

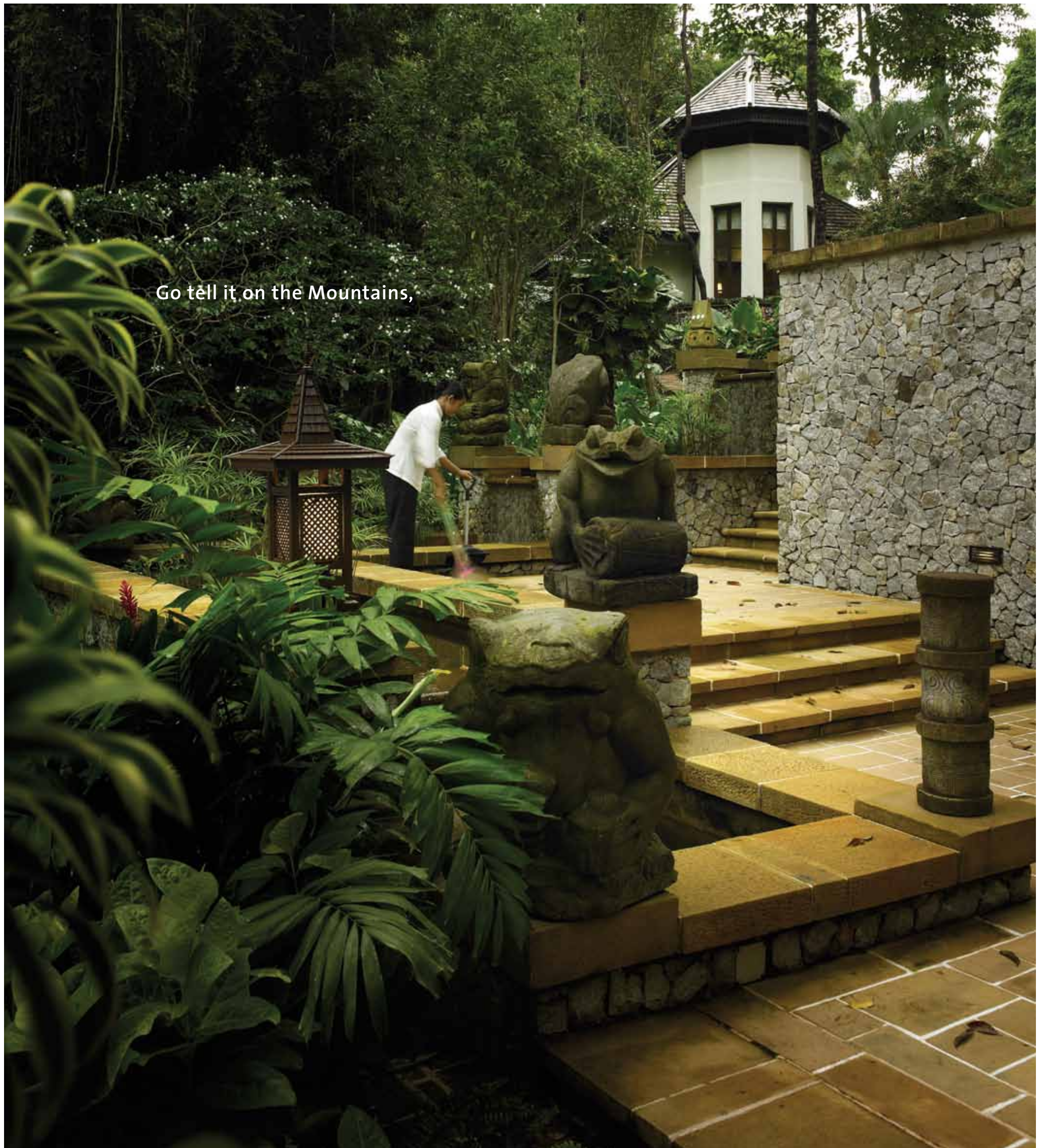
Estate 7

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Go tell it on the Mountains,



Opposite:  
Located in the northern hills of Pangkor Laut island, this property has the advantage of multiple lofty views. Each one of the bedroom, dining, resting or living pavilions has a unique elevated perspective of its surroundings.

## Over the Hills and Everywhere

genius loci e7  
HILLY TERRAIN WITH MANY KNOLLS

*In its eye the far-off hills are mirrored – dragon fly!*  
– Kobayashi Issa –

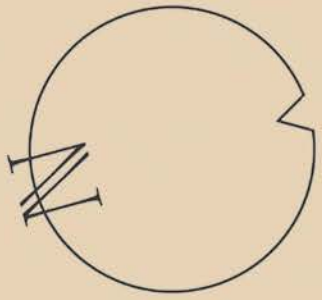
Once inside the boundaries of Estate 7, it is immediately obvious that one has entered a hilltop property. The eye is led up several knolls by the presence of natural sandstone steps that gently flow upwards following the many gradients in the property.

Each little valley and knoll on this property is left in its pristine state, yet in beautiful partnership with its built structures. To achieve this, the architects of Estate 7 incorporated the principles espoused by the pioneer of sustainable architecture, Geoffrey Bawa.

In his book “Lunuganga”, Bawa wrote that the contours of the land would show an architect what the first moves must be. By reading the lines of the land, examining the plants that grow there, and noting the climate, one would know where and how to start building. The architects of this property adhered

to these wise observations and were acutely sensitive to both site and context in order to maximise what the land had to offer.

The unusual contours of the land were especially pertinent when Estate 7 was being constructed. The *genius loci* – the hilly terrain – was evident from the outset. As one of the largest, and hilliest of all The Estates, this property proved to be the most architecturally challenging, containing the most number of tiers in comparison with the other Estates. The knolled terrain here dictated that all the structures be built on staggered levels, following the varying slopes of the land, to avoid cutting into the hill. The built structures on this property are thus more detached from each other, with the result that the different bungalow bedrooms enjoy the most secluded and expansive private spaces in all The Estates.





## Estate 7

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Estate 7 is tucked away in Pangkor Laut's forest-clad granite hills. Within the Estate are:

- Four bungalow bedrooms
- One outdoor jacuzzi
- Living pavilion
- Dining pavilion
- Resting pavilion
- Geometric infinity pool
- Cascading pond

The structures in this Estate are built further from each other than in other Estates. The separateness appeals to guests who prefer some time alone within their own private garden space instead of congregating with the rest of their group.

*Prominent figures that have stayed here include John Major and one of Britain's top contemporary Bible teachers, Reverend David Pawson.*



*I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till  
sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.*

*– John Muir –*



This bungalow bedroom which features a traditional Malaccan-style staircase, is located on its own private hillock.







Left:  
Dappled sunlight streaming in from all sides bathes the interiors of this pavilion with delicate hues of gold, and also with hints of green reflected from the luxuriant palms and ferns growing by the windows.

#### CONTEXTUAL ZEN IN THE EQUATORIAL JUNGLE

Of all the Estates on Pangkor Laut, only Estate 7 has recognisably Japanese features. Yet it is not a replica of things Japanese, as it does not have any *ishidoro* (stone lantern) or *tsukubai* (stone water basin). At most, there are hints: a low table resembling a *shokutaku*, *futon*-style seats and *makura*-like pillows.

Instead, it is Japanese in spirit rather than form, articulated through the Zen emphasis on naturalness, simplicity and reverence for nature rather than through clichéd artefacts. In the context of this island's tropical rain forest, this *chashitsu*-like alcove integrates what is natural to Pangkor Laut's indigenous environment.

Located within the bungalow bedroom, the corridor leading to this alcove is flanked by tall slim windows which look out to tropical courtyard gardens on the left and right. These two courtyards and the main garden beside the alcove are filled with myriad rain forest ferns and palms, unlike temperate climate-style *chaniwa*. Sunlight on these plants is reflected into the interiors, bathing the floors and walls with delicate hues of green.

While the built structures of The Estates are based on vernacular architecture of the Malay Archipelago, the Japanese elements fit in seamlessly here – as they spring from the same roots – and there are quite a few schools of thought that actually say they do.

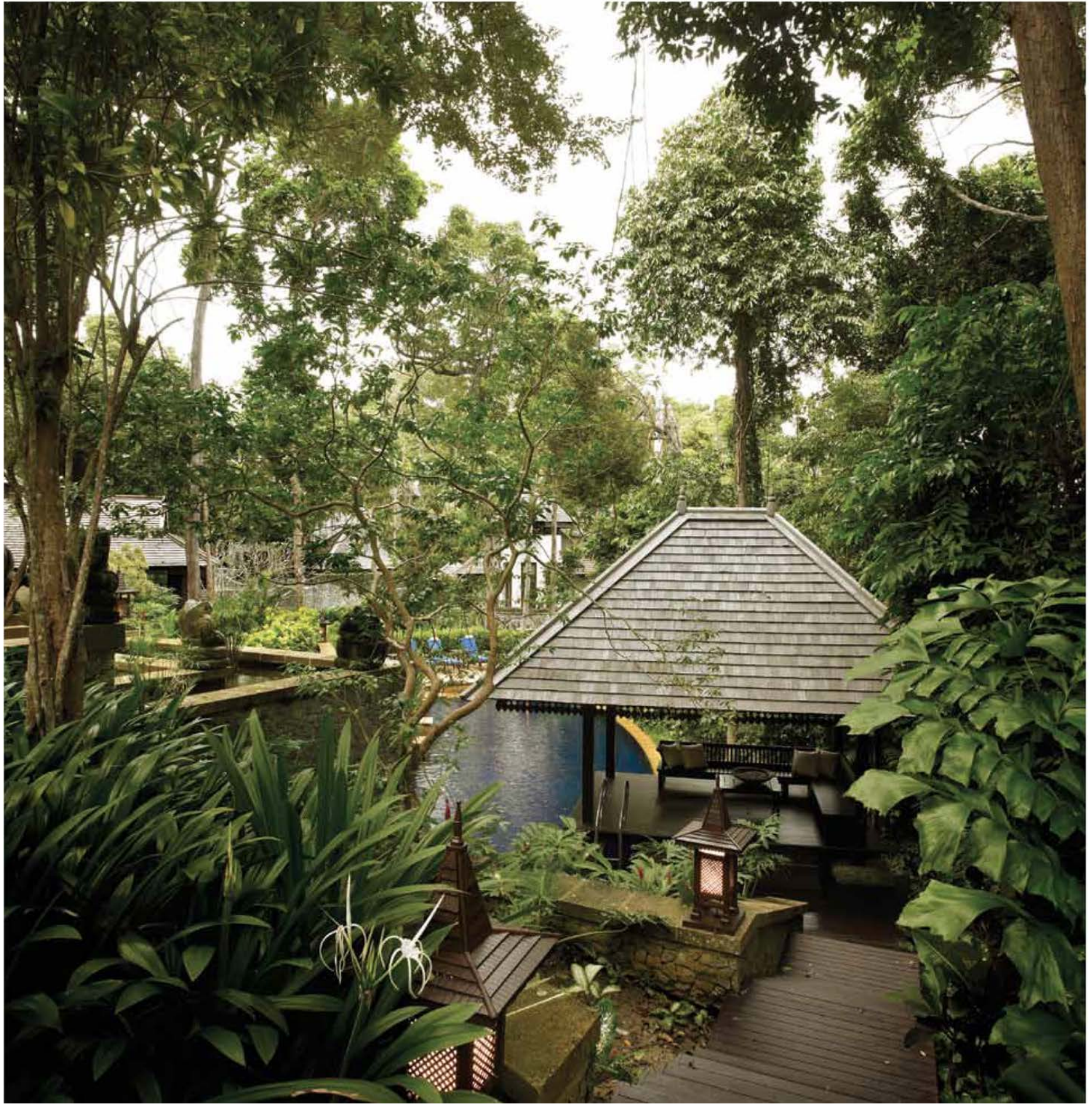
#### THE SHARED ROOTS OF JAPANESE AND MALAY CULTURES

Although the line above is contentious, in “The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South East Asia”, the author Roxana Waterson notes that “some features of traditional Japanese architecture are so strongly South East Asian that some kind of historical ink has long been assumed on these grounds alone.” The traits most typical of South East Asian and Malay Archipelago architecture – namely the saddle-back roof, pile structure and gable horns – are evident in the Ise Shrine of Southern Honshu which is considered to be the holiest Shinto (indigenous Japanese belief system) centre. Since the 7th century AD from the reign of Emperor Temmu, the Ise Shrine has been faithfully reconstructed every 20 years according to its original design.



This page:  
The use of rough-hewn sandstone, granite, volcanic rock and limestone for paving, ornamentation and functional purposes adds to the timeless appeal of this Estate.

Opposite:  
Stroll through the rich green rain forest, pass a splendid clump of fishtail palms (*Caryota* spp.) on your right, and suddenly you will see the brilliant blue swimming pool of Estate 7.







Left:  
The resting pavilion extends into the forest on one end, and over the waters of the pool on the other.

Opposite:  
View of the contrasting yet soothing colours of blue and green from the resting pavilion.

### MERGING DIFFERENT WORLDS

What is so striking about the resting pavilion in Estate 7 is that it personifies two basic principles of The Estates. The pavilion, built half over pool and half into the rain forest, literally straddles two different worlds, that of the primeval jungle and that which man built. This is a design decision that underlines the fundamental concept of The Estates: architecture in harmony with nature. The overlap of two further zones of existence is also reflected in the merging of the interior and exterior, seen in the comfortable cushions and seats (usually expected inside a house) on one side of the pavilion while the opposing side sports a gleaming stainless steel ladder leading into the inviting waters of the pool just below the pavilion.

The nature of the resting pavilion begs the question: is a relaxing afternoon spent in it an indoor or outdoor activity? The answer is “Neither” or “Both”, and that is because the resting pavilion is an in-between realm, a delightfully indeterminate zone which is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside. In “Tropical Architecture and Interiors”, Tan Hock Beng refers to the in-between realm as “a vital and essential link between architecture and the landscape, maximising the interface between the inside and the natural surroundings”. Societies in the tropical Malay Archipelago often exhibit what Mr. Tan calls “ambiguous relationships” between built form and external space. Offering varying degrees of protection from the elements, these structures include the traditional open-walled Balinese pavilion, the verandah or *serambi* of the traditional Malay dwelling, and the Thai *sala*.

The *sala*, a roofed pavilion without walls, is so ubiquitous in Thailand that it has become a national symbol. It is a familiar structure seen along heavily travelled routes, riverbanks, roadsides, public and private gardens, and even rice fields. The *sala* is used for all sorts of reasons and occasions, some of which are as a shelter against sun and rain, social gatherings, rest, contemplation, chit-chat, waiting, storage, ceremonies, feasts, sermons, and giving lessons. Usually made of teak wood, the *sala* is constructed without nails, the planks ingeniously hinged together. This makes for easier dismantling and moving to a different location if necessary. Some *salas* are built on wooden stilts or pillars and raised above water. The Thais regard constructing a *sala* as a merit-making act; it is a community service to give rest to the weary traveller.

What the *sala* is to Thais, the resting pavilion is to Estate 7: a place in and from which one can do anything. Jump into the pool. Sniff the sweet smell of coming rain and the salty tang of the sea. Listen to the love songs of cicadas, the call of circling eagles and the chattering of macaques. Watch the hornbills delicately pick fruits off the trees. Draw the bamboo blinds on a rainy day and turn the pavilion into a deliciously snug cocoon within which to quietly read or take a nap, lulled by the soft pitter-patter of rain on leaves.



Elevated on a natural knoll and totally open to the forest, ocean breezes, the songs of birds and cicadas, the living pavilion of this Estate epitomises the delightful realm which is both indoors and outdoors simultaneously.





This page:  
This unusual-looking plant is the ancient  
*setawar* (*Costus speciosus*). It is actually a  
species of ginger, but it looks different as it  
only has one row of spirally arranged leaves.

Opposite:  
Gorgeous gingers, from left to right: red ginger  
(*Alpinia purpurata*), *bunga kantan* (*Etilingera*  
*elatio*), and *setawar* (*Costus speciosus*).





#### FRESH HERBS AND SPICES, ONLY MILLIONS OF YEARS OLD

Estate 7 has some of the prettiest plants to be found in The Estates. Below the bay window of a bungalow bedroom grows a red-and-white profusion of *setawar* (*Costus speciosus*), a species of tropical ginger which is native to Peninsular Malaysia. *Setawar*, which means “remover of virus”, is a plant that is well-known among Malays as a medicinal herb to be used externally, for the most part. Burkill in his 1935 book “A Dictionary of the Economic Products of the Malay Peninsula”, noted that the plant was boiled and the concoction used to bathe a patient with high fever; its leaves were bruised and used as a poultice for the head; the scrapings from the stems were applied to leprosy skins; and it was decocted as lotions for smallpox and fever. In Java, other uses discovered for the plant included it being administered for syphilis, after-confinement, and eye complaints. It was even used to bespatter elephants suffering from fever. The rhizome is edible and fairly nutritious, and has been used as famine food in India. Boiled in coconut milk, the tender shoots make a good vegetable.

Across to the right of the *setawar* plant, another ginger species shows off its attractive, red cone-like inflorescences. The red ginger (*Alpinia purpurata*) – also known as pink ginger or plume ginger – reproduces vegetatively and does not produce seeds. The beautiful little ‘baby plants’ (or bracts) can be seen growing right out of the petals of the parent plant’s flowers, complete with tiny rootlets. Amazingly, to plant them, these new shoots together with their ready-made roots can simply be plucked from the flowers and placed directly in the ground. Three clusters of yet another native ginger species, the *bunga kantan*, grow near the rubble wall that backs against the most secluded and highest of the bungalow bedrooms in Estate 7. The *bunga kantan* (*Etlingera elatior*), also known as “torch ginger” is a plant that is both useful and decorative. The fragrant, delicate pink flower buds are used as ingredients in the fish-based soup of a favourite local dish, the deliciously spicy hot and sour *assam laksa*. In addition to the *bunga kantan*, the other ingredients of this dish include

cucumber, red chillies, lettuce, onions, pineapple, Vietnamese mint (*daun kesum*), and common mint, all finely sliced. Shredded fish, usually mackerel (*ikan kembung*) is also added to the soup or stock, commonly flavoured with tamarind (*asam jawa*) to make it sour. *Assam laksa* is normally served with a thicker version of the thin vermicelli or rice noodles, topped with *petis udang* or *hae ko*, a thick sweet prawn or shrimp paste.

Between two of these clusters of *bunga kantan* grows a native *tempinis* tree (*Sloetia elongata*). The slow-growing *tempinis* is said to be the most valuable timber-tree in Peninsular Malaysia with a distinct odour when first cut. Burkill notes that the wood is “very hard, very heavy, very strong, very durable – probably the strongest of all the Malayan woods”. The hardness of the wood makes planing difficult; hence it is not used to make furniture although it is easy to polish. Although the wood has great strength, it also has great elasticity and this makes *tempinis* wood flexible enough to be shaped into handles for tools such as the axe and the local gardening implement, the *cangkul*. It is also the wood of choice for making the long pole that is used to balance the two baskets of food carried by the local *nasi kandar* man in the old days as he peddles his wares on foot from house to house. (*Nasi* in Malay means “rice” and *kandar* refers to the carrying stick or pole.)

Some of the biggest and tallest trees in The Estates are found in Estate 7. Several of these trees are *Eugenia*s, a very large genus of trees belonging to the *Myrtaceae* family. Many *Eugenia* trees have fruits that are edible. The Malays use the very young leaves of a few *Eugenia*s as a vegetable to flavour their rice and curries.

The flora of the ancient rain forest have been growing on this property for millions of years, reminiscent of this excerpt from Wendell Berry’s “Sabbath Poems”: “They stand and grow. Time comes / To them, time goes, the trees / Stand; the only place / They go is where they are.”



Twilight in Estate 7: Viewed from its loftiest knoll, the pavilions appear like little lanterns in the gigantic rain forest.



