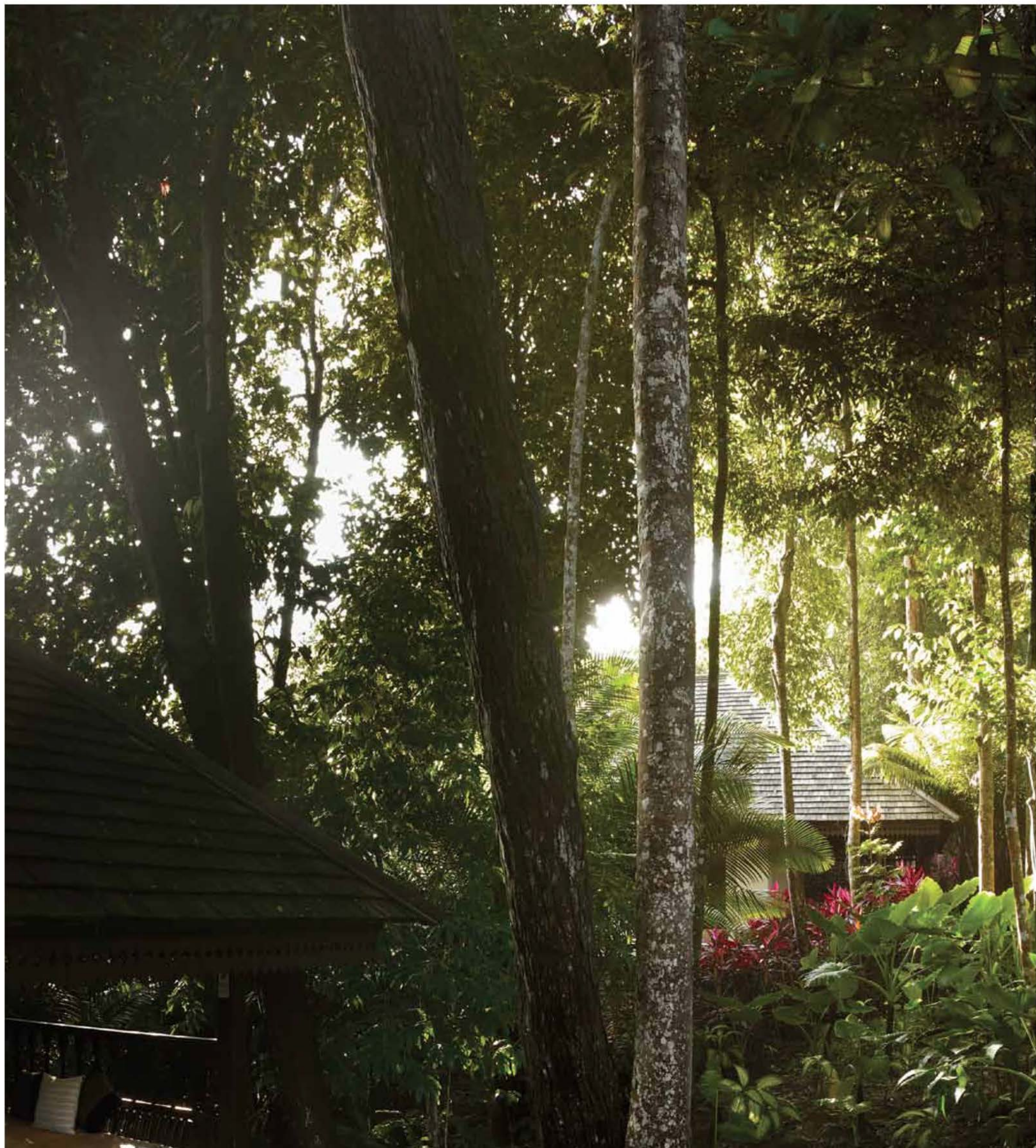






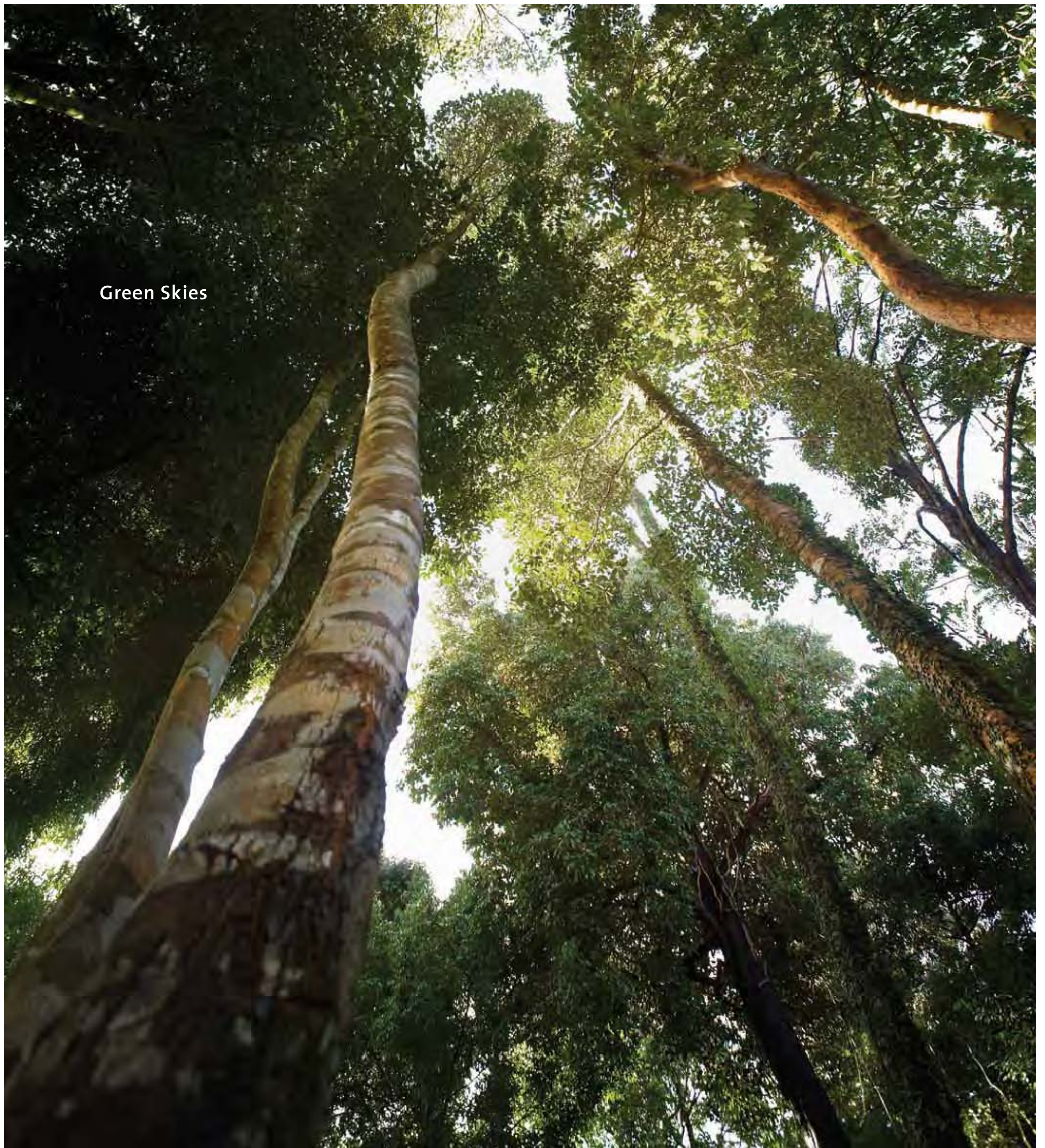
Estate 8

e
∞





Green Skies



Opposite:
Green skies: Look skywards and you will see how rich the tree canopy is in Estate 8. Not surprisingly, Estate 8 is the most abundantly wooded among the nine Estates on Pangkor Laut.

and Everything Nice

genius loci e8
DENSE RAIN FOREST CANOPY

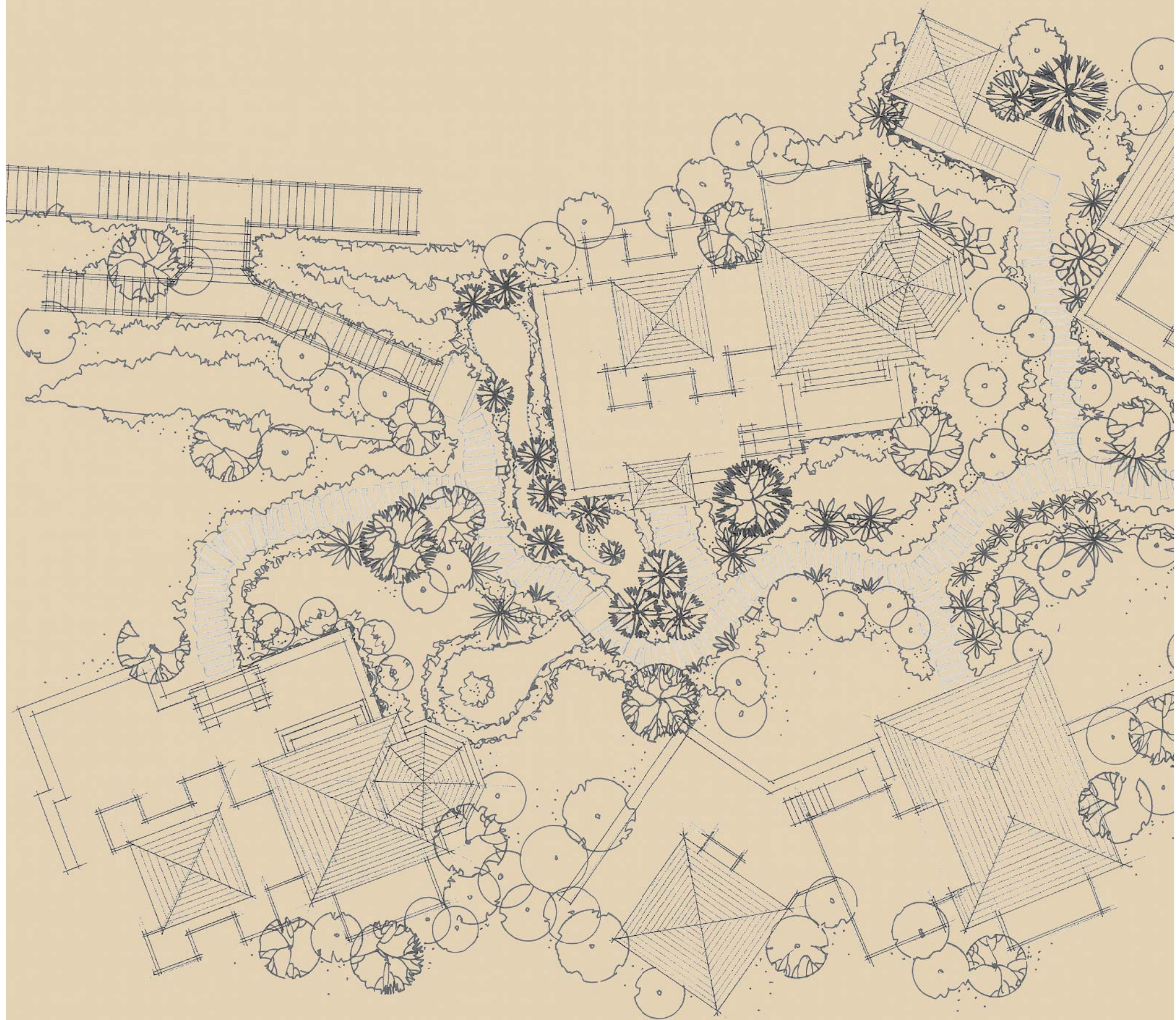
*And see the peaceful trees extend their myriad leaves in leisured dance –
they bear the weight of sky and cloud upon the fountain of their veins.
– Kathleen Raine, Envoi –*

Walking into Estate 8's grounds for the first time, one immediately notices that the temperature here is significantly cooler than on the beach. The exquisite sweetness in the air recalls the words of Robert Louis Stevenson: "It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon men's hearts, as for that subtle something, that quality of air that emanation from old trees, that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit."

This is because among the nine Estates of Pangkor Laut, Estate 8 is the most densely forested. Its rain forest canopy utilises the tropical sun so effectively that the entire acreage seems to be under a colossal dome of living breathing leaves, held up by ever growing 'pillars' of ancient trees. Look up and one would see green skies. Although it may initially seem a bit dark within this cavernous 'interior', the delicate streams of sunlight give the entire Estate a sense of lightness. One always feels sheltered, but never enclosed. The mosaic of light filtering through the rain forest canopy articulates the glory of the Creator more eloquently than stained-glass cupolas of the world's biggest basilica. The famed Austrian architect, Raimund Abraham says:

"For me architecture's role is to elevate the profane with the sacred. If you succeed in making architecture, the sacred has to prevail. That means that in the most profane or the most pragmatic programme, the programme always has to succumb to this period of the sacred whether it is a small house, a cathedral or a temple." In Estate 8, the sacredness so important to Abraham is achieved by 'emptying' all built structures of man's vainglory. Very grounded, every building here is single-storey and designed to blend in with the forest. Utilising indigenous materials and techniques wherever possible – such as roofing of *belian* wood, flooring of natural sandstone and marble, and beams of *chengal* wood – the structures merge better into the environment without compromising on the 5-star creature comforts. The contextual design is derived from the vernacular architecture of the Malay Archipelago, a tribute to the wisdom of this region's ancients.

The lushness here is not a result of landscaping in the usual sense. Instead it is "tree-scaping" as it is the rain forest trees that dominate. The gardener cannot take credit for it; these trees are untouched by the hand of man.



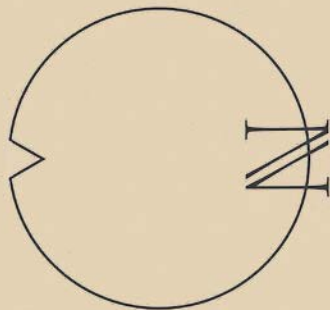


Estate 8

At first sight, it is almost easy to imagine that the fun-loving satyrs and majestic centaurs of folklore live among the dense rain forest trees of Estate 8. Here where hornbills frequently ply the air and colourful carp playfully chase each other in the pond, is a paradise of nature's own doing. The dining pavilion offers the most beautiful sunset views, while the living and sitting pavilions overlook a free-form infinity pool whose contours are inspired by the shape of a lotus flower. Facilities here include:

- Three bungalow bedrooms
- Outdoor jacuzzi
- Lotus-shaped free-form infinity pool
- Living pavilion
- Dining pavilion
- Resting pavilion
- Fish pond

Guests that have stayed here include British tenor Russell Watson aka "The People's Tenor" and Cynthia Lawrence, the world-famous soprano who has sung with Luciano Pavarotti on more than 70 occasions.







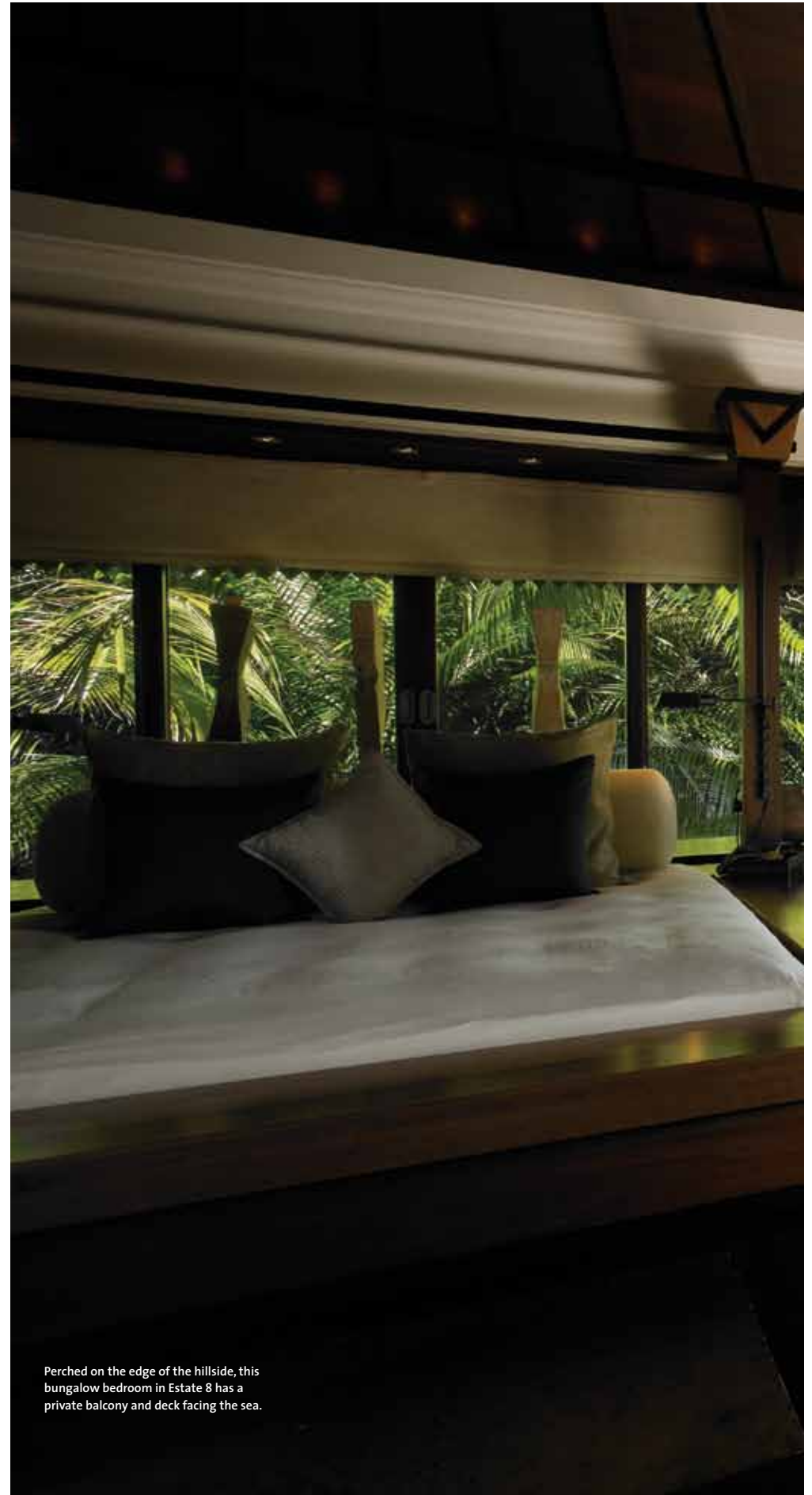
The shimmering waters of the pool reflect the lush greenery of the trees, painting its surface with sparkles of green.

Privacy is not something that I'm merely entitled to, it's an absolute prerequisite.
– Marlon Brando –

AU NATUREL PRIVACY

The ambience of The Estates dictates that built structures should offer privacy and also blend in with the rain forest. Hence, the plan for each Estate is reminiscent of Bali, where home is a series of pavilions laid out in an enclosed courtyard. There is a significant difference, however, as the feeling of being in a “private courtyard” in The Estates is provided by natural “walls” of living rain forest trees. Nowhere in The Estates is this more evident than on this property where the denseness of the surrounding trees easily forms protective walls of privacy around each bungalow bedroom. Yet these walls do not imprison; they are walls, in fact, that breathe and draw the eye to the complex beauty of their world.

Two layouts were designed for The Estates’ bungalow bedrooms, both of which are present in Estate 8. In the “tower” design, guests can sit within the embrace of double volume bay windows to enjoy the sunlight from within the bungalow’s cool interiors. The second layout sports a verandah just outside the entrance, perfect for a morning cup of tea and the day’s newspapers, shaded by the native *tongkat ali* tree. Perched on the edge of a hillside, each bungalow bedroom in Estate 8 has a private balcony and deck facing the sea. From here, the eye can stretch, through the jungle foliage, far into the distance to gaze upon the Straits of Malacca.



Perched on the edge of the hillside, this bungalow bedroom in Estate 8 has a private balcony and deck facing the sea.





This bungalow bedroom and its linked bath pavilion are sanctuaries of privacy, thoughtfully and cleverly snuggled into swathes of jungle, boulders and inaccessible niches for maximum seclusion.





Left:
The road to Estate 8 and
Estate 9. Note the *medang
kemangi* tree growing
happily right in the middle
of the road.

Right:
The fearsome spines of the
Oncosperma horrida palm.



THE LONE GUARD OF THE ESTATES

Standing like a sentinel in the middle of the road at the entrance to Estates 8 and 9 is a solitary 'sarsi tree' (*Cinnamomum porrectum*), locally known as *medang kemangi*. This tree with the fissured bark and small leaves belongs to the laurel family (*Lauraceae*). All species of this family have aromatic oils in their leaves and bark. Some carry cinnamic aldehyde (like the cinnamon); some carry eugenol (and smell like cloves); some carry safrol (which smell like sassafras); and some contain camphor. Their essential oils are used as flavouring agents in the food and beverage industry. The reason the 'sarsi tree' is so named is obvious; simply smell the part of the tree where the bark has exposed the wood beneath. When the wood of the tree is scraped, its volatile oils escape and give off the familiar sarsaparilla smell.

The bark and leaves of this type of tree are used in Thai traditional medicine as an anti-flatulent. Recently however, in 2007, a group of Thai researchers published their findings that the distilled oil from the root of the tree has antimicrobial activity against bacteria, yeasts and dermatophytes. The Thai scientific studies recorded that the extracted oil samples "exhibited strongest activity against *Streptococcus mutans* (MIC 0.01mg/ml) followed by the *Candida albicans* and *dermatophytes* (0.5-1.0mg/ml), *Bacillus subtilis* (2mg/ml), and susceptible strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* (4-16mg/ml)".

THE DON'T-TOUCH-ME PALM

One look at the *Oncosperma horrida*, a species of the native *nibong* palm, and it becomes clear why curious young children should be kept a healthy distance away from the plant. It is a point that the palm obviously wants to get across. The word *horrida* means "bristly", "prickly" or "standing on end" in Latin, a fitting description of the plant's main characteristic: stems that are surrounded by wickedly sharp, thorny black spines, some as long as seven centimetres.

Fearsome-looking as these thorns are, they do not intimidate one particular animal. When the elephant is intent on getting high, it braves the spines to get to the pith of the matter, an interesting fact that Cindy Engel alludes to in her book "Wild Health: Lessons in Natural Wellness from the Animal Kingdom". In the wild, says Engel, a visible sign of intoxication is sedation. She cites the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society as having reported in 1941 that solitary elephants "after they had fed on a palm called *Oncosperma horrida* ... seemed drowsy and unwilling to travel. In fact, I have known occasions when an elephant, having fed well, but possibly not too wisely, on this palm would not travel more than a few hundred yards from where there was a stand of this plant before he would lie down for a nap; only to return again on waking up to have another gorge."

"Eating this palm is no easy matter," Engel continues. "[It] is covered in long, tough thorns that point downward. The elephant has to push over the whole palm with its head, then stamp on the upper half of the tree to expose the inner pith. Even then, it is so difficult to consume much of the pith that it seems unlikely that the resulting intoxication is accidental."

The *Oncosperma horrida*, which belongs to the *Arecaceae* (alt. *Palmae*) family and is usually found in higher elevations, is also prized for a more sober reason. Known as *bayas* by the aborigines or *Orang Asli*, its heart is eaten by the Semai tribe in Perak and it is also often offered by them as a gift to important people.

On this page:

Centuries before *Viagra* was invented, the natives of the Malay Archipelago were already aware of the unique powers of this *tongkat ali* tree (*Eurycoma longifolia*).

Opposite left:

Swinging from tree-to-tree, this liana has naturally grown to form a swing-like shape directly in front of the pavilion.

Opposite right:

Various lianas reaching for the sun by climbing trees in Estate 8.

TAKE A HIKE, VIAGRA

Long held to be a powerful aphrodisiac by the locals, the *tongkat ali* (*Eurycoma longifolia*) is the native answer to treating erectile dysfunction and increasing sexual desire and performance in males. *Tongkat*, which literally means “staff” or “walking stick”, is also a local euphemism for the male sexual organ. Every part of this slim-trunked plant, from its dark compound leaves to its roots, is so exceedingly bitter that among the names for it are *penawar pahit* (bitter antidote) and *muntah bumi* (vomit of the earth). The long twisted roots are the parts of the tree which are harvested for their medicinal value. According to Burkill, the roots (particularly the bark of the roots) were used as a febrifuge, an agent for reducing fever. It had other uses. “The Malays,” wrote Burkill, “give it internally on occasions when a tonic is useful, as for instance, after childbirth. It is pounded and applied externally, probably just because it is an internal medicine of such repute, as a poultice for headache, on wounds, ulcers, and syphilitic sores.” To the list of traditional uses, the International Centre for Science and High Technology, an international technology centre of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (ICS-UNIDO), adds: treating high blood pressure, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, jaundice and dysentery. The Centre also reports that the plant is anti-malarial and anti-histaminic.

Its widely believed claim as a testosterone-increasing agent is also gaining worldwide attention. The male hormone testosterone is primarily responsible for the development of the entire male reproductive system, hence the plant’s reputation as an aphrodisiac. *Tongkat ali* is also gaining interest among body-builders because the enhanced level of testosterone in the blood increases muscle mass and strength. Capsules of the powdered root are manufactured locally and it is also popularly marketed as an ingredient in beverages such as coffee and canned drinks.







The Oriental Pied Hornbill (*Antracoceros albirostris*), one of Estate 8's most frequent guests, can be seen dining on the fruit of wild palms and figs.

*The groves were God's first temple. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them, - ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,
Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication.*
- William Cullen Bryant (1794 - 1878) -

THE BIRD WITH THE BLUE MASCARA

The Oriental Pied Hornbill (*Antracoceros albirostris*) is regularly seen at Estate 8 eating the fruit of the Macarthur Palm (*Ptychosperma macarthurii*) beside the swimming pool. In the 1993 edition of "A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore", the authors listed this hornbill as "Recorded previously from Singapore but now extinct". However, on Pangkor Laut Island's well-preserved rain forest, sightings of this bird are relatively commonplace. Besides having blue mascara-like colouration around its eyes, the Oriental Pied Hornbill is also unusual in other ways. To nest, the female hornbill, with the help of the male, seals herself inside a cavity in a tree by 'cementing' the opening until it is just a narrow oval slit. This opening is so small that the ever-attentive male hornbill can only pass tiny morsels of food to her. Tightly sealed within, the female lays her eggs, incubates them, and cares for the chicks until they are ready to fly.

THE PARTY OF SWINGERS IN THE TREES

The males sport whiskers and moustaches, and the females, beards. The buffet spread is wide-ranging: jungle fruits, leaves, bark, flowers, grass, roots, clay, mushrooms, fish, shrimp, crabs, octopus, frogs, lizards, insects, bird eggs and chicks, ice cream and soft drinks. To top it off, the males groom the females to have an increased chance of mating with them.

These swingers of Pangkor Laut are the long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*), arguably the most successful primate species in the Malay Archipelago. Locally known as *keras*, the macaque is a social animal usually living in troops numbering six to over twenty, dominated by an older male. Their defining characteristic is their extraordinarily long tail that is almost always longer than their height from head to rump. Long-tailed macaques are particular about their roosting sites on trees; each group sleeping in its own tree, huddling together to maintain body temperature.

The resident naturalist on Pangkor Laut, Yip Yoon Wah (popularly known as Uncle Yip) notes in his book "Pangkor Laut: A Guide to Its Natural History" that the crab-eating macaques, another name for this primate species, has cheek pouches which are a developed feature to enable macaques to temporarily store food in their mouths. In the competition for food, they may hardly have time to chew and swallow food before they are chased away by older males.

Any time to the long-tailed macaques is a good time to be inquisitive. Naturally observant, they pose a challenge to the Pangkor Laut management and keep the Team on its toes. The Manager of the Estates abounds with stories of how quickly the macaques figure out the latches on doors and locks on rubbish bins. The result is that every so often, the door locking system has to be changed. A carelessly left open window or door is an unspoken invitation to the macaques to investigate the contents of the bungalow bedrooms.

This page:
This pavilion in Estate 8 is just perfect for spending a pleasant afternoon reading a favourite book. Here, one can sit during the hottest time of the day and still feel a cool wind blowing in from the sea.

Opposite:
Rising between the tall trees of Estate 8, this tower-like structure of the bungalow bedroom houses a delightful day bed from which one can observe the forest inhabitants while enjoying 5-star creature comforts.



