Singapore, Tokyo and Bangkok. Now, of course, Pangkor Laut has joined the list."

What is it like growing up in the Roux family?

Our family has always had great love for food, cooking and the appreciation of wine. I cannot help but be influenced by this, especially in our passion for service and devotion to the business of delighting customers. It nurtures my love for what I do!

What is the secret behind The Waterside Inn's great success?

There is no secret. As we all know, when something is done well, rewards usually follow. Our formula is, simply, daily hard work, quality and consistency. What we achieve is a credit to the whole team but we are also aware that the challenge lies in maintaining these high standards.

How important are Michelin stars to you, personally?

They are important as it denotes recognition from an established international source, which is renowned for its professionalism, flair and fair ratings.

Your father, Michel, recently opened a restaurant in Vietnam. Do you have plans to expand to Asia?

Vietnam is a solo venture for my father and it is a French restaurant called La Maison 1888, at the InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort. I am not planning to expand in the UK or elsewhere, but who knows what the future holds? If the opportunity arose, my first choice would be to open in Asia.

What has been the best piece of advice you've ever received from your father?

Remember to not cook for oneself, but for the customer.

What was your childhood ambition, though? Did you feel pressure from the family to become a chef?

There was no pressure at all. It was I who couldn't resist the urge to join the culinary world. I did enjoy the idea of growing fruit and vegetables for a living, although, since I do not possess green fingers, I think I made the right career choice!

What was your first work experience like?

I was an apprentice at the Pâtisserie Millet and learnt a great deal. I was privileged to



Balinese Summer Festivals

The true richness of Bali life is largely unknown to the millions of visitors who visit the Island of the Gods. **Simon Pridmore** shares three mid-year events that offer unique insights into Balinese culture.

In Bali, around the middle of every year, the wind changes; the clouds blow away and the island erupts in a frenzy of cultural activity. The preparations have been going on for months: dance teams forming, practicing and performing in villages all over the Island of the Gods; cohorts of artists planning and producing new creations; groups of young men sweating over the construction of gigantic elaborate flying devices and fearless athletes training themselves and their animals for the competitions to come.

The main events take place in theatres and workshops in Bali's capital of Denpasar, on the south-eastern beaches of Sanur and in the skies

above this usually sleepy coastal village, and along dusty tracks in remote, rural West Bali. These are all major features on the calendar for the Balinese but are largely ignored by the millions of visitors that descend on the island during the summer months. If only they knew what they were missing!

A Rich Cultural Heritage
Art is just part of daily life for the Balinese. For example, everywhere you go, in shops, hotel gardens, on the streets and in thousands of roadside temples, you see the delicate hand-made offering baskets called *canang* laid out several times a day for the gods (or devils), each one a colourful, artistic creation in its own right. Even the way these

1. Towering penjor accompanying a religious procession.

offerings are placed involves a graceful dance-like ritual. Along village roads, you often see lines of towering *penjor*, stylishly decorated curved bamboo poles that announce an upcoming festival or celebration. Again, these are not just simple signposts; each is an astonishing work of art.

Art is intertwined with religion, the prime mover for the Balinese. It governs every aspect of daily life and is responsible for lending Bali the spiritual element that distinguishes it from all other tropical islands.

Hundreds of years ago, the Hindus of the Majapahit Empire brought their culture, painting, music, dance and sculpture from Java to Bali and these merged with existing practices to create a unique form of Hinduism and an individual artistic style. In the 20th century, early western tourists included a large number of artists,



2

“Religion is responsible for lending Bali the spiritual element that distinguishes it from all other tropical islands.”

At the Arts Centre, attractions include traditional music, dance and theatre, flower arranging, contemporary art, film, puppet shows, literature recitations and handicrafts. Permanent exhibitions are set up in the two main halls; competitions in activities as diverse as food preparation, costume design, offering making and pop singing take place in the indoor Ksiranawa Theatre, while major dance and musical performances are held in the huge outdoor 6,000-seater Artha Candra amphitheatre.

Although Bali is only a small island, styles and specialities vary greatly from place to place; many Balinese themselves rarely get to see some of these local art forms outside the festival. As you move through the site, you can chance upon trances from remote villages in the interior; groups performing almost-forgotten ancient traditional regional dances; bamboo *gamelan* orchestras from Jembrana in West Bali playing their fast, rhythmic *jegog* music; demonstrations of unique *ikat* cloth weaving from Sidemen in East Bali or gangs of folk from Buleleng, Bali's northern-most province, singing humorous *genjek* songs. Occasionally, you may discover something completely new or find yourself witnessing an art form that has become unpopular and is in danger of fading away into obscurity. There may only be a handful of spectators in attendance but you may still find the performance moving, rewarding and memorable.



attracted and inspired by the island's own creative community. Some of these visitors stayed and settled in Bali, adding their own influences, including a commercial aspect to activities that previously only had religious or social significance, and introducing the world to what became known as 'Bali-style'.

The Bali Arts Festival

(Mid-June to Mid-July 2013)

In 1979, the Bali Arts Festival was established to showcase the island's astonishingly rich cultural heritage. It is a month-long celebration of traditional Balinese culture that runs from mid-June to mid-July each year and brings people from all over the island to Denpasar to participate as both performers and spectators. For many, their involvement in the festival actually began months

beforehand, when they competed with other cultural groups in their region for the honour of representing their village, the home of their family and the resting place of their ancestors, in front of a large audience. In 2012, the festival featured over 300 troupes with more than 15,000 performers, as well as a small number of participants from elsewhere in Indonesia and overseas.

The festival begins with a grand parade in mid-afternoon on the opening day that starts at the Bajra Sandhi Puputan field in Renon and finishes up at the Werdi Budaya Arts Centre on Jalan Nusa Indah in east Denpasar, where the majority of the festival events will be held. Each of Bali's eight regencies is represented by a *gamelan* orchestra and local people dressed in regional costumes.



3

2. Offerings add splashes of colour to the Mother Temple of Besakih in Bali.
3. Although Bali is a small island, dance styles and specialities can vary greatly from place to place.

Big Hits

Massive dance drama spectacles depicting stories from the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* that are put on by high schools and the College of Performing Arts usually mark the beginning and end of the festival and the Balinese. The

gamelan competition is a big draw too. This contest pits top orchestras from different regencies against each other on the same stage. It can be quite a noisy affair but not all the sound in the auditorium is generated from the stage. There are usually huge numbers of local supporters in the audience, shouting encouragement for their orchestras and heaping abuse on the opposition.

Another local favourite is Old Masters night, which celebrates performers who have devoted their lives to a particular art form. Sometimes, these artists are old and frail and have to be helped onto the stage but, once they lay their hands on their instrument or pick up a favourite puppet, their youth returns in the expression of their skills and the fluidity of their movement.

Entry to the festival events is completely free of charge and most of the performers are volunteers, driven by competition, love of their art and pride in their talent rather than monetary gain. The festival is a fabulous opportunity for visitors to see Balinese village culture at first hand and tourists are warmly welcomed.

To find out about this year's event, visit www.baliartsfestival.com

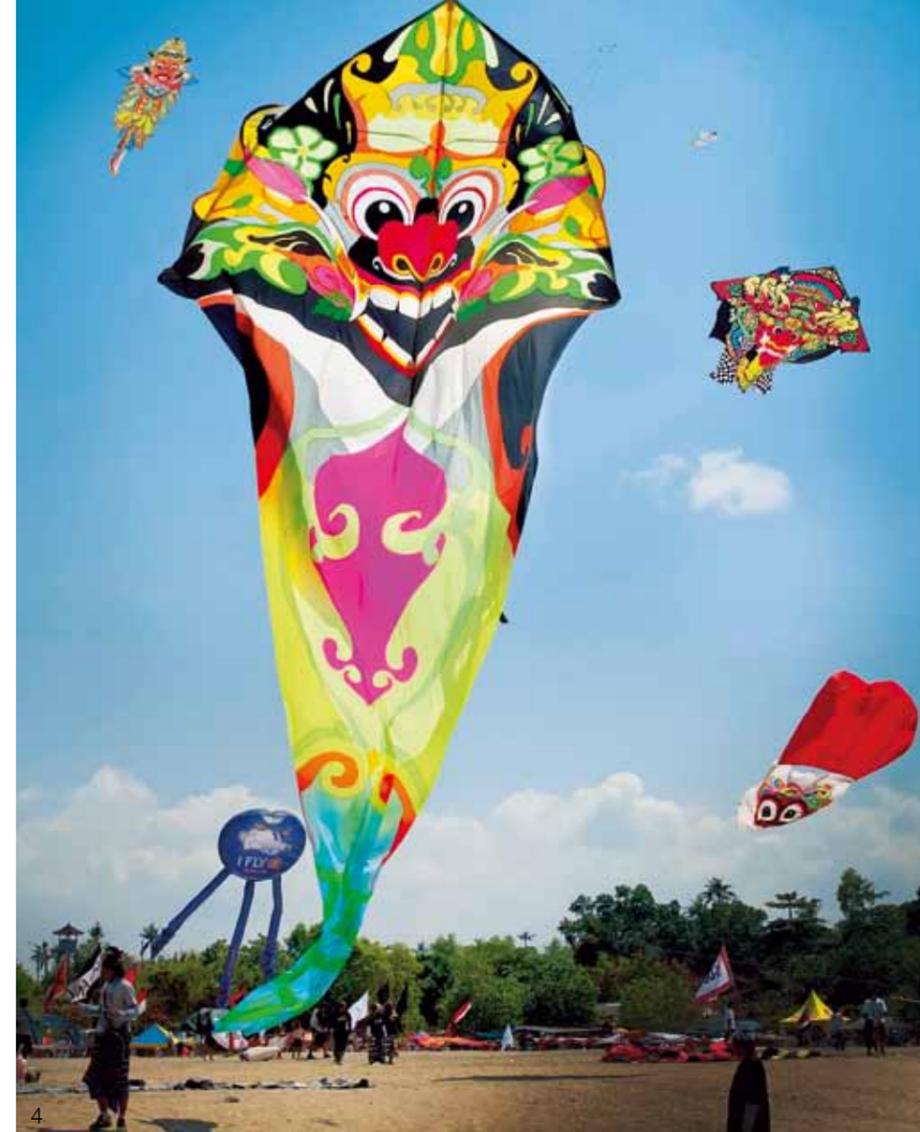
Bali Kite Festival (July 21 to July 24 2013)

A week or so after the Arts Festival closes, an event featuring a very different but just as traditional activity opens on Padang Galak in Sanur.

This is the astonishing and unique Bali Kite Festival.

Now, when you think of kites, you may visualise the small, diamond-shaped toys that you played with as a child and which always ended up getting stuck in trees. Banish such images from your mind straightaway. This is a different world. These kites are enormous creations evoking religious and cultural themes. They are flown to encourage the Gods to grant good harvests but there is another, more earthly aspect to the event as the kites also act as a vehicle for peaceful inter-village rivalry.

This is fun but it is also taken very seriously. The kites take weeks to plan and construct and religious blessings are



4. The Bali Kite Festival features enormous creations that evoke religious and cultural themes. 5. Balinese wayang has served as the local community's cinema for centuries. 6. Delicate hand-made offerings can be found everywhere on the island.

required at various points in the process. In the days leading up to the event, large teams, dressed in their chosen colours and waving banners, march through the streets of Denpasar towards the beach. Their kites often dwarf the pick-up trucks they are carried on and the procession completely blocks traffic as it goes. Some groups are so large they have their own police escort!

The kites are made of cloth strung on a bamboo frame and each one takes at least 10 people to get off the ground. There are three main traditional designs – Bebean, Janggan and Pecukan. The Bebean looks like a wide-mouthed fish with a split tail; the bird-like Janggan has a long flowing tail while the Pecukan is said to be the most difficult to fly as its oval, leaf shape makes it unstable.

The stars of the show, though, are the eye-catching non-traditional kites, which are often enormous aerial sculptures representing the Hindu gods or, sometimes, more unusual creations, such as a two-masted schooner with all sails aloft or a flying dragon with a 10m wingspan.

Competition is fierce and villagers turn out in droves to cheer on their teams. Last year, over 10,000 people attended the festival and there were 1,200 kites in competition. A kite is judged on the quality of its design, how easy it is to launch, how high it flies, how stable it is in the air and how gracefully it is brought back to earth.

As you might imagine, take offs and landings can be difficult. Teams charge across the padang at top speed to propel their kites into the air, wreaking

havoc as they go, and the final stages of the flight can be equally chaotic as they fight to bring the kite back down on exactly the right spot.

Throughout the day, *gamelan* orchestras clang away, providing an exotic soundtrack to proceedings, while food carts and drink vendors patrol through the crowds. It is a wonderful atmosphere and a rare chance to mingle with the local people as they relax and let their hair down. Again, everyone is welcome and there is no charge for entry.

Makepung Buffalo Racing

(Sunday mornings, beginning 28 July)
Well off the normal tourist trail, near the town of Negara in Bali's western-most province of Jembrana, the dry season ushers in a series of events that mix sport, culture, skill, courage and, yes, an opportunity for a small wager.

These are the Makepung water buffalo races, introduced to Bali by immigrants

7. Behind the rich and cheotic cultural life of Bali is a tranquility of Spa Village Resort Tembol, Bali.
8. The Makepung buffalo races are a mix of sport, culture and courage.



7



from Madura, the island province that lies east of the Javanese city of Surabaya. On alternate Sunday mornings, between the end of July and mid-November, hundreds of participants representing two teams from either side of Jembrana's Ijo Gading river, the East (red banners) and the West (green banners,) compete in heats leading up to the early season Regent's Cup and the end of season Governor's Cup.

The events start relatively sedately and, for foreign visitors, amusingly, with a buffalo beauty contest. The animals are paraded before the crowd with their horns painted and colourful harnesses and silk ribbons around their necks. These decorations are removed before the races



SPA VILLAGE RESORT TEMBOK, BALI
With a dramatic landscape of soaring peaks and black volcanic sand, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali embraces the healing ethos of celebrating local culture and honouring the ancient remedies of the island. A place of peacefulness and calm, combining the therapeutic value of its beautiful location with an ancient and rich cultural heritage, Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali reflects the spirituality of ages, making it the perfect place to rejuvenate and rediscover yourself after exploring the Island of the Gods' rich cultural heritage.

and excitement mounts as preparations for the racing begin in earnest.

Pairs of buffalo are harnessed to small two-wheeled chariots, which are actually modified ploughs, and raced along a track. The jockey balances precariously on the chariot, driving the buffalo by twisting their tails and 'encouraging' them with a spiked whip.

Each race is a time trial, with one pair of buffalo chasing another (*makepung* is a derivation of the word *kepung* meaning 'chase'). The teams can reach speeds of up to 60 km/h and it is an incredible thing to witness these huge animals thundering past, the diminutive, brightly clad jockey suspended between them furiously urging them on to the finish line. It is not a scene for the faint-hearted. Flecks of blood fly into the air as the whip scourges the flanks of these huge beasts, and sweat and foaming buffalo spittle mingle with the clouds of dust thrown up by their pounding hooves.

If you want to be one of the very few foreigners to experience this extraordinary

tradition at first hand, note that the racing always takes place early in the morning, before the heat of the day makes the buffaloes sluggish. Bear in mind also that Negara is a good three-hour drive away from Kuta, so make a very early start from your hotel or arrange to stay over near Negara the night before. Again, as with the other festivals, it costs nothing to attend the races themselves.

Experience the Extraordinary

Attending any of these festivals allows you to get to know the island and its people in greater depth and gives you an extraordinary chance to see what lies behind the tourist tapestry of beach, rice field, temple and shopping opportunities. Immerse yourself in Bali's cultural soup, embrace the chaos, the cacophony and the excitement, and return the countless smiles you will be offered along the way. ▣



Coming Up Roses

Spring and summer fashion is all about being bright, beautiful and embracing colour. Ensure your visage follows suit.



Blooming Wonderful

One of the most revered names in perfume, the house of **Creed's** *Fleurissimo* scent is not to be sniffed at. Majestic, highly elegant and beautifully composed, it is a fragrance that is scented with rose, tuberose, violet leaves and Florentine iris. Created especially for the legendary Hollywood star and Monegasque princess Grace Kelly, upon commission by HSH Prince Rainier of Monaco, to wear on her wedding day, this scent is also beloved by a host of other luminaries, including Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis and Madonna.



The Numbers Game

For spring 2013, renowned Parisian perfumers and candle-makers **Diptyque** introduces *L'Eau de Trente-Quatre*, a sophisticated and versatile new scent inspired by the house's first-ever fragrance, named simply *L'Eau*. Paying tribute to the original boutique at 34 Boulevard Saint-Germain, *L'Eau de Trente-Quatre* is rich with citrus notes, particularly bitter orange, verbena, lemon and grapefruit, ensuring a more than fresh approach to the season.



Think Pink

Everything's coming up lilac roses at **Bobbi Brown**. Pretty is the keyword here and everything is in a shade that'll please the ladylike set. From limited edition sparkly eye shadows to rose-hued nail polish and pearlescent shimmering lip gloss, it's the perfect beauty palette for this season's romantic clothes.



April Showers

Few people realise it but *Folavril* is, in fact, legendary perfumer **Annick Goutal's** first creation. Inspired by the name of an antique shop where she used to work while in her 30s, it was said that *Folavril* was Goutal's most favourite scent to wear in springtime and likened it to "a stroll through a garden, lush with exotic fruits and tomato leaves".



Window on the world

Striped t-shirt,
leopard print skirt
and tote bag,
M Missoni.

The Life Majestic

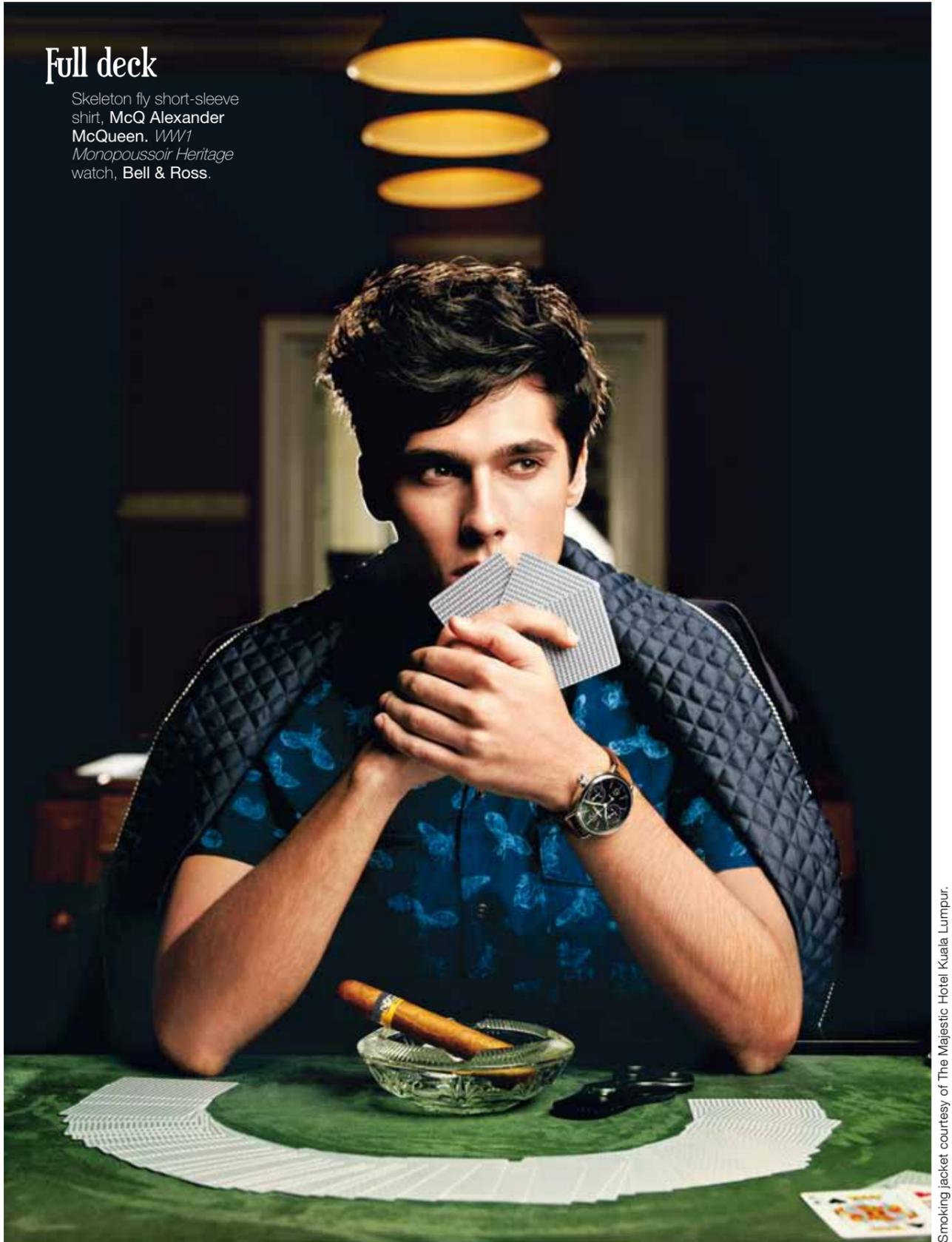
Old world charm meets modern trends as The Majestic Hotel
Kuala Lumpur plays host to fashion at its most creative.

Photography **Chuan Looi** Styling **Calvin Cheong** Hair **Ricco Cheng** Makeup **Amber Lee**
Model **Natalia L/Andrews Models & Marc/Base Model** Location **The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur**



Checking in

Lace blouse, lace princess sleeves cardigan and tweed A-line skirt, RedValentino. Happy Diamonds earrings and ring, Chopard.



Full deck

Skeleton fly short-sleeve shirt, McQ Alexander McQueen. WWW1 Monopoussoir Heritage watch, Bell & Ross.



Close shaves

[Him]
White cotton shirt and
sweater, **Kenzo**. Denim
jeans, **McQ Alexander
McQueen**.

[Her]
Knitted halter-neck
jumpsuit, **M Missoni**.



Tea for two

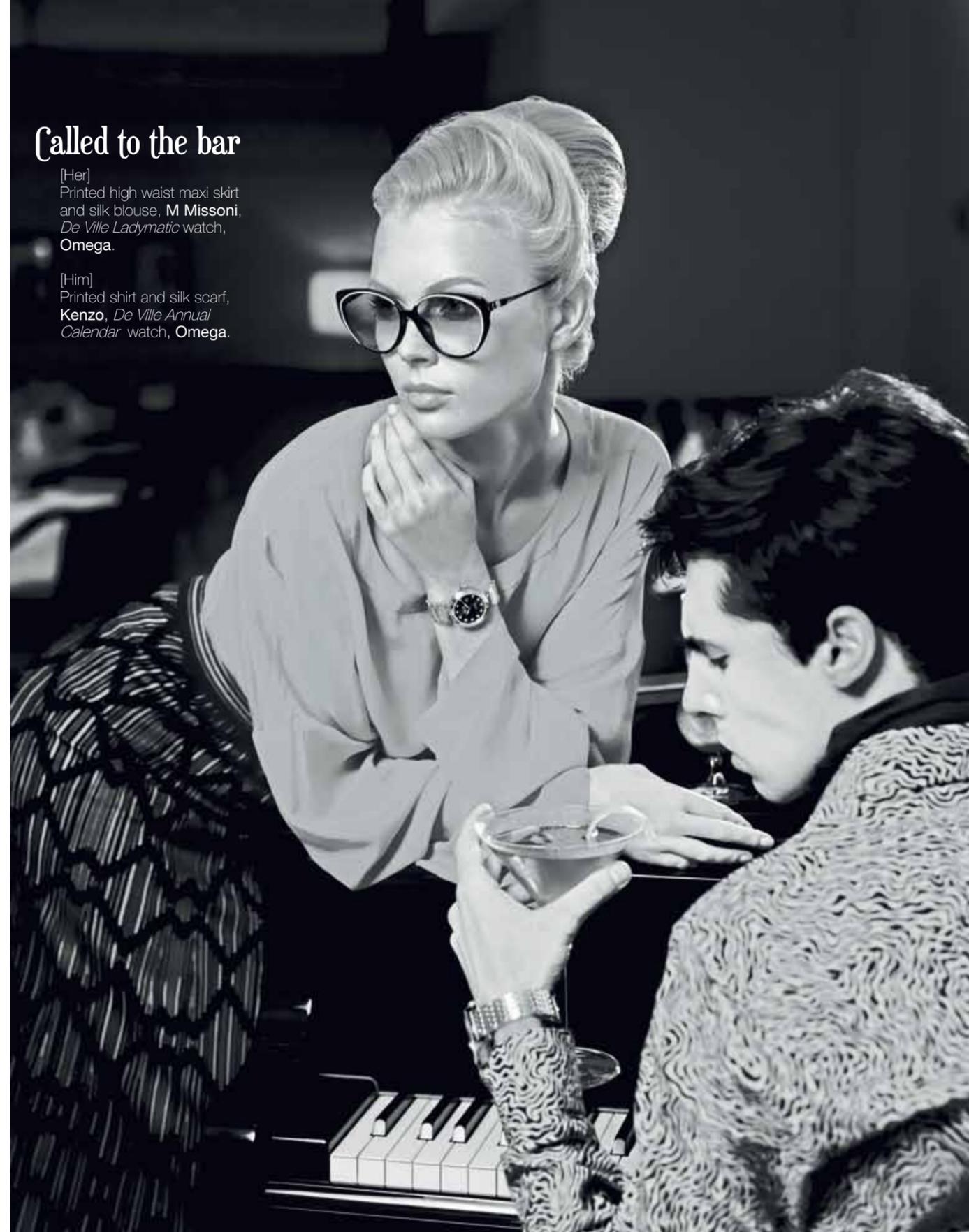
[Him]
Green leopard print shirt
and jersey sweatshirt,
Kenzo. Denim jeans, **McQ
Alexander McQueen**.

[Her]
Printed dress and pleated
maxi skirt, **Kenzo**. Tabacco
acetate with rose gold
sunglasses, **Chopard**.

Called to the bar

[Her]
Printed high waist maxi skirt
and silk blouse, **M Missoni**,
De Ville Ladymatic watch,
Omega.

[Him]
Printed shirt and silk scarf,
Kenzo, *De Ville Annual
Calendar* watch, **Omega**.





Blast from the past

Printed cap sleeve dress dress, McQ Alexander McQueen.
Smoke-lensed acetate sunglasses, Chopard.



Full bloom

Floral kaftan with belt and flare pants, M Missoni.



Touch of class

[Her]
White linen shirt, brown
suit, pants and scarf,
Kenzo.

[Him]
Cropped crochet-knit
cardigan and dress,
**M Missoni. Happy
Diamonds** earrings and
ring, **Chopard.**

All Things Bright & Beautiful

Brush off the dreariness of winter and, instead, let your ensemble explode in riotous colour!



Fairytale Flair

Soon-to-be or June-to-be brides would be thrilled that celebrated designer **Khoon Hooi** has recently launched his inaugural bridal collection. Infused with his trademark femininity and signature romantic style, explore delicate lace, floral appliqués, extravagant embroidery and dreamy tulle, all crafted into light, airy creations sculpted with a subtle modern twist.



Paper(Cut) Dolls

Inspired by the Chinese folk art of paper-cutting, the house of **Shiatzy Chen**'s Spring/Summer 2013 collection, named 'Perpetuality', blends traditional paper-cutting motifs together with sumptuous materials like semi-translucent jacquard, lace and embroidered organza to stunning effect. The palette is also vibrant, with bright yellows, soft pinks, rich blues and ivory all coming together to shape the image of a modern woman in a new age, all the while proud and confident of her culture and heritage.



Pops of colour

Inspired by the preppy wardrobes of American Ivy League university students, **M Missoni** goes all Yale, Harvard and Princeton this season. Jacquards, waved jersey and cotton faille are paired with patterns like chevron, stripes and polka dots for an ironic yet contemporary twist. Lookin' smart, we say!



Neon Lust

The only arm candy to sport this spring – **Dior's Mini Diorissimo** handbag in neon pink or neon yellow.



Lounging In Luxury

Channel your resort goddess with **Farah Khan**'s new Art Nouveau-inspired fashion collection. From loud and proud dresses to vivid shifts and fabrics adorned with lavish bird and dragon designs, this is designed with the holidaying siren in mind!



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

couples the chance to experience all the splendour and pomp of a wedding ceremony infused with Malay grace and charm. Tanjong Jara Resort is itself located in paradise-like settings – the long stretch of pristine beach faces the azure expanse of the South China Sea, while the traditional architecture, redolent of a sultan's *istana* (palace), has won it numerous citations, including an Aga Khan Award.

The Elements: Here, exchange your vows right on the beach surrounded by strewn tropical petals and under a classic floral arch. An indulgent five-course seafood feast awaits after that at the Teratai Terrace, where a traditional *gamelan* ensemble entertains while you celebrate. If, however, your dream is to experience all the colour and richness of a traditional Malay wedding, do ask for the Nelayan or Bunga wedding packages, which include an authentic Malay wedding procession, complete with bearers carrying tall poles of *bunga manggar*, a celebratory decoration that is a must-have at Malay nuptials, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of the *kompang*, and, perhaps, a kampong-style dinner with food prepared and served from little wooden huts.

Highlight: If you've ever attended a traditional Malay wedding, you'd be able to understand and appreciate the gaiety and festive air the occasion affords. And, if you're looking for a memory to immortalise, a traditional *bunga manggar* procession



Ever After

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

The month of June has always been a favoured one for weddings. Some say it's attributed to honouring the Roman goddess of marriage, Juno, while others believe summer weddings were preferred as it wouldn't get in the way of the ensuing harvest time. Whatever the reason, there's no doubting the popularity of June as a month in which to wed. So, whether or not you're a soon-to-be or June-to-be blushing bride, here are some locations you might wish to consider when planning the occasion.

Tanjong Jara Resort

The Scene: The East Coast of Malaysia, with its sweeping golden sand beaches, glass-like waters and rich Malay heritage, is steeped in age-old Malay traditions and offers

“Oh, they say when you marry in June, you’re a bride all your life.”
~Seven Brides for Seven Brothers~



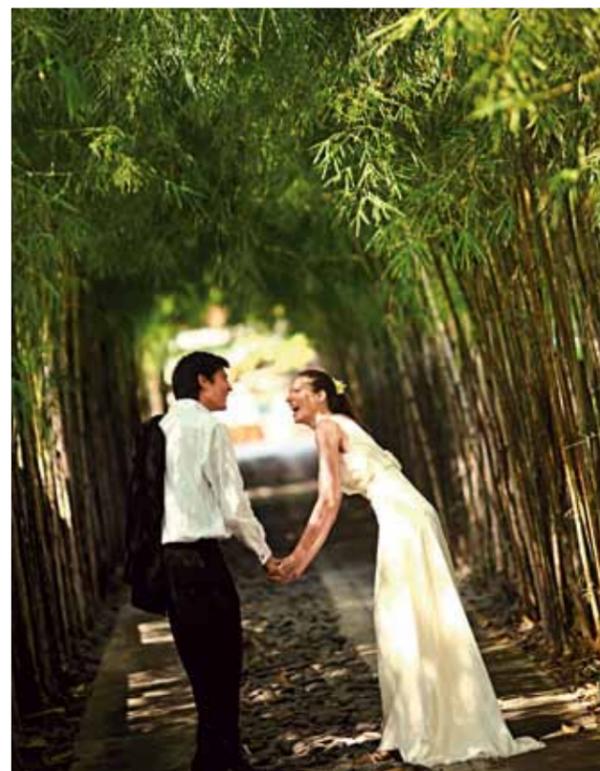
1. You can choose either a Thai or western-style wedding ceremony on The Surin's patch of Pansea Beach. 2. Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali is a mystical setting for a wedding. 3. Gaya Island Resort offers the richness, colour and natural beauty of Sabah as the backdrop for your wedding.

escorted by a *kompang* troupe, looking wonderful in their traditional attire of *baju Melayu* matched with colourful *samping*, is pretty hard to beat.

Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali

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

The Elements: Imagine hypnotic *gamelan* music playing while Balinese dancers execute their graceful movements, with each flick of the wrist or look of the eye rich with significance and meaning, as you pledge your lives to each other. If this scene gets your approval, you might want to consider an exotic Balinese wedding. The resort's signature package offers the



wedding couple complimentary bouquet and *boutonniere*, as well as a host of other delightful touches, including a bamboo-lined and frangipani-strewn aisle, rustic wedding arch accented with tropical flowers, Balinese dancing, a five-course Balinese banquet and more. The bride and groom will also be treated to a couple's spa experience and a gift in the form of two night's complimentary honeymoon, inclusive of accommodation and breakfast, at any YTL Hotels property in Malaysia and Bali with every wedding experience booked.

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

The Surin

The Scene: Phuket's perfectly-formed Pansea Beach, fronted by the emerald-hued Andaman Sea and verdant coconut groves. Having been completely renovated in 2011 by

celebrated architect Ed Tuttle, The Surin offers private wedding as well as wedding party packages.

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

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

Gaya Island Resort

The Scene: Imagine a tropical island paradise in the South China Sea, the majestic Mount Kinabalu on the horizon and all



Photography Louis Pang

4. Exchange your vows amidst verdant peaks and undulating tea plantations at Cameron Highlands Resort. 5. The Majestic Malacca gives your wedding all the colour and pomp of an authentic Peranakan-inspired ceremony.



the Lumba-Lumba, for a wedding cruise or even if you wish to exchange your vows at sea.

Highlight: Located within Sabah's famous Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park and in the area's famed Coral Triangle, Gaya Island is a gem of a location should you desire an island wedding. The hotel is also a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, so rest assured any experience here will be, naturally, world-class.

The Majestic Malacca

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

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

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

Cameron Highlands Resort

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

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

the richness, colour and natural beauty of Sabah, affectionately referred to as 'the Land Below the Wind'. Gaya Island Resort, YTL Hotels' latest island resort and just a 10-minute speedboat ride away from Sabah's capital of Kota Kinabalu, offers unique spaces in which to celebrate and commemorate one of the most important days of your life. Sunsets in this part of the world are particularly breathtaking and the little island of Gaya itself offers secluded bays, exotic mangroves and lush rainforest in which to celebrate the occasion.

The Elements: There are no fixed packages available as yet but the team at Gaya Island Resort are ever-willing to help you plan and see to every detail should you wish to celebrate your wedding here. The island's beautiful beach is a wonderful location in which to host a wedding on the sand. You may also wish to command the hotel's luxurious 64ft Princess yacht,





6



6 & 7. Pangkor Laut Resort offers a stunning backdrop of natural beauty for the perfect wedding.

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

Pangkor Laut Resort

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

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

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

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

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

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



Afternoon Delight

Indulge in all the pleasures of a splendid English afternoon tea without having to worry about ingesting a single calorie. Sounds impossible? Not with The Majestic Spa's luxuriously-spoiling English Afternoon Tea treatment.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Law Soo Phye**



Afternoon tea with a no-less delicious twist at The Majestic Spa, Kuala Lumpur.

Be transported back in time the moment you step into the Art Nouveau-inspired Majestic Spa at the newly-reopened The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur. Located right across from celebrated colonial architect AB Hubback's Moorish-dream of a railway station, The Majestic Spa, managed by YTL Hotel's award-winning Spa Village arm, is housed in a special annex, separate from the heritage hotel, and evokes all the old world grace and charm of colonial Malaya. Fronting it is the rather marvellous spa pool, which looks out onto the Moghul-esque *chhatris* (dome-shaped pavilions) and horseshoe-shaped arches of the station. It is, however, not to Rajasthan that The Majestic Spa looks but, rather, considerably further west. Greatly inspired by the progressive modern style and distinctively romantic spirit of architectural legend and one of Glasgow's most famous sons,



Charles Rennie Mackintosh, The Majestic Spa draws its design influence from his well-known work for the city's famous Willow Tea Rooms, arguably his most famous commission by Catherine Cranston, who'd owned Glasgow's most famous and popular chain of tea rooms at the time, which includes her equally-renowned Argyle Street and Ingram Street tea rooms.

Design enthusiasts would immediately recognise the Art Nouveau motifs so favoured by Mackintosh and the clever use of light and space – a distinct similarity in layout between the spa and the tea rooms. Evoking all the sophistication and savoir-faire associated with salon-socialising in the early 1900s, The Majestic Spa's design also brings to mind Mackintosh's love of creating a variety of spaces within a single location. Treatment rooms are located on the first level, while the ground floor houses charming changing rooms as well as the steam and cold rooms, available for guests to lounge in, pre- or post-treatment.

Little posies of purple static flowers also abound, as do artful displays of colourful teapots and cups and saucers – a clever nod again at Mackintosh's tea room legacy – which immediately put you in the right frame of mind as you prepare yourself for the English Afternoon Tea experience. And, as with all Spa Villages, there is the added bonus of a ritual to enjoy before your spa journey commences. After selecting your treatment of choice, accompanied by a glass of Pimm's or, for the teetotaler, a gunner (a hugely popular colonial-era mocktail that's essentially a blend of ginger beer, ginger ale, lime and mint), you will be whisked off for a little treat, designed to get you quickly, but unhurriedly, into the spa frame of mind. Here, inspired by the colonial heritage of old Malaya and the beauty regimes of expatriate ladies, each treatment at The Majestic Spa is preceded by a lavender water foot bath, followed by a soothing head massage with rosemary hair tonic and finished off with a gentle foot scrub using a paste made with assorted herbs, like lavender, thyme, sage and mint.



Berries and cream feature strongly in The Majestic Spa's English Afternoon Tea Experience.

The spa treatment is itself inspired by Anna, the Duchess of Bedford, who'd begun the English institution of afternoon tea by devising a thoroughly-enjoyable way of beating that "sinking feeling" she experienced in the hours between breakfast and dinner, and The Majestic Spa's own take on the art of afternoon tea is definitely worthy of Woburn Abbey's most famous contribution to society. The experience begins with a full body scrub using a fragrant blend of blackberries, cream and oat bran. After a few minutes, allowing the antioxidant- and moisture-rich mixture to melt onto the skin while ensuring you are sloughed off in style, you are invited to rinse off in a warm shower before beginning a relaxing therapeutic massage, using the spa's special garden berries oil. I'd initially planned on staying awake to enjoy each soothing knead and press afforded by my therapist Shaidatul, but her fingers worked their magic too deftly and I promptly fell asleep, only to be awakened by her gentle placement of chamomile bags onto my eyes as she began the final instalment of the experience – the English Rose natural facial. After a face massage, masque and a spritz of rose water, I was eased back into the real world with a cup of chamomile tea. Those wishing to prolong the entire experience may choose to upgrade the treatment to include a soothing chamomile bath as well. As for me, although I didn't spend the afternoon nibbling cakes and scones and sipping Lapsang Souchong, this calorie-free experience proved to be infinitely more enjoyable. After all, how often can you say you enjoyed a full English Afternoon Tea without having to worry about weight-gain and, instead, sport the added bonus of a post-spa glow? **■**

The English Afternoon Tea spa experience is priced at RM700 for a two-hour session. A special couple's experience is also available upon request and includes a full afternoon tea session at the Colonial Café post-treatment. To book your spa experience, tel: 603 2785 8070.



OTHER TREATMENTS TO TRY

Can't get enough of The Majestic Spa? Check out its other signature experiences, all inspired by the beauty and wellness rituals of olde England and colonial Malaya.

Malaya Golden Chersonese – a 2½-hour experience inspired by the epic journey of Isabella Lucy Bird, the intrepid colonial explorer and author of *The Golden Chersonese*, her seminal work detailing the accounts

of her journeys across British Malaya. Available as a single's or couple's treatment, enjoy a hair masque, herbal or coconut-papaya scrub, a steam session or lime blossom bath and finish with a special massage. *RM1,500 per couple or RM750 as a single treatment.*

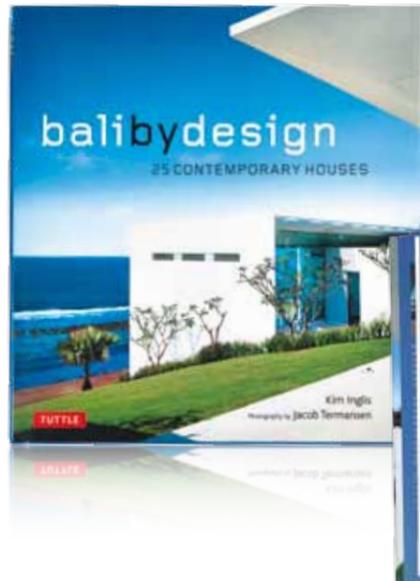
Queen Victoria's Lavender – Favoured for its anti-bacterial and soothing properties as well as delicate fragrance, this experience combines a tranquillity breathing ritual with an

exfoliating session, a curative lavender and aloe gel mask, and is finished with a 'Drift Away' lavender massage. *RM850 for a three-hour session.*

Alternatively, pick from the à la carte menu's selection of soothing facials or deluxe Majestic massages. Each 90 minute revitalising session begins with the Gifts from the Garden foot scrub and Rosemary Scalp Treatment. *Treatments range from RM350 to RM550 each.*

Asian Inspirations

Inspired by this issue's eclectic selection of destinations, YTL *Life* picks out six reads, all published by Tuttle and Periplus, that'll resonate, be it on food, travel or style.



What: Bali by Design – 25 Contemporary Houses.

Who: Kim Inglis and Jacob Termansen.

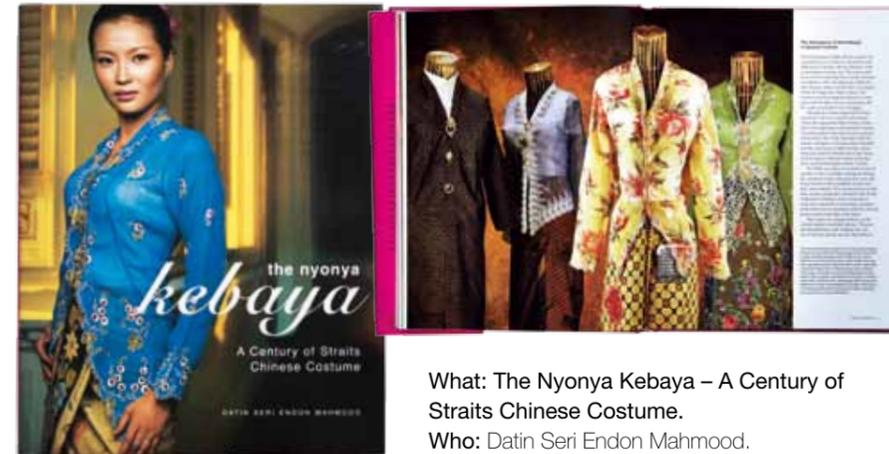
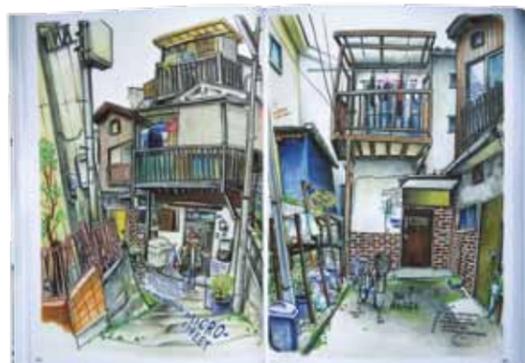
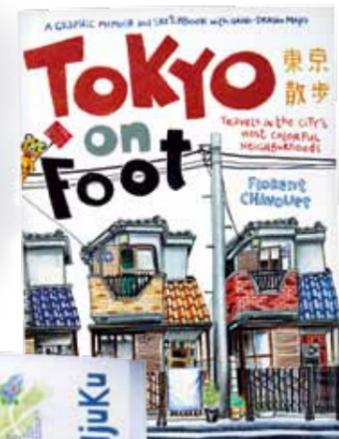
Why: After delighting in the talented duo's work on *A Perennial Feast*, a look at the food culture and dining rooms of YTL Hotel's properties around the globe, from Saint-Tropez to Hokkaido, you might enjoy this design-centric read on beautiful modern Balinese homes, certain to make you hanker after a return visit to the Island of the Gods.



What: Tokyo on Foot.

Who: Florent Chavouet.

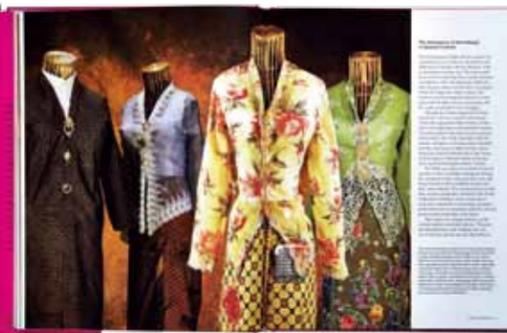
Why: As this issue of YTL *Life* is strongly focused on Japan, this fun book might inspire you to stop by Tokyo for a few days before or after your Hokkaido jaunt. To many, Japan's capital is *Blade Runner*-like: futuristic, audacious and bold. Yet, it is also classical, traditional and elegantly vibrant. For those who've never been or are planning to go, this book offers a unique perspective on discovering Tokyo, complete with tales and sketches of everyday Tokyo-ites living out their lives in one of the most bustling metropolises in the world.



What: The Nyonya Kebaya – A Century of Straits Chinese Costume.

Who: Datin Seri Endon Mahmood.

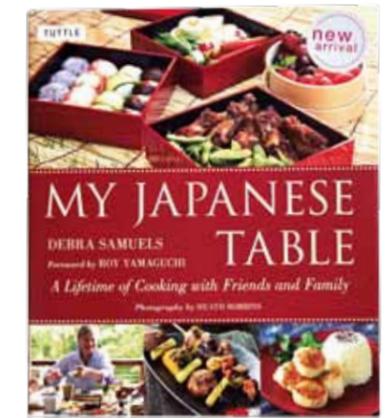
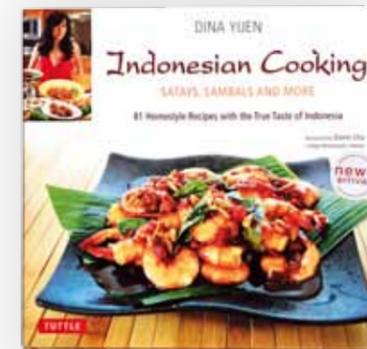
Why: Authored by the late wife of one of Malaysia's former Prime Ministers, who herself was a great fan of Peranakan style, this book offers a rich introduction to the history and culture of the Straits Chinese. With each page a visual feast of the Nyonya's famous and unabashed love for fine things, many of the sarong kebayas featured in the book come from Datin Seri Endon's own collection. Read and discover about the various types of kebaya fashion that existed – from exquisitely-embroidered kebaya sulam to traditional baju panjang – as well as the accessories that accompanied them and the painstaking work that went into creating each piece. A celebration of the evolution of a unique form of fashion and craftsmanship.



What: Indonesian Cooking – Satays, Sambals and More.

Who: Dina Yuen.

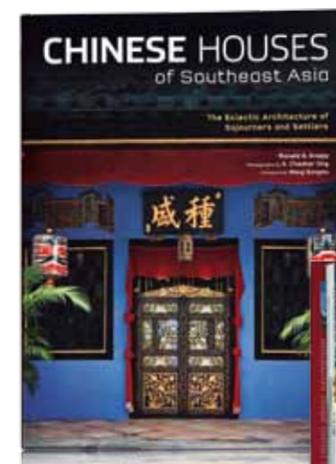
Why: If you've enjoyed reading Simon Pridmore's article on Balinese festivals on page 34, we thought you might like to enjoy a literary feast-ival as well. Dina Yuen's collection of homestyle Indonesian recipes might encompass the country, but there are several signature Balinese dishes featured within, like *ayam bumbu* Bali, grilled swordfish with yellow rice and sweet-spicy calamari.



What: My Japanese Table.

Who: Debra Samuels.

Why: With a key cuisine story this issue focusing on the food of Hokkaido, Japan (Niseko, in particular), this charming book not only teaches you how to recreate most Japanese dishes at home with ease, but is also packed with interesting nuggets of information that'll help you appreciate Japanese cuisine and culture even more, such as the thought process and care that goes into putting together a bento box meal as well as tips on rolling your own sushi.



What: Chinese Houses of Southeast Asia.

Who: Ronald G Knapp and A Chester Ong.

Why: The Chinese diaspora has greatly impacted the world, particularly the South-East Asian region. In this beautiful and evocative book, Professor Emeritus Ronald Knapp and celebrated Filipino photographer A Chester Ong team up to capture, document and tell the stories behind these sojourners and settlers through the homes they built and the lives they lived. From the Tan Cheng Lock residence in the historical heart of UNESCO-listed



Malacca, to the sprawling plantation home of Oey Djie San in Tangerang, Indonesia, the spirit behind these structures live on today to serve as the collective memory of the souls they used to shelter.



1. Tomioka White lounge at The Green Leaf Niseko Village. 2. Hilton Niseko Village. 3. Chef Takuya Kato of Pirka Teppanyaki. 4. Succulent meat for warming hot pot dinners at The Crab Shack.

NORTHERN COMFORT

Winter or summer, you'll find Hokkaido to be the go-to destination for gourmet-minded travellers all-year round!

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

Global gourmets have long been clued in to Hokkaido's reputation as a mecca for world-class produce and cuisine. After all, Japan's northern-most state does boast of its own Michelin guide. But, what the truly in-the-know set aren't telling you is that most of the food action isn't far at all from the tiny alpine village of Niseko, famous for its amazing powder-like snow and a veritable magnet for skiers and snowboarders, and now fast featuring on every globetrotting culinary enthusiast's travel itinerary.

while spring, summer and autumn lure a different kind of traveller, who come for champagne-fresh air, nature and, oh, of course, the food.

Located about two hours' drive from Hokkaido's capital of Sapporo, Niseko sits prettily at the foot of Mount Niseko-Annupuri and is actually made up of a cluster of lovely resort villages. It is hugely popular as a winter sports destination as it clocks up an amazing amount of snowfall (it recently ousted Mount Baker in the United States' Washington State for the title of snowiest resort in the world),

Hokkaido's reputation as Japan's breadbasket is also well-deserved; not forgetting the marine delights its bountiful seas and wonderful produce its fertile lands regularly serve up. The spring season is the usual herald for a host of fresh new things to eat after a long winter. The ground softens, the trees bud, flowers blossom and, suddenly, the local farmers' markets explode in riotous colour. Niseko, in particular, is a wonderful place to experience the bounty the warmer weather brings, with its abundance of fine dining rooms and bijou gourmet producers. From luscious snow crab to creamy farm-fresh milk and the silkiest tofu made with crystal-clear mountain spring water, here's a taste of what Niseko is serving up on a plate.



Makkari Pork

A short 10km distance away from Niseko lies the village of Makkari, famed for Shinichi Sugaya's marvellous fine dining room, **Maccarina**, as well as for its scrumptious pigs. If you can imagine what Gloucester Old Spots are to England or Iberian *pata negra* is to Spain, then you'd get a better idea of what Makkari is to Hokkaido. Fed on a herb-heavy diet of oregano, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger, the meat from this hamlet's (pardon the pun) pigs has to be tasted to be believed. The Hilton Niseko Village's Executive Chef, Rob Shipman, does several exquisite variations of Makkari pork, all of which may be sampled at the hotel's **Melt Bar & Grill** as well as at the **Ezo Pub**. At the former, opt for the Caesar salad with Makkari bacon, herb croutons and Edam or, for a more local flavour, the Makkari herb pork loin with *yuzu* sauce. If you have children travelling with you, they would certainly appreciate Ezo's luxed-up version of a traditional fast food favourite – Makkari pork hot dogs with grain mustard, served on a baguette instead of the regular hot dog bun. There's also pizza topped with Makkari bacon, mushrooms and a generous smear of basil pesto sauce. Those with a penchant for meat, not necessarily Makkari, might also do well to visit the **Tomiooka White** lounge on the ground level of The Green Leaf Hotel next door to try its assorted Hokkaido sausage platter. Certain to go down well with adults and children alike.



Dairy Products

Niseko Village is itself home to two dairies, both of which are open to visitors all-year round. First up is **Milk Kobo**. Founded by Mamoru Takahashi 15 years ago by chance, after puzzling over what to do with the surplus of milk from his farm cows, he began experimenting and then selling an assortment of dairy treats and confections. It didn't take long for him to make a name for himself. Come summer, long queues have been known to snake in and out of this charming little dairy, just down the road from both The Green Leaf and the Hilton. Milk Kobo's must-try item here is, without doubt, its delectable

“Niseko is a wonderful place to experience the bounty of spring, with its abundance of fine dining rooms and bijou gourmet producers.”

5. Stylish cocktails are served up at the Melt Bar & Grill. 6. Don't leave Niseko without trying Milk Kobo's justifiably-famous cream puffs. 7. Gourmet Makkari pork is served at the Hilton Niseko Village's Melt Bar & Grill.

cream puffs. Baked fresh daily and filled with an obscene amount of luscious custard-y cream, one bite and you'll instantly understand why over a couple of thousand of these *choux* buns are sold daily during the high season. Other things to try include the chocolate eclairs, milk puddings (a Hokkaido favourite), yoghurt drinks and farm-fresh Swiss milk rolls. There's also a cosy café area where you



8. As Niseko can remain under heavy snow up until late April, expect to look for Niseko Fromage under a blanket of white. Niseko's mountains, meanwhile, are snow-covered till early June. 9. Ice Kobo's green tea ice cream. 10. Niseko Fromage's famous oven-toasted cheese crisps.

can munch away on your purchases immediately, accompanied by something hot or cold. We recommend the café latte made with *kuromitsu*, a Japanese sugar syrup that literally translates as 'black honey'. And, if you're visiting in summer or are just in need of something cold and sweet, the **Ice Kobo** soft ice creams are sure to hit all the right spots. There are over a dozen flavours on offer, including Gianduja chocolate, caramel, tiramisu, blueberry, choco-banana and rum 'n' raisin. Should your sweet tooth rear its head long after Milk Kobo's closed, don't panic. The **Mountain Boutique**, the Hilton's hotel shop, sells little tubs of Ice Kobo – in milk and green tea flavours.

If you've trekked your way around Niseko Village, you'd surely have come across this darling little cheese shop called **Niseko Fromage**. A boutique enterprise owned and operated by Noriaki Seki, a master cheese craftsman from Yoichi, a small seaside town not far from Niseko. There's no sign in English but you may look out for a small red and white flagstaff planted into the ground or, alternatively and if your eyes are sharp, a little kennel belonging to a pooch named Sakura – the *fromagerie* is right next to it. Niseko Fromage's cheese has won Seki-san several awards already but few realise accolades, albeit of a different kind, is something he is accustomed to, having coached Japan's

snowboarding team during the Nagano winter Olympics. Try and buy several types, including Gouda (perfect for fondues), sandwich-perfect Havarti and fresh handmade string cheeses, ideal for sprinkling over summer salads. Niseko Fromage's famous oven-toasted cheese crisps are also all-too-easy to snack on and come in plain, shrimp and seaweed or chilli flavours. If you happen to be visiting from late April to November, you might be lucky enough to try its famous soft ice creams. There are only two flavours – milk and Camembert. The latter, though, is the undeniable star. One lick could possibly prove life-transforming.

Tofu

If you've ever observed the breakfast buffet at the Hilton Niseko Village's Melt restaurant, you'd probably be wondering why so many Japanese guests make a beeline for little dishes of white pudding. To clue you in, they contain not pudding, but small scoops of fresh tofu, made with water that bubbles up from a natural spring at the foot of Mount Yotei. Referred to as *wakimizu* tofu, it is considered to be one of the most delicious of its kind in the region. If you're in the mood to explore, visit the



11



12



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11. Pre-prandial drinks are a must at the Hilton Niseko Village's Flame Bar & Lounge. 12. Eating crab is an art form in Hokkaido. 13. Snow crab ramen at the Ezo Pub. 14. Goshiki at The Green Leaf is a favourite all-day dining room.

spring itself to indulge at the very source of the refreshing water. For foodies, note that there is a *tofu-ya* (a little shop that sells a wide variety of spring water and tofu-based edibles) next door, including tofu *udon* noodles, flavoured tofu skins and tofu drinks. What delights many visitors, however, is their discovery of 'tonuts' – the shop's own version of doughnuts but made with, what else, but tofu.

Crab

Flanked by the chilly Seas of Japan and Okhotsk, it's no surprise that seafood, particularly crab, features strongly in Hokkaido cuisine. Here, eating crab is elevated to an art form, of which there are many grand masters. Those with exquisite

palates would inevitably hanker for the rare and highly sought-after *hanasaki* crabs from Nemuro. The more widely-available (and no less delicious) are *tarabagani* (king crab), *kegani* (hairy or horseshoe crab) and *zuweigani* (snow crab), all of which are at their best from April right up until August. Both the Hilton and The Green Leaf offer several ways to enjoy all three varieties of these leggy crustaceans. The **Melt Bar & Grill** does a mean snow crab spaghetti as well as a grilled Hokkaido king crab in a tarragon sauce, while **Ezo Pub** goes traditional with its snow crab *ramen* served in a *miso* broth with sweet corn kernels, as does **Sisam**, whose snow crab and potato *chawanmushi*, both iconic Hokkaido produce, offers intense flavour encased

in a light-as-air egg custard. **Pirka**, the Hilton's teppanyaki restaurant, also does a particularly lovely version of Sea of Okhotsk king crab served, decadently, with a lobster sauce. For those visiting during the winter season, The **Crab Shack**, located next door to The Green Leaf Niseko Village, is quite possibly the best location in which to indulge your wildest crab fantasies. Here, you may order grilled king crab or boiled hairy crab, or, if you're undecided, just go for the *kaisen nabe* (seafood hot pot), where a massive king crab, together with a host of other good things, including prawns, fish, scallops and a variety of Japanese mushrooms like *enoki*, *maitake* and *shitake*, will be put together in true gourmet style for you to slowly feast on.

The one downside is that it only reopens mid-December when the winter season is underway once more.

Sea Urchin

Once considered a nuisance to fishermen and a pest to swimmers, the reviled sea urchin is now finding itself the star of Asia's most sophisticated dining rooms and unwitting darling of top Japanese chefs around the world. From Tetsuya Wakuda's celebrity-status *botan ebi* appetiser to Shinji Kanesaka's simple but sublime *uni* sushi, it would seem pampered palates the world over can't get enough of the *umami* explosions that a delicate mouthful of sea urchin can give. Hokkaido is, undoubtedly, a fine place to indulge in this marine equivalent of foie gras. The seaside town of Otaru, about an hour and a half's drive from Niseko, with its numerous sushi restaurants, is a great place to indulge in these spiny but hugely tasty echinoderms but, if you aren't keen to wander too far, **Rera Sushi** at the Hilton would be able to serve you some *au naturel* or as a topping for sushi, while

Pirka offers a more subtle version, using it to enrich a *shiso*-fragranced sauce while matching it with a portion of luscious Hokkaido abalone.

Rice

The rice-producing capital of Japan, Hokkaido has another deserving title to add to its name – that of 'rice bowl of the nation'. With its cool climate and low humidity, it's no surprise that rice cultivated in Hokkaido, the first place in Japan to do so, is flavoursome and boasts a rich, slightly-glutinous texture. Here, it must be noted that the Hilton Niseko Village and The Green Leaf support the local industry by using only Hokkaido-grown rice in all its dining establishments. And rice, without fail, makes an appearance every mealtime, from breakfast (the Japanese love rice with grilled or broiled fish to start their day) to lunch and through to dinner. If you're breakfasting at The Green Leaf's **Goshiki**, try the steamed rice cooked with 15 types of healthy local grains and cereals to give your body a bigger boost as you gear up for a day outdoors. ▣

“Niseko is a wonderful place to experience the bounty of spring, with its abundance of fine dining rooms and bijou gourmet producers.”

OTHER THINGS TO TRY

Corn – Hokkaido pearl corn is incredibly sweet and boasts whitish, pearl-like kernels. They may be eaten raw or steamed. The locals' favourite way, however, is to roast it lightly with butter and soy.

Potatoes – Local varieties like *Danshake* and *Kita-akari* are delicious. Enjoy them in various traditional or Western-style dishes, or look out for Gosetsu *udon* potato noodles or even local potato *shochu*, a potent liquor.

Beans – August and September is widely-regarded as 'bean season' in Hokkaido, especially for the well-known and popular *edamame*.

Buckwheat – Soba noodles are a popular Hokkaido delicacy and you may chance upon buckwheat fields covered white with flowers in the months of July and August. Fresh soba is best enjoyed in the months of September and October.

Visit *Michi-no-eki* or the *Niseko View Plaza* to buy a wide variety of local seasonal produce. Enquire at the concierge desk at the Hilton Niseko Village for more information on how to get there.

THE PERFECT BASE

The Hilton Niseko Village, set at the foot of Mount Niseko-Annupuri, is the perfect base from which to enjoy all of the area's top produce and dining outlets, several of which are within the hotel itself. There are also a host of other outdoor activities to enjoy throughout the spring and summer seasons, including tennis, horseback-riding and, for the golfers, two 18-hole championship courses, including one that's designed by Arnold Palmer.

Poh's Kitchen

Complex and highly flavourful as the result of hours of laborious preparation and cooking, it's no wonder Peranakan or Straits Chinese food remains as alluring (and enduring) as ever. To gain insight into this unique culinary experience often described as Malaysia's original fusion cuisine, join The Majestic Malacca's Peranakan Culinary Journeys.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Yong Keen Keong & Ting Yang Shan**



Few words are as evocative as *masak*. Although it means 'cooking' or 'to cook' in Malay, to the Peranakans or the Straits Chinese of Penang and Malacca, it conjures up visions of *kebaya*-clad women bonding in the kitchen or around the dining table as they prepare the day's meals, be it peeling or preparing ingredients, painstakingly pounding spicy, aromatic *sambals* the traditional way, using a mortar and pestle, or standing by the fire, gently toasting cubes or slivers of pungent *belacan* (shrimp paste cakes) until fragrant – an essential ingredient in Peranakan cuisine.

Legend says it was the Chinese princess, Hang Li Po, whose arrival in 15th century Malacca to be the bride of Sultan Mansur Shah, bringing with her an entourage of noble young men and women, that heralded the start of inter-marriage between the two races. In time, their descendants became known as 'Peranakan'. This unique culinary fusion has resulted in the creation of some of the region's most exotic and original cuisines. Although Peranakan food may be found as well in Penang and Singapore, Malacca's is distinctive, thanks, in part, to its multi-cultural influences; from the Portuguese and Dutch to other ethnic groups that are uniquely Malaccan, like the Chittys. Aside from trawling the streets of Malacca in search of authentic Nyonya flavours, one of the easier ways



Chef Poh offers practical insights into Peranakan cooking at The Majestic Malacca.

“Nyonya cooking can be very tedious, but I've ensured that whatever's taught during the classes is easy to replicate once you're back home.”

be to engage yourself in a two-and-half-hour culinary session with The Majestic Malacca's Chef CK Pow, or 'Poh' as he is more commonly known.

Cooking classes are conducted at the poolside, with stations all set up, and chef's hats, aprons and recipes all provided for. And Chef Poh, although a little quiet at first, warms up amazingly quickly once he starts on his favourite topic: food. “Nyonya cooking can be very tedious,” he shares, “but I've ensured that whatever's taught during the classes is easy to replicate once you're back home.

After all, what's the point if you don't feel inspired to cook and try out what you've been taught?”

Although an amateur in the kitchen, under Chef Poh's guiding hand, I see how easy it can be to prepare classic Nyonya dishes like Chicken *Pongteh*. Even the complex-sounding *Udang Kuah Pedas Nenas* (a prawn and pineapple curry that's a great favourite) is produced without too much hassle. Chef Poh effortlessly demonstrates how blended spices may be deftly transformed into a paste that's headily fragrant once it hits the oiled

wok. The key ingredients go in soon after and, before you know it, you have a true blue Nyonya feast at the ready. If you're inspired to pick up a few pointers in the fine art of Peranakan cooking, you now know where to look.

The Majestic Malacca's Peranakan Culinary Journey is held from 3pm to 5.30pm upon request and is priced at RM250++ per person. This includes a cooking lesson with Chef Poh, followed by food tasting. Hats and aprons are provided and children below the age of 12 are welcome to join in at no additional charge.



Easy Nyonya Dinner

Here are three easy dishes you might wish to serve up at your next meal. All you need to go with these are servings of hot white rice and a hearty appetite.

Ayam Pongteh

A classic Malaccan Peranakan dish, you won't find Chicken *Pongteh* on the menus of Penang Nyonyas. This dish tastes even better when the flavours have been allowed to infuse and develop. Most Peranakan families tend to make this tasty dish in big portions so that there's plenty to enjoy over the course of a few days.

Ingredients

- 500g chicken, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 100g shallots, blended
- 100g garlic, blended
- 2tsp *tauchu* (preserved bean paste)
- 1tbsp *gula Melaka* or coconut palm sugar (ground)
- 2 shiitake mushrooms or dried Chinese mushrooms, cut into pieces
- 1 potato, quartered
- 20ml cooking oil
- 300ml water or chicken stock
- 1tsp dark soy sauce

Method

1. Heat the oil in a wok and add the blended garlic and shallots. Sauté over a medium heat until fragrant.
2. Add in the *tauchu* and *gula Melaka* into the paste and stir till dissolved. Add in the water or chicken stock and bring to boil.
3. Add in the mushrooms and potato and cook for another three minutes until the potato is half-done.
4. Add in the chicken and cook until the meat is cooked through. Season with the dark soy and add salt for flavour.
5. Serve with steamed rice or bread.

Prawn and Pineapple Curry

Tangy and spicy, this dish demands several helpings of steamed white rice. A tip: if the pineapple is not as ripe as you'd like it, add a little more sugar to take the edge off the curry's sharpness.

Ingredients A

- 300g prawns, cleaned and washed
- 200g fresh pineapple, cubed



- 300ml diluted coconut milk
- 2 kaffir lime leaves, torn
- 1 stalk lemongrass, crushed slightly to release its aroma
- 20ml cooking oil
- 300ml water
- Salt and sugar to taste

Ingredients: B

- (to be blended together)
- 100g shallots
 - 50g garlic
 - 20g turmeric
 - 20g ginger
 - 20g galangal / blue ginger
 - 50g red chillies
 - 50g candle nuts
 - 50g *haebi* (dried shrimp)
 - 50g dried chillies, boiled and blended

Method

1. Heat the oil in a wok and add ingredients B, including the lime leaves and the lemongrass. Sauté over a medium heat until fragrant.
2. Add in the pineapple and the water and bring to boil.
3. Add in the coconut milk. Cover and simmer over a low heat for 15 minutes.
4. Add in the prawns and season with salt and sugar.
5. Once the prawns are cooked, serve immediately with steamed rice.

Telur Dadar Cincaluk

Cincaluk is a popular Malaccan condiment featuring fermented shrimps or krill. Pinkish in colour, a little bit of this goes a long way in cooking. The shrimps are also referred to as *udang geragau* in Malacca and are seasonally available in Pantai Klebang, Limbongan, Tanjung Kling and other coastal areas. Here, it's used to add a thoroughly Malaccan flavour to the classic omelette.

Ingredients A

- 3 large fresh eggs
- 1tsp *cincaluk*, drained of brine

Ingredients: B

- 50g onion, sliced
- 50g red chilli, julienned
- 50g carrot, julienned
- 50g shiitake mushroom, sliced
- 50g spring onion, sliced
- 1tbsp cooking oil

Method

1. Whisk ingredients A in a bowl and set aside.
2. Heat up a non-stock frying pan and add a little cooking oil.
3. Sauté ingredients B over a medium heat until fragrant.
4. Add ingredients A and fry till cooked thoroughly.
5. Serve immediately with steamed rice.



NYONYA NOSH

A quick guide to some other Peranakan delicacies you might want to try while exploring Malacca's food culture.

Pie Tee – Also known as 'top hats', these crisp, delicate hat-shaped pastry shells (hence the nickname) filled with julienned turnip and shrimp and topped with chilli sauce are popular appetisers.

Chap Chye – A traditional dish of Nyonya-style mixed vegetables, featuring cabbage, mushrooms, dried lily buds and cloud ears.

Kangkong Belacan – Stir-fried water spinach or water convolvulus with chilli, dried shrimp and shrimp paste (*belacan*).

Cincalok – A popular Malaccan condiment featuring fermented shrimp or krill. Often mixed with chilli, shallots and lime and eaten as an accompaniment to piping-hot rice.

Ayam or Babi Buah Keluak – A thick chicken or pork stew made with black *keluak* nuts. A true Nyonya delicacy and specialty!

Laksa – Unlike the Penang variety, which is fish-based, tangy and eaten with lashings of *haeko* (a black prawn paste sauce), *laksa* in Malacca is essentially a curry-based noodle dish, enriched with coconut milk, chilli and fish cake. A must-try!

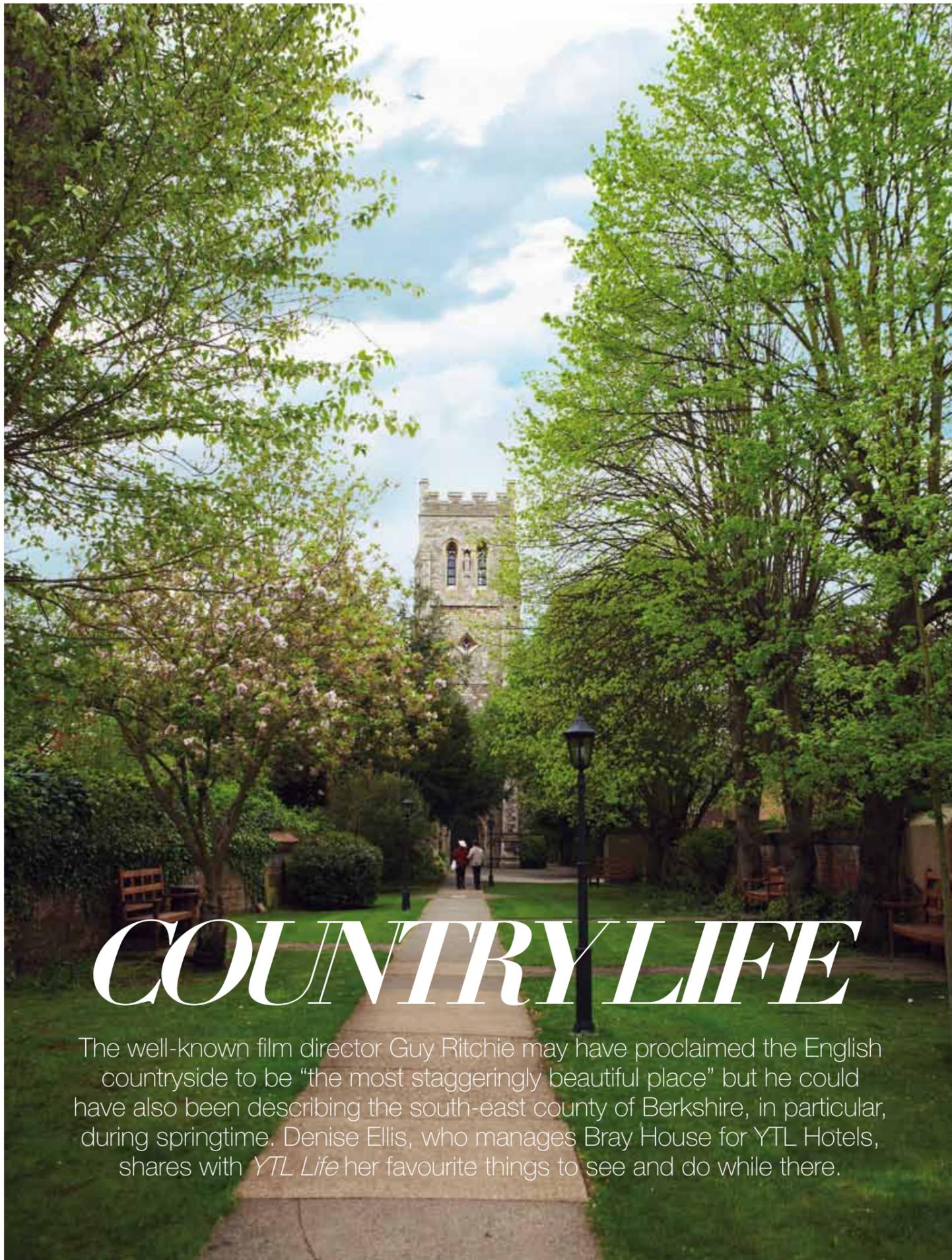
Otak Otak – Local fish or seafood mousse enriched with spices and coconut cream, wrapped in banana leaves and grilled. Penang Peranakans often steam it, in dishes lined with *kadok* leaves.

Itik Tim – Duck soup with preserved salted vegetables.

Terung Pajeri – Sweet and tangy brinjal curry. Also look for *Pajeri Nenas*, made with pineapple.

Kuih – Peranakan cakes. These may come in a mind-boggling and a veritable Pantone chart of colours! There's the bright blue *Pulut Tai Tai* (glutinous rice cake with coconut jam); *Onde Onde* (green dough balls filled with palm sugar syrup and flecked with desiccated coconut); *Angkoo* (bright red glutinous rice flour cakes filled with green bean paste or a similar sweet filling) and *Kuih Lapis* (local layer cake in varying hues, depending on the flavour), amongst many others.

Tai Bak – An increasingly-rare Nyonya dessert featuring little blue, white and pink noodles made from rice, tapioca and wheat flours, enjoyed cold with syrup or shaved ice.



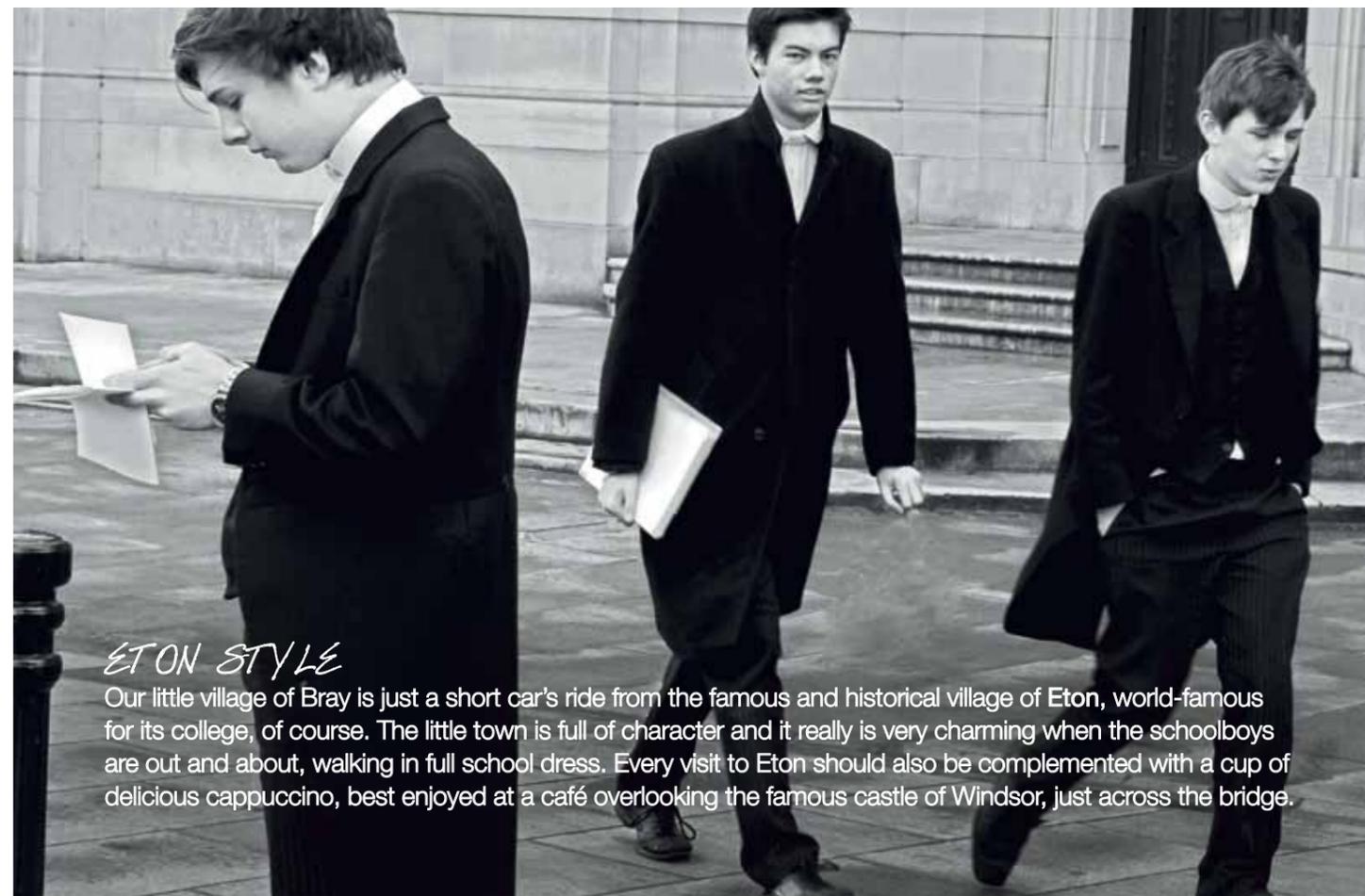
COUNTRY LIFE

The well-known film director Guy Ritchie may have proclaimed the English countryside to be “the most staggeringly beautiful place” but he could have also been describing the south-east county of Berkshire, in particular, during springtime. Denise Ellis, who manages Bray House for YTL Hotels, shares with *YTL Life* her favourite things to see and do while there.



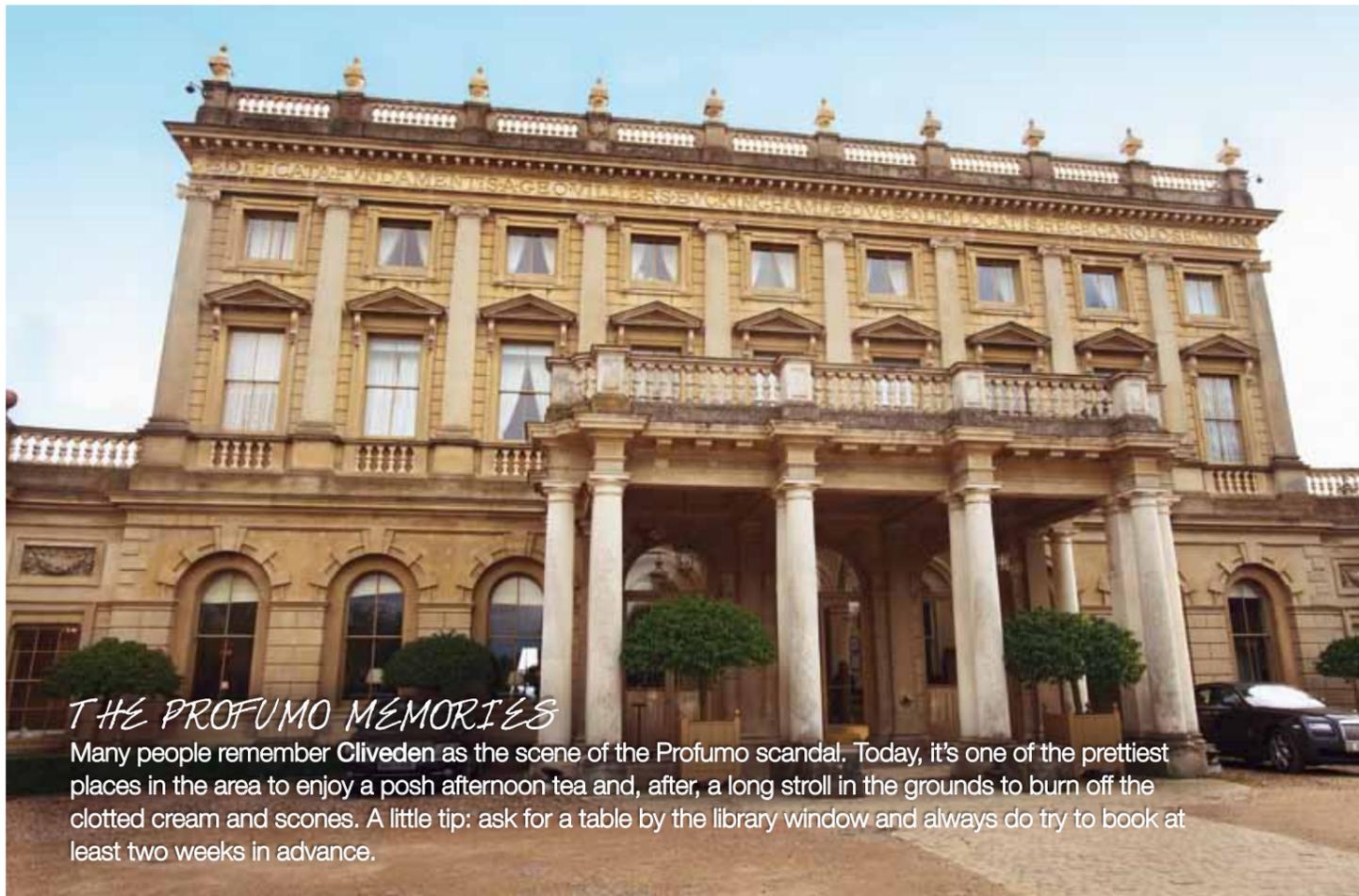
HORSING AROUND

English country life is sometimes best enjoyed on horseback. You can take a cue from Her Majesty the Queen, who lives in nearby Windsor, and saddle up for a casual canter around the village. It's great fun!



ETON STYLE

Our little village of Bray is just a short car's ride from the famous and historical village of Eton, world-famous for its college, of course. The little town is full of character and it really is very charming when the schoolboys are out and about, walking in full school dress. Every visit to Eton should also be complemented with a cup of delicious cappuccino, best enjoyed at a café overlooking the famous castle of Windsor, just across the bridge.



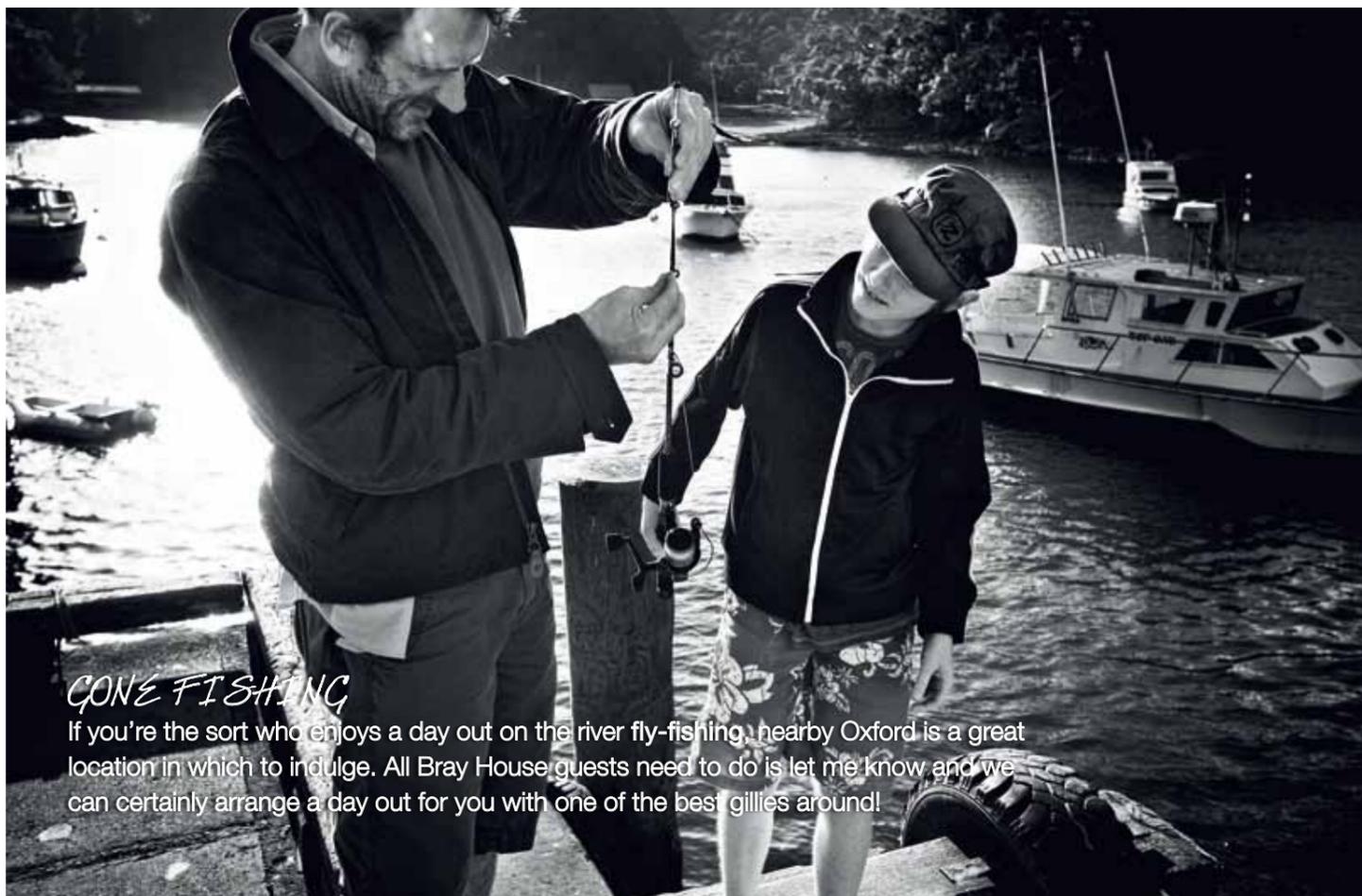
THE PROFUMO MEMORIES

Many people remember Cliveden as the scene of the Profumo scandal. Today, it's one of the prettiest places in the area to enjoy a posh afternoon tea and, after, a long stroll in the grounds to burn off the clotted cream and scones. A little tip: ask for a table by the library window and always do try to book at least two weeks in advance.



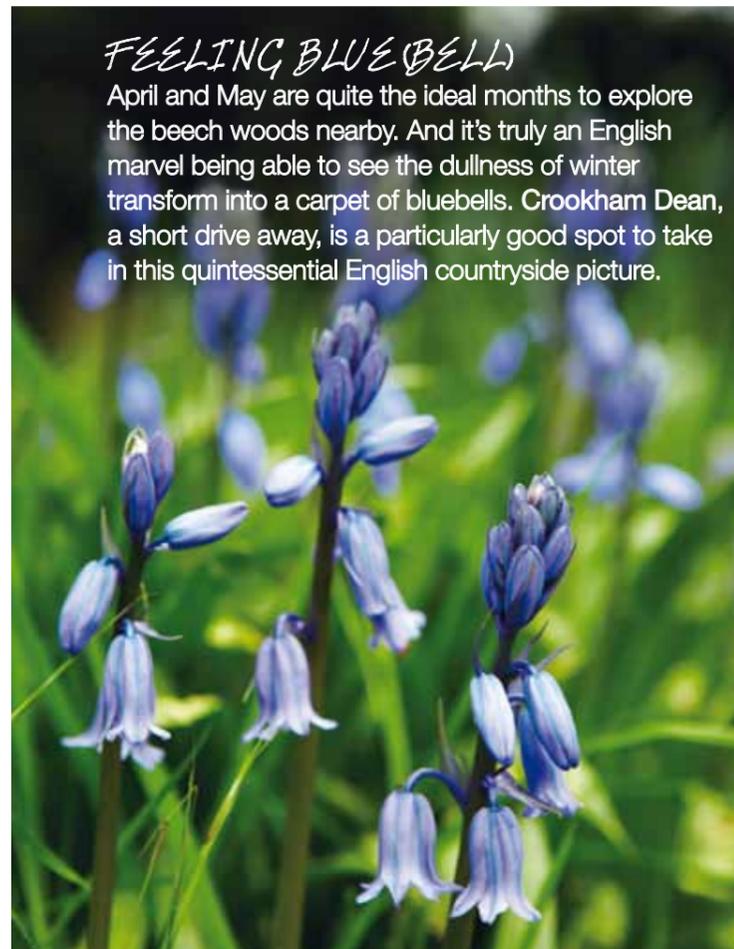
THREE MEN IN A BOAT

It's incredibly scenic in Berkshire and you could well hire a beautiful boat to enjoy a Jerome K Jerome kind of moment. The Thames flows through Bray and few pleasures beat a spring or summer's day picnic combined with a boat ride. It must also be said that my partner Kevin Snook puts together the best gourmet picnic baskets!



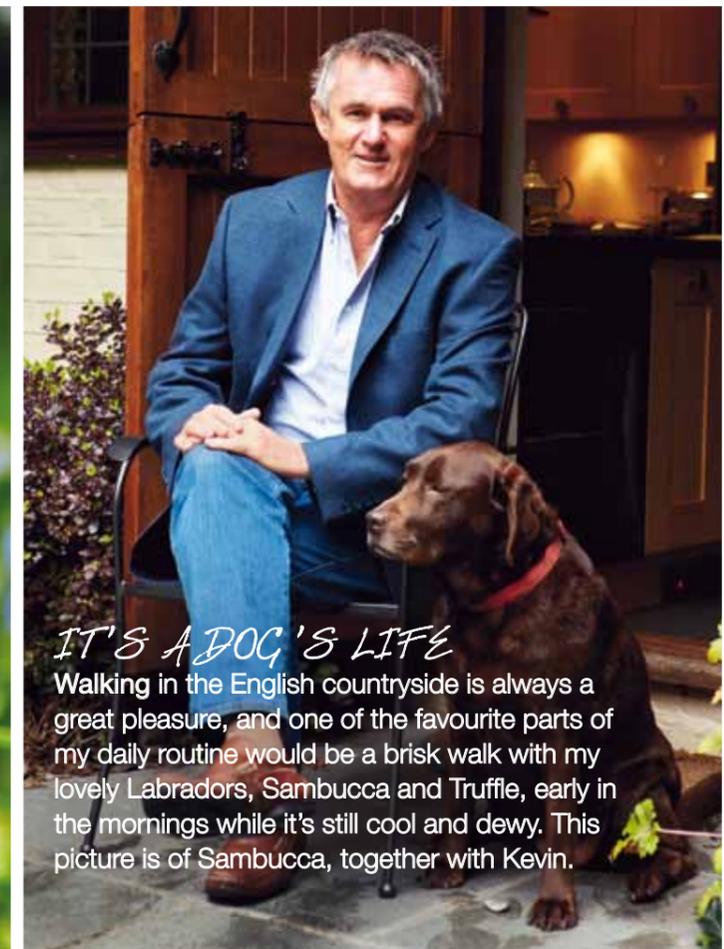
GO FISHING

If you're the sort who enjoys a day out on the river fly-fishing, nearby Oxford is a great location in which to indulge. All Bray House guests need to do is let me know and we can certainly arrange a day out for you with one of the best gillies around!



FEELING BLUEBELL

April and May are quite the ideal months to explore the beech woods nearby. And it's truly an English marvel being able to see the dullness of winter transform into a carpet of bluebells. Crookham Dean, a short drive away, is a particularly good spot to take in this quintessential English countryside picture.



IT'S A DOC'S LIFE

Walking in the English countryside is always a great pleasure, and one of the favourite parts of my daily routine would be a brisk walk with my lovely Labradors, Sambucca and Truffle, early in the mornings while it's still cool and dewy. This picture is of Sambucca, together with Kevin.



BAR NONE

Our pretty Bray House is conveniently located right next door to the famous Hinds Head pub, owned by celebrated culinary alchemist, Heston Blumenthal. It's housed in a listed 15th-century building and is famous for its inventive cuisine. It also has a large range of lagers, stouts, ales and ciders, but I think its new cocktail list is simply wonderful! Also, if you're staying at Bray House, you really can go ahead and indulge – all you need to do is walk a few steps home to be safely back in bed!

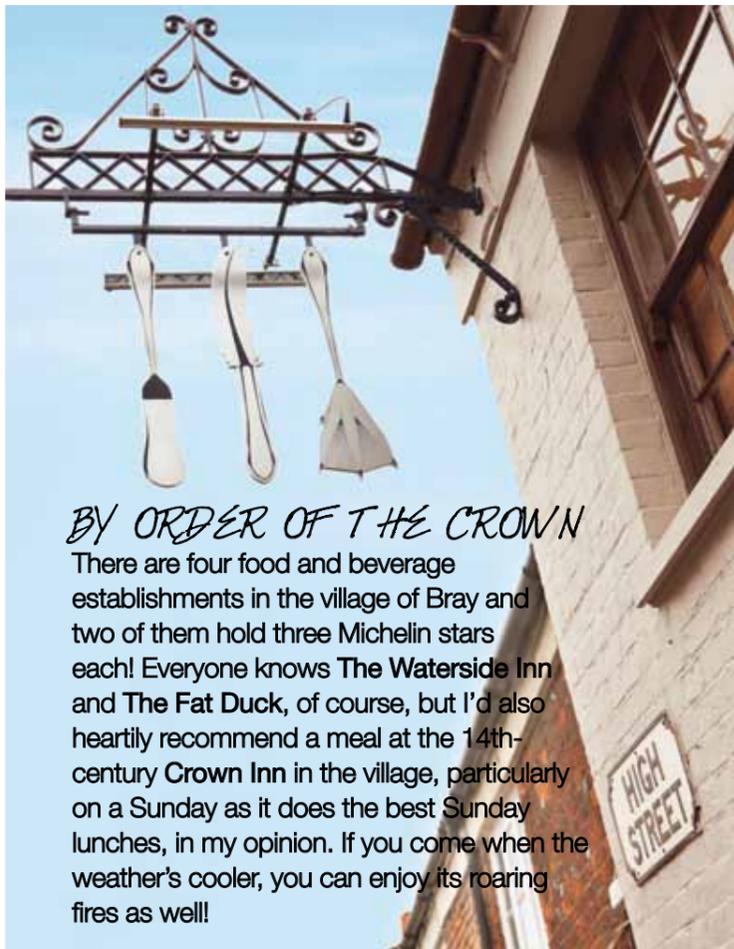


TIME FOR TEA

There's no place like London when it comes to the art of afternoon tea. If you've got time to spare in the midst of your Berkshire break, let us know and we'll set you up with Wayne, our wonderful, talkative Cockney driver, who'd take you into London for the day, which includes a languorous stop at one of the iconic London hotels for a delicious afternoon tea.

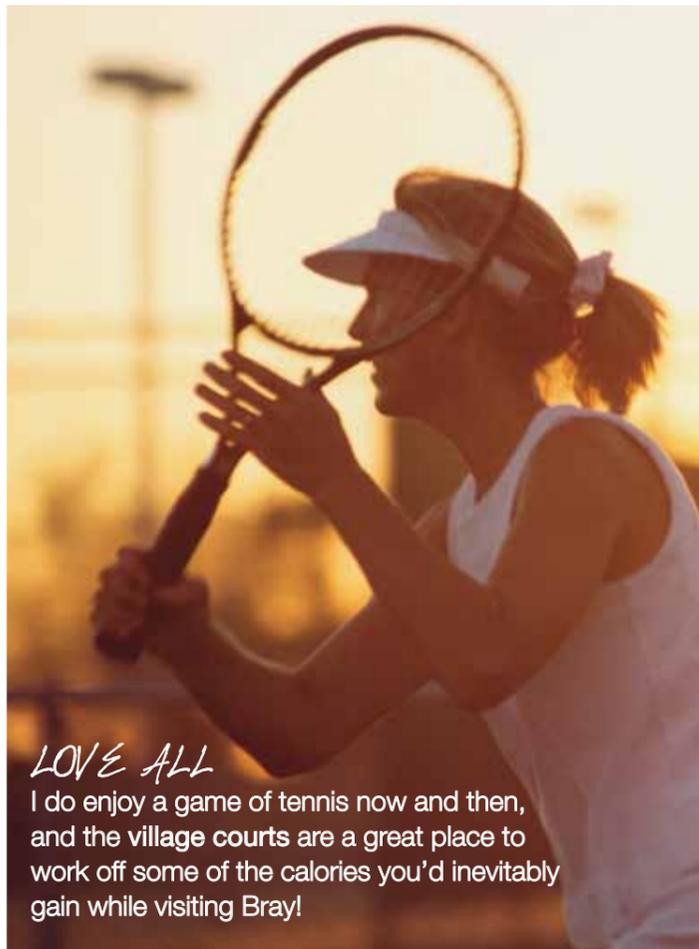


Image from The Dorchester



BY ORDER OF THE CROWN

There are four food and beverage establishments in the village of Bray and two of them hold three Michelin stars each! Everyone knows **The Waterside Inn** and **The Fat Duck**, of course, but I'd also heartily recommend a meal at the 14th-century **Crown Inn** in the village, particularly on a Sunday as it does the best Sunday lunches, in my opinion. If you come when the weather's cooler, you can enjoy its roaring fires as well!



LOVE ALL

I do enjoy a game of tennis now and then, and the village courts are a great place to work off some of the calories you'd inevitably gain while visiting Bray!



GOURMET STOCK-UP

As Bray House is essentially self-catering, it's a good idea to pop by the Windsor Farm Shop to stock up on a variety of nibbles, just in case you get hungry in the middle of the night. From Sandringham Apple Juice, which is, by the way, served at Buckingham Palace's garden parties and receptions, to interesting local cheeses like Oxford Blue and Stinking Bishop, you can also pick up other things to accompany your big English breakfast. ☑



Denise Ellis is a personal service entrepreneur and manages Bray House for YTL Hotels.



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-opened in December 2012, The Majestic Hotel is poised to reclaim this former glory; its pièce de résistance is 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.majestickl.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

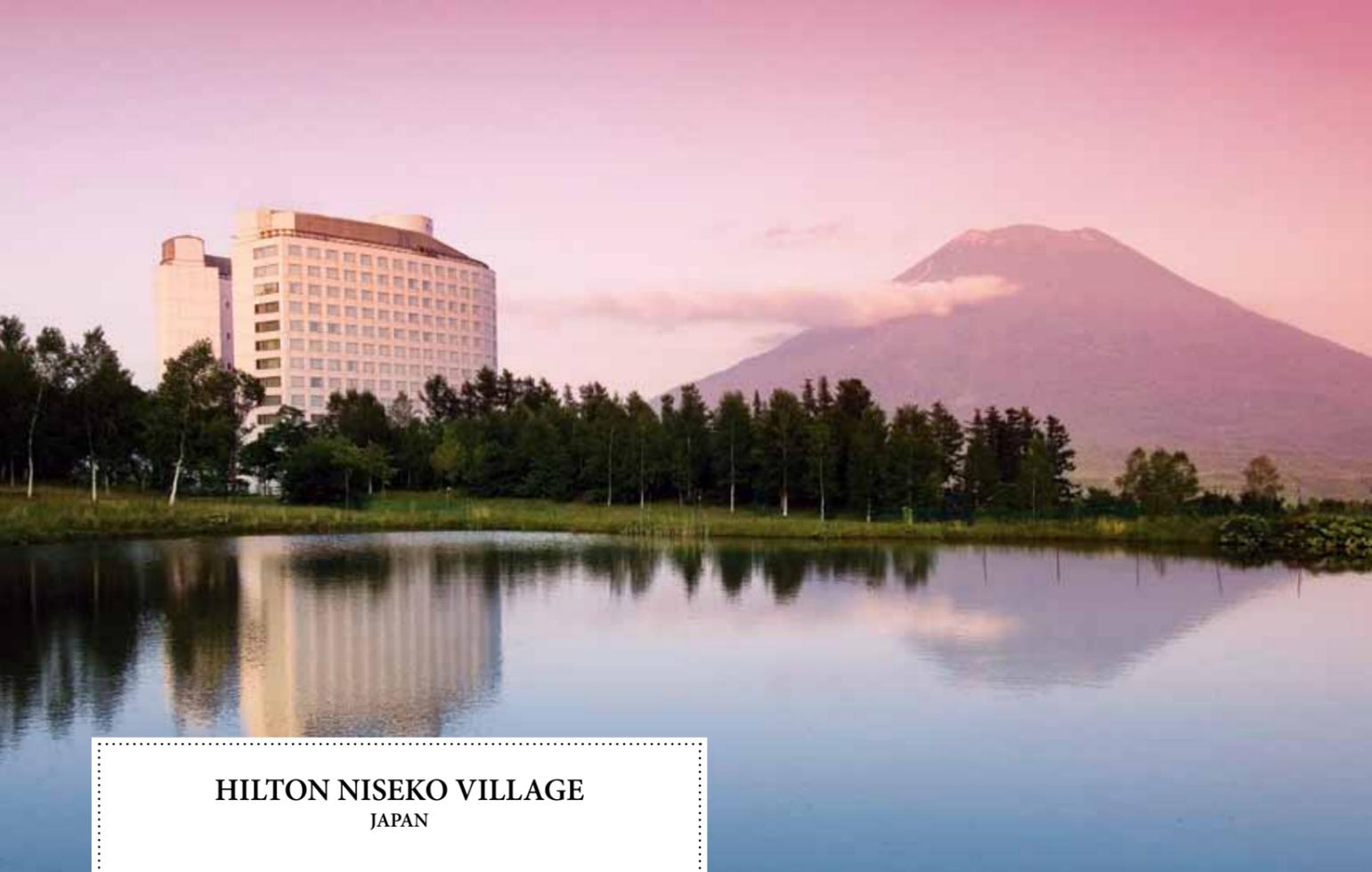


THE GREEN LEAF NISEKO VILLAGE
HOKKAIDO, JAPAN

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

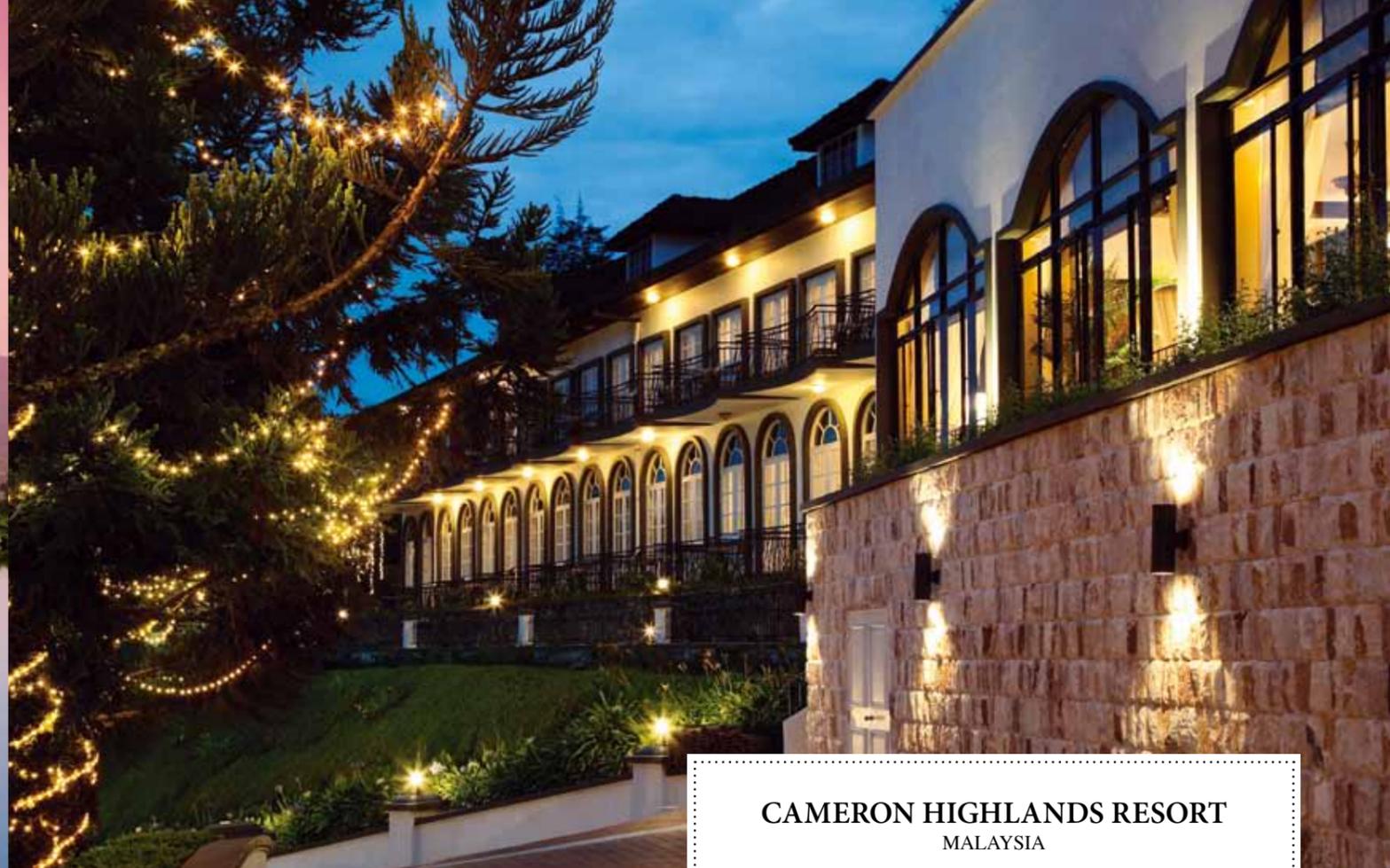


HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE
JAPAN

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.pangkorlautestates.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

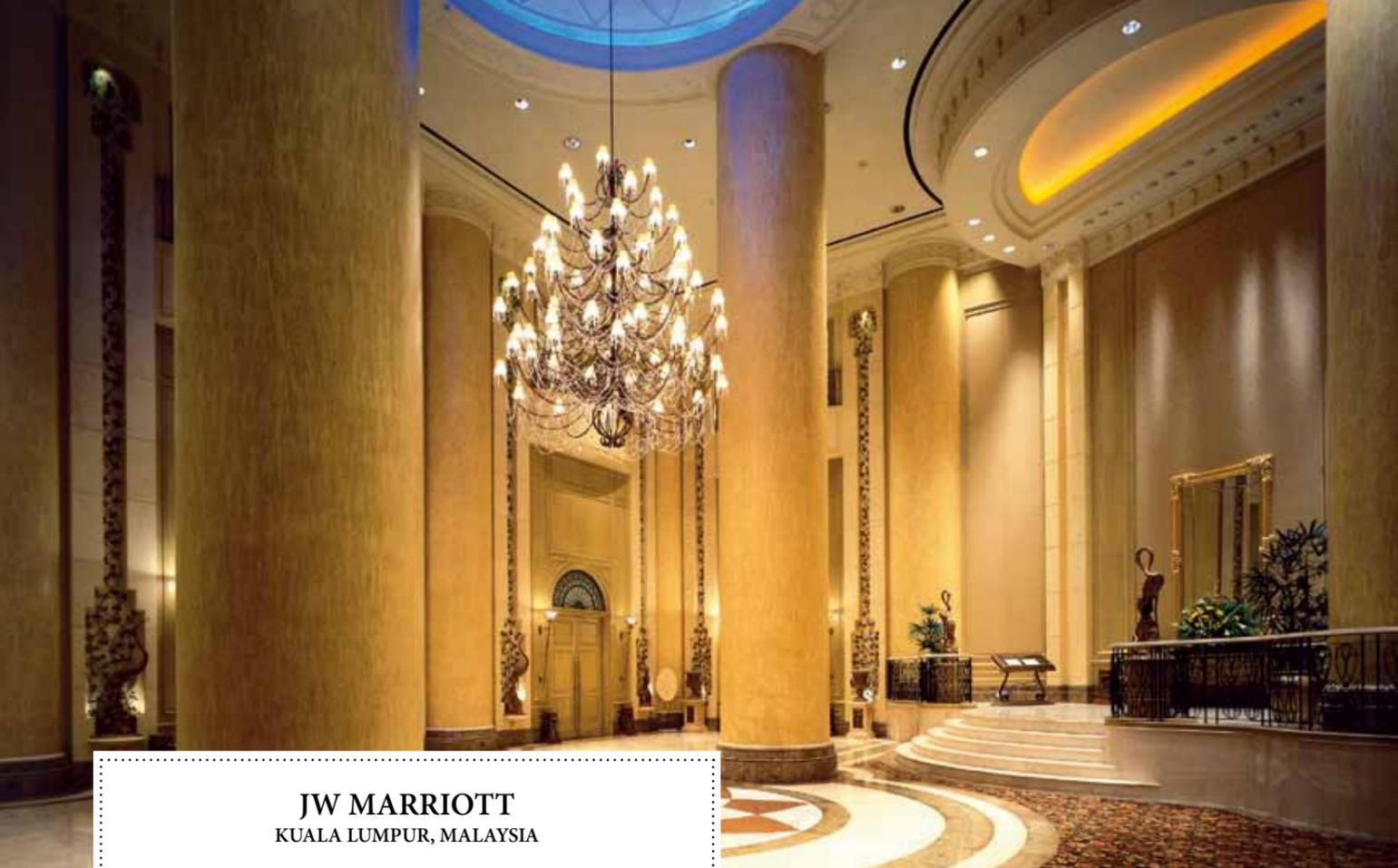
Located on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia, Tanjong Jara Resort is a sanctuary of luxury and well-being steeped in age-old Malay traditions. Designed to reflect the elegance and grandeur of 17th century Malay palaces, Tanjong Jara is a 99-room resort embodiment of the gentle Malay art of service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





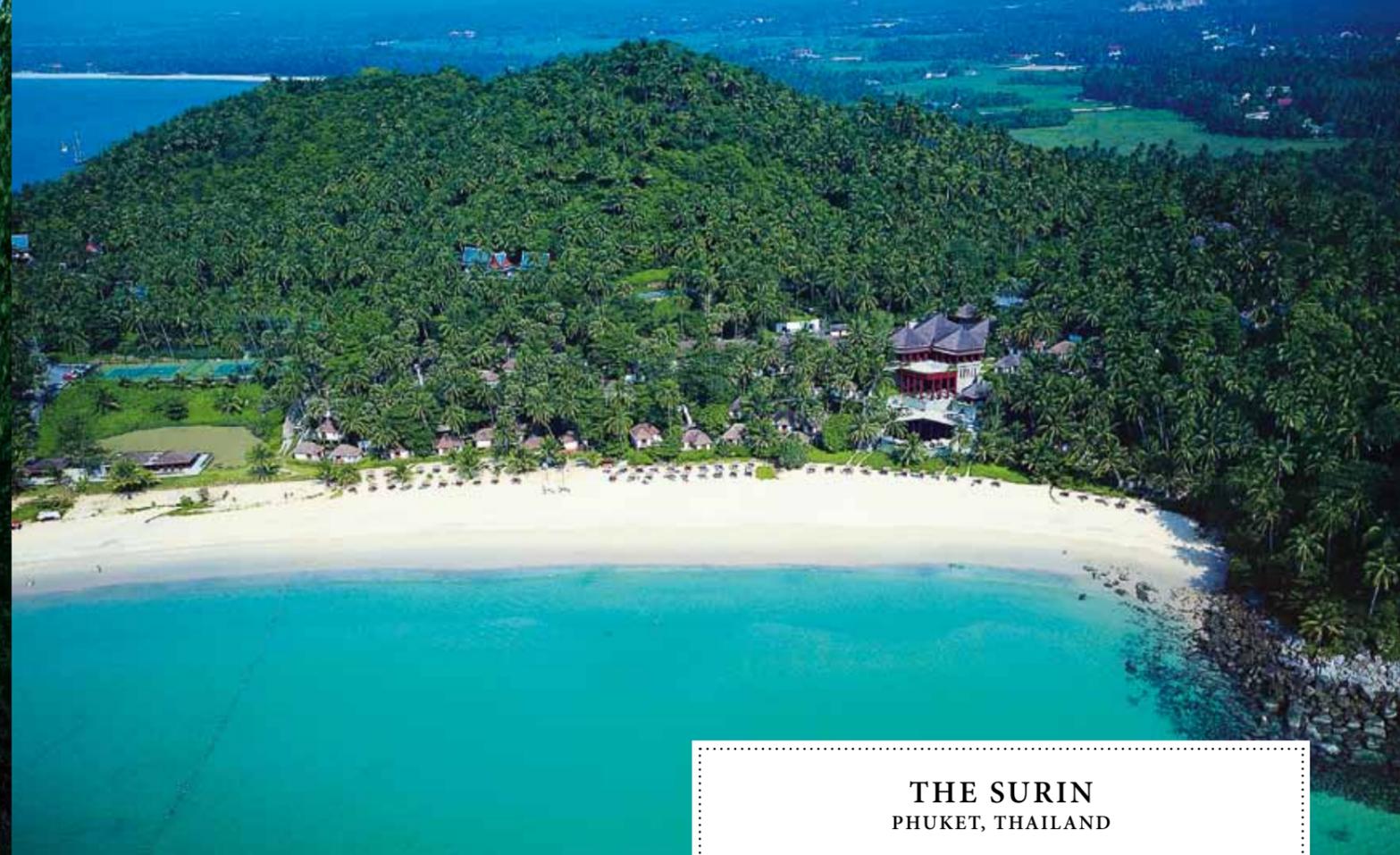
VILLA TASSANA
PHUKET, THAILAND

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





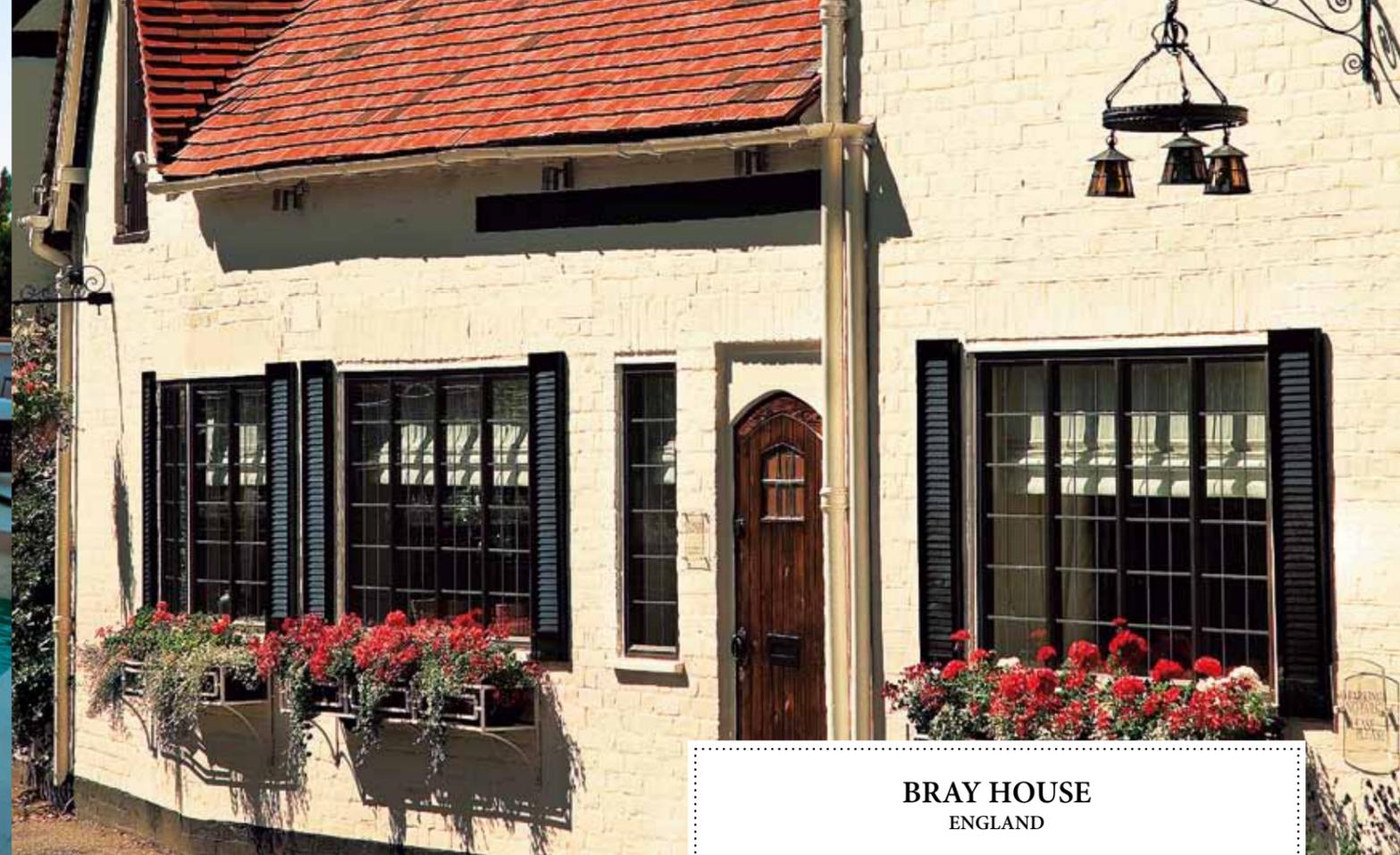
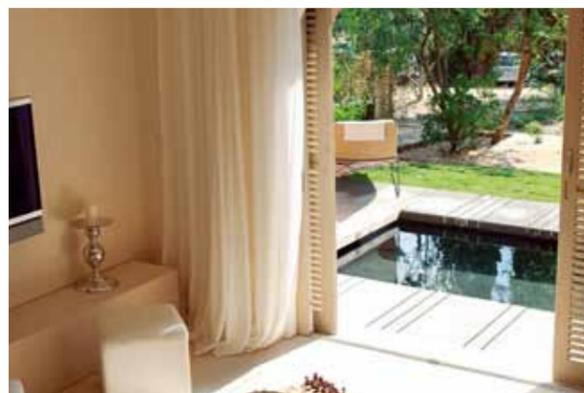
MUSE HÔTEL DE LUXE
FRANCE

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.

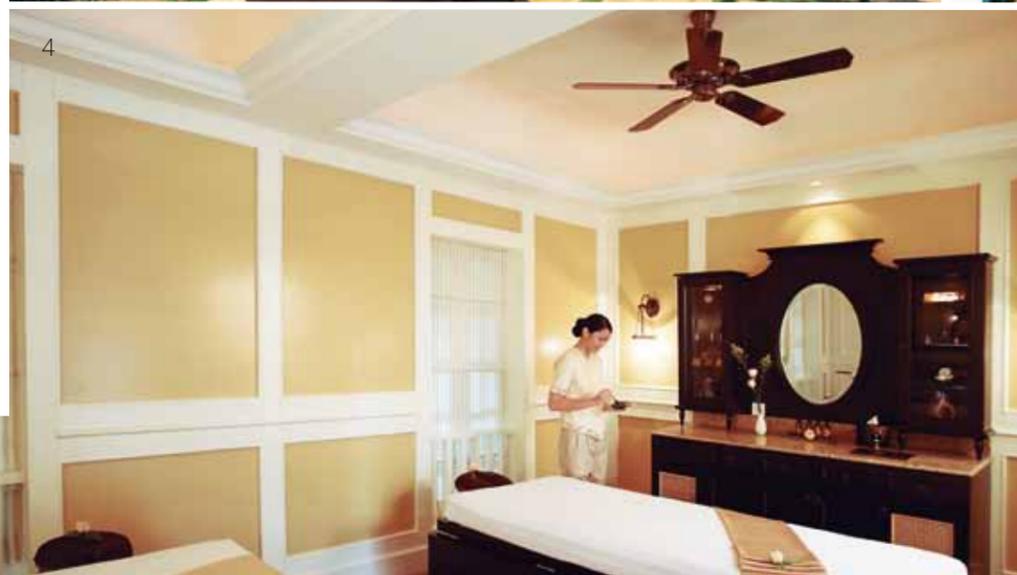
4. Spa Village Cameron Highlands Malaysia

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

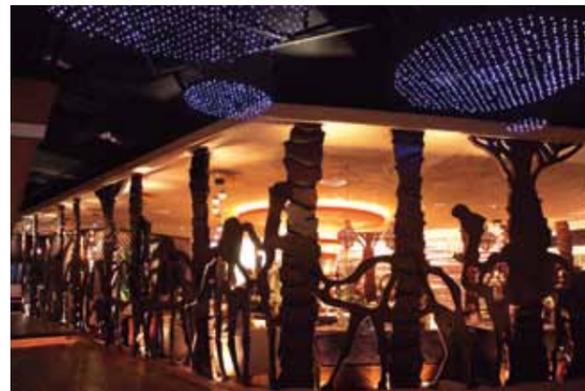
Feast to your heart's content in our Feast Village, a dramatic and stylish dining haven with a village charm. Here, you will find 11 uniquely-designed restaurants serving a mix of world-class cuisine and providing a display of culinary skill embodied in a chic and contemporary atmosphere.

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.

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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.

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www.shookrestaurantshanghai.com



MORE THAN WORDS

Celebrated author Tash Aw was long-listed for the 2005 Man Booker Prize and won the same year's Whitbread Book Awards for a First Novel: *The Harmony Silk Factory*. His recent return to Malaysia heralded the debut of his third novel, *Five Star Billionaire*, a story of five Malaysians who reinvent themselves in new China.

I've always been very inspired by the American writers from the first half of the 20th century – Steinbeck, Hemingway, Faulkner and Fitzgerald. I can definitely try to pick my three favourite books of all time – *Moby Dick* is definitely one of them, *The Sound and the Fury* by Faulkner and, I would probably say, *Pale Fire* by Nabokov.

Five Star Billionaire came to me in the space of a year, maybe 18 months. I was travelling and living in China for about a year and I was struck by the number of Malaysians that I kept bumping into, many of whom were by the fantastic opportunities that China represented and the chance for them to make a new life.

I don't have a secret place that I go to escape from stuff, but both my parents come from quite rural areas. My mom's side is from Perak and my dad is from Kelantan. When I visit these places, it's like stepping into a parallel world; there's nothing there that reminds me of my own life, so it's like an escape.

There's no 'off' switch on a writer, but I try very consciously to create one. Mobile phones get turned off and there's no access to the Internet. Thankfully, there are places in the world where that still happens.

To relax, I swim. I discovered yoga two years ago. And music, which is too varied to say – it really depends on my mood. I have a weakness for old Chinese love songs when I'm feeling down... Tsai Chin, for example. Bad Chinese pop music is a guilty

pleasure. And I do lots of folk music; I'm listening to the American band, Bon Iver, a lot now.

I travel with more than one book and my favourite way of reading a book is slowly, from start to finish, when I don't have any work hovering on the edge of my consciousness. So, it's when I'm totally free to devote myself to that book, which is more and more rare these days.

I've stayed in a lot of hotels... and one of the most important things for me is that there should not be too much clutter in the room. It has to have a big bed with very good bed linen and good sound insulation – all of which, basically, adds up to a good night's sleep.

For me, the most memorable places I've been to include the east coast of Malaysia. I acknowledge there's a sentimental link for me, but it's about the feeling of vastness when you look out to the South China Sea – it looks and feels so perfect and that place stays in my mind. I also think the west coast of Bali feels very magical – it retains a sense of real mystery and danger, and it's not at all like Malaysia's east coast. Here, the sea feels more untamed and dangerous. And I'm very attached to the south of France. It was the first place I travelled to in Europe on holiday, as a backpacker, and I've been back virtually every year for the last 18 years. You know, the first place you go to as an adult, on your own money, is very important. ■

Five Star Billionaire is published by Fourth Estate.

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