

YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine



GREEN LEAF

The Spirit Of The Season

Have a Brilliant
Time in Bath

YTL People

Martin Yan
Tara Stiles
Eric Cantona

Sydney On The Side

Your Personal
Gourmet Guide

Niseko Winter • Highland Chic • The 7 Treasures of Gaya Island

WELCOME THE NEW YEAR
WITH EVERYTHING NEW.

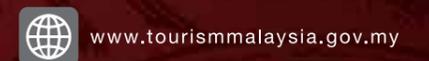


1MALAYSIA YEAR END SALE

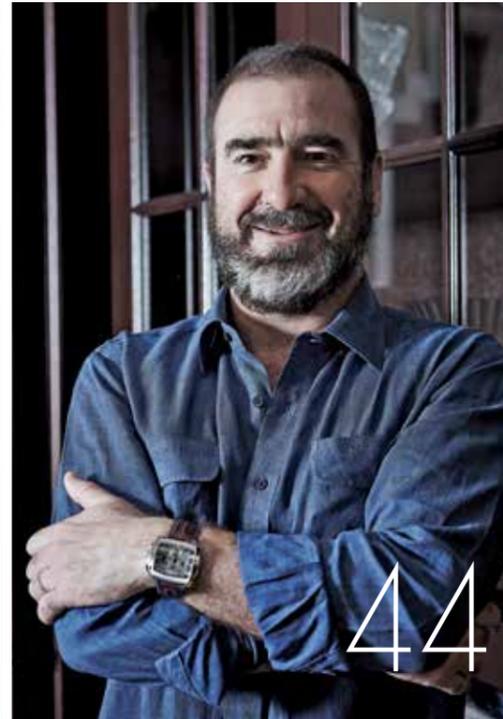
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period. Make sure you don't miss out wherever you are.

40 In two short years, Malaysian singer Elizabeth Tan has gone from being a YouTube sensation to Best New Female Artist at the 2015 Anugerah Planet Music. The 22-year-old shares with *YTL Life* her childhood, ambitions and memories of Bath, where she performed recently at the grand opening of The Gainsborough Bath Spa, alongside jazz legend Freddy Cole.

44 Former Manchester United football extraordinaire and Hautlence Ambassador, Eric Cantona, recently visited Malaysia to commemorate the independent's official partnership with Cortina Watch and debut in

the country. At The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, *YTL Life* speaks with Cantona and Guillaume Tetu, CEO and Co-Founder of Hautlence, to discover what their partnership means for the brand.

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58 Athletic events and luxury rarely go hand in hand, but this was just the case at Pangkor Laut Resort, which recently hosted the preview of The Chapman's Challenge. *YTL Life*, along with



LA REINE ROSE THE PINK QUEEN

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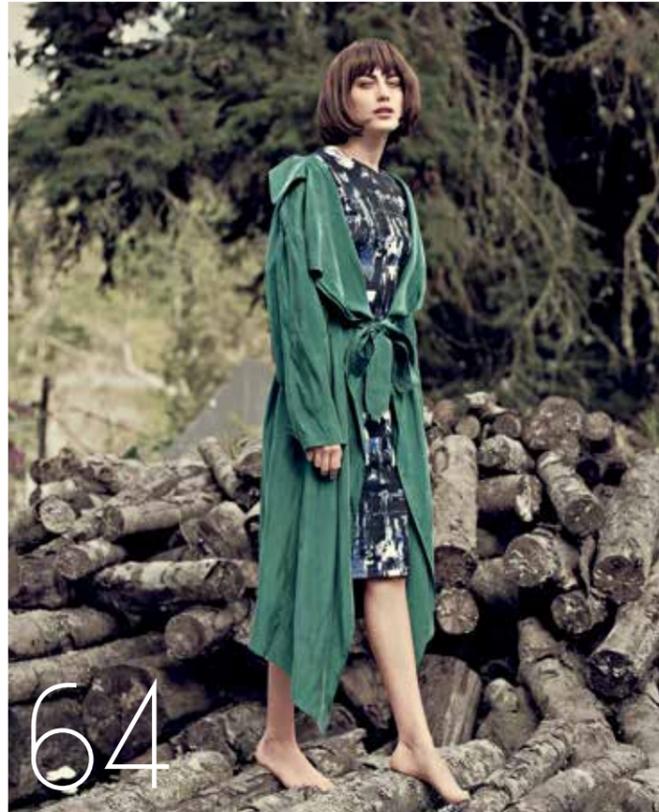
This pink and white diamond bangle can boast of 696 white round diamonds and 81 pink superior quality diamonds (marquise, pearl, oval, radiant, heart), weighing approximately 17.13 carats set in 18K rose gold weighing 77.71 grams.



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BY NITIN GOENKA

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Malaysia's top triathletes and local Reebok ambassadors, discovers some surprises along the way.

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90 Need a little more motivation to dust off that yoga mat? Perhaps a weekend jaunt to the tranquil paradise that is Pangkor Laut Resort will inspire you to get your *am* on. Here's what reigning international yoga

sensation Tara Stiles has to say about her blissful stay during Wellness Week.

94 Flanked by the mystical Mount Kinabalu and the shimmering waters of the expansive South China Sea, cocoon yourself in the sybaritic sanctuary that is Spa Village Gaya Island.

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Niseko Village



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PERFECT POWDER SKI HAVEN

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

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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 quite possibly an understatement to say that the mood at YTL Hotels is decidedly festive. We are still bowled over by the response we have been blessed to receive over the recent grand opening of The Gainsborough Bath Spa, the latest addition to the Group. In this light, and in the spirit of the season, we are going with a celebratory feel for our cover story, which highlights the best and brightest of Bath over the Christmas season. If you have yet to visit this historical, jewel box of a city that's, literally, the colour of honey, I invite you to explore this Georgian gem of England with us post-haste. And what's winter without a sprinkling of snow? Our properties in Japan – the Hilton Niseko Village, The Green Leaf Niseko Village and the Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse – are already welcoming lashings of powder snow, fresh from Siberia. If the idea of skiing, soaking in *onsens* and enjoying the best Japanese cuisine appeals to you, book now for a winter to remember.

Closer to home, the team is readying for the inaugural Chapman's Challenge. A unique race that celebrates the heart and history of Pangkor Laut Resort's surroundings as well as the unique story of a British lieutenant whose past is inextricably entwined with the magic of Emerald Bay, turn to page 58 for an idea of how to plan your adventure and escape with us next year. With the Marriott Hotels of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane also under the stewardship of our Group, we decide to look south to feature one of the highlights of any visit to Australia – its fine produce and world-class dining. For this issue, we highlight the joys of eating out in Sydney.

Peace to all this season. God bless and enjoy the issue.



Mount Kinabalu appears mystically behind the parting clouds.
And once again, you remind yourself that you're not dreaming.
Your moment awaits.

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1. Anthony Champalimaud and Alexandra Champalimaud. 2. Elizabeth Brooks CBE, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, St John's Hospital, Sue Porto, Chief Executive of St John's Hospital, Tan Sri Dato' Seri (Dr) Yeoh Tiong Lay, Executive Chairman of YTL Corporation and Dato' Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Hotels. 3. The Reverend Prebendary Edward Mason, Rector of Bath Abbey, Manda Rigby and The Right Worshipful Mayor of Bath, Councillor William Sandry.



When In Bath

YTL Hotels celebrates the opening of its latest luxurious destination, The Gainsborough Bath Spa.

More than 250 local and international guests gathered at The Gainsborough Bath Spa recently to celebrate the official grand opening of YTL Hotels' latest addition to its burgeoning portfolio of hotels. The only member of The Leading Hotels of the World in the south-west of England, The Gainsborough Bath Spa is YTL Hotels' first Classic Hotel in Europe as well as the only hotel to have exclusive access to Bath's natural thermal mineral waters. In a nod to YTL Hotels' Malaysian heritage, a lion dance performance preceded a simple ribbon cutting ceremony, officiated by Tan Sri Dato' Seri Yeoh Tiong Lay, Chairman of YTL Corporation. The hotel also took the opportunity to make a GBP10,000 donation to its designated charity, St John's Hospital. Guests then enjoyed free-flowing champagne and Asian-fusion canapés by Michelin-starred Chef Johann Lafer, whose name graces the hotel's fine dining restaurant, and were entertained by performances from jazz legend Freddy Cole and Malaysian singer Elizabeth Tan. 🍷



4. Mr and Mrs Andrew Love, Datin Tina Tan Siew Bee and Dato' Michael Yeoh Sock Siong, Executive Director of YTL Corporation. 5. Choy Yui Yi and Chik Lai Ping. 6. Rachel Yeoh, Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Francis Yeoh and Michelle Yeoh. 7. Dato' Mark Yeoh, Tan Sri Dato' Seri (Dr) Yeoh Tiong Lay, The Right Worshipful Mayor of Bath, Councillor William Sandry, Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Francis Yeoh, Managing Director of YTL Corporation, and Colin Skellett, Chairman of The Gainsborough Bath Spa. 8. Dato' Yeoh Soo Min, Executive Director of YTL Corporation, and Dato' Jimmy Choo.



High Note

Ever since Carly Paoli made her international debut in 2014, she has grown from strength to strength, and has emerged as one of the world's most talented and renowned artists. The 26-year-old mezzo-soprano recently partnered Italian composer Romano Musamurra and a 30-piece orchestra for a live performance in Monaco's Le Chapiteau de l'Escape, during which Prince Albert himself was present. After a standing ovation for her 45-minute show, Paoli was granted an audience with the prince and Sibylle Szaggars-Redford, the wife of Oscar-winning actor Robert Redford, who gifted her with a personal painting in gratitude for her extensive charity work at a private dinner hosted by Bedat & Co. In the days that followed, Paoli was appointed an ambassador for UNICEF, which further broadens her opportunities to help children, especially girls, in need. "Gifts like this not only honour me, but also Madame Simone Bedat's incredible legacy," Paoli iterated, referring to the founder of Bedat & Co. "This is something I am proud to continue and feel blessed to be a part of as anything that celebrates women and their contribution to the world echoes the ideals of Madame Bedat."



SOLEIL, SOLEIL

Fragrances were the stars of the day when luxurious perfume maker Amouage recently unveiled its latest creation, *Sunshine Man*, to a select group of *The Peak's* readers. More than 40 guests visited Amouage's luxurious boutique in Starhill Gallery, where they enjoyed wine and afternoon tea at a soirée hosted by the house's Creative Director, Christopher Chong. Chong also shared his insights into the creation of *Sunshine Man*, before guests discovered for themselves the myriad delights of Amouage.

1. Christopher Chong. 2. Rozie Mastor and Lexie Rodriguez. 3. Fatin Nadia and Shahid Shayaa. 4. Datin Nini Wong, Aileen Chan and Cheryl Chew. 5. Barbara Lim and Tay Ai Leen. 6. Charmaine Low and Datin Sri Joey Tor. 7. Mala Chandran and Datin Wira Malini Rajendram. 8. Datuk Ramli Ibrahim and Bremen Wong.



Saving the Seas

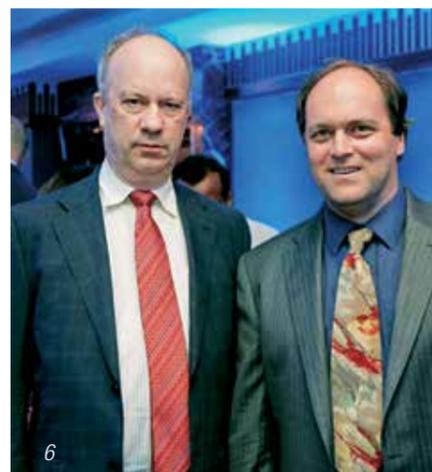
The efforts of Gaya Island Resort's dedicated Marine Centre got a glamorous boost recently when the organisers of the Miss Scuba Sabah pageant brought along a group of visitors, including Jane Ho, the reigning Miss Scuba Sabah, as well as finalists Ikki Tan, Dewina Petrus Guriting and Janet Fabian, to pay the centre a visit. Welcomed by Resort Manager Kirinjit Singh, Scott Mayback, the resort's Resident Marine Biologist took over, giving the guests an in-depth tour of the centre, including Malaysia's first dedicated turtle rescue and rehabilitation facility, as well as a talk on the centre's three pillars: Turtle Rescue, Coral Reef Restoration and Conservation Through Education. **BY**





Bright Minds, Bright Ideas

The collective IQ of The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur went through the roof recently with the best and brightest minds coming together for *An Evening with Oxford Professors*. The event was a collaboration between YTL Foundation and Oxford University's St Anne's College in conjunction with Summer School Kuala Lumpur held the same week. There were plenty of intellectual exchanges going on as guests mingled and networked at the splendid reception. Thought-provoking lectures on *The Nuclear Future for Malaysia* and *Biodiversity Conservation in South East Asia* were given by Professors Chris Grovenor and Martin Speight, respectively, that left the audience pondering on the future of the world. The British High Commissioner, HE Victoria Treadell, CMG, MVO, also turned up to show her support for the event and highlighted the long history between British and Malaysian education. ▀



The Time is Right

Watch connoisseurs gathered at The Hour Glass in Starhill Gallery to be awed by a showcase of Ulysse Nardin's Baselworld 2015 collection. The collection by the prestigious luxury watch company included pieces that represented the four pillars of the brand; Marine, Functional, Exceptional and Classico. Wolfgang Sickenberg, International Sales Director of Ulysse Nardin, was present at the event, to the delight of loyal fans of the maison, as he expressed his confidence in the brand's growth and development in light of the partnership between Ulysse Nardin and The Hour Glass. Apart from the exquisite timepieces, guests were entertained with a special 'sleight of hand' show by illusionist Andrew Lee. The intimate cocktail event also presented guests with a unique chance to marvel at the intensely intricate enamel *cloisonné* technique employed in the *Classico Kruzenshtern* limited-edition timepiece. ▀

1. Dato' Simon Low and Datin Karen Koh. 2. Yashoda G, Rajan G and Nishanti G. 3. Princess Dr Becky Leogardo and Michael Mantz. 4. Daphne Yap and Dato' Jeffrey Raymond. 5. Datin Su Day and Dato' Steve Day. 6. Wolfgang Sickenberg, Teh Soon Kheng and Francois Picci. 7. Steven Khoo, Alice Ng, Sherilyn Foong and David Young.





life events //



SALUTI!

It was an all-Italian affair at the JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur for the recent Italian National Day celebration. Businessmen, diplomats and Italians converged at the majestic ballroom to celebrate the joyous occasion at a reception hosted by the Ambassador of Italy, HE Mario Sammartino, and his lovely wife, Federica. The very best of Italian luxury cars on display drew appreciative looks from the excited guests, who also took the opportunity to pose with them. Guests were serenaded by beautiful arias as they enjoyed a heavenly Italian feast that kept them coming back for more. It was a wonderful evening indeed to celebrate the republic's national day. 🇮🇹



1. Puan Sri Christine Khir Johari and The Most Reverend Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. 2. HE Harry Molenaar, Ambassador of the Netherlands and Ir Hans Keller. 3. HE Monsignor Joseph Marino, Ambassador of the Apostolic Nunciature, Tan Sri Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria, Secretary-General of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and HE Nicolai Ruge, Ambassador of Denmark. 4. Rick Penney, Lynn Penney, Dee Shults and Christian Shults. 5. Dr Pio Trippa, Federica Sammartino, HE Mario Sammartino, Ambassador of Italy, and Giulia Catella.



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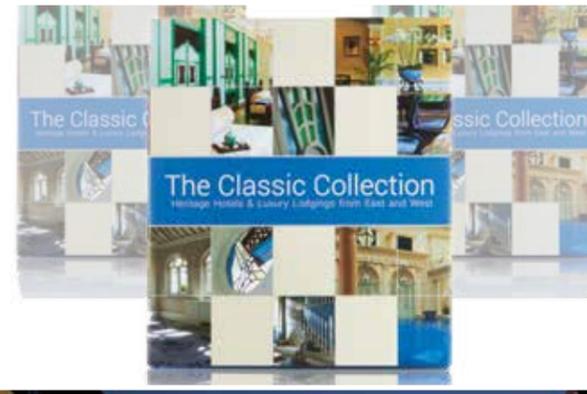
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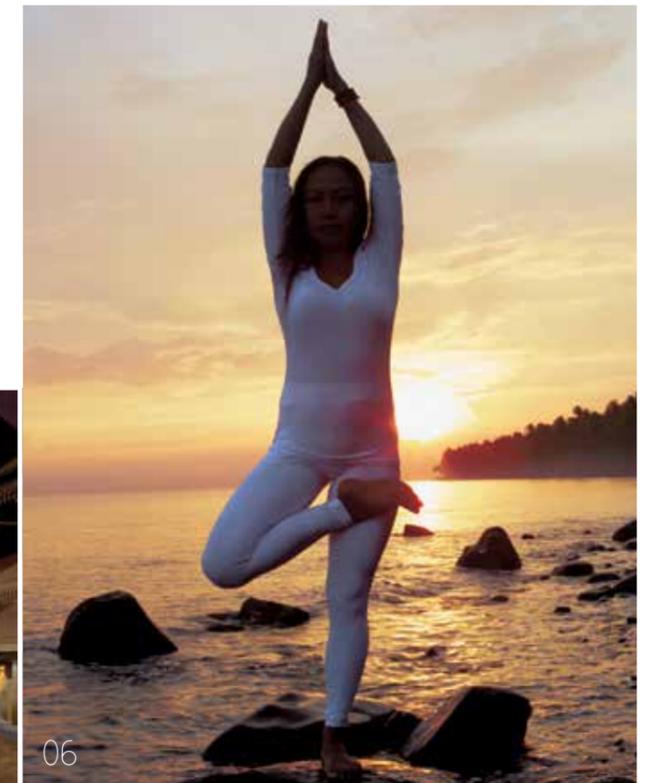
02



03



05



06

01

A Majestic Afternoon Affair

The best afternoon tea in Kuala Lumpur is without a doubt at the Colonial Cafe of **The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur**. With its delectable array of dainty sandwiches, scones served with clotted cream and strawberry jam, sweet and savoury hot local treats, it's indeed a delightful occasion in full colonial tradition. Though the ambience at the Colonial Cafe is magnificent, one sometimes longs to enjoy tea in the warm sunshine. Now, you can have a lovely picnic with Colonial Cafe's *Afternoon Tea Box*, which consists of dainty morsels and classic English tea. And if a garden picnic is not your cup of tea, you can always bring it home for your very own tea party. The elegantly packaged *Afternoon Tea Box* serves two.

02

Day Treat

Only have a day to spare to experience the healing waters of Bath? Worry not, thanks to the Day Spa and Stay package at **The Gainsborough Bath Spa**, which gives you the full curative treatment along with a complimentary overnight stay at the hotel's luxurious rooms or suites. Enjoy the Bath House experience at the Spa Village Bath and soak in the curative waters of the natural thermal pools. You'll also be treated to a *Wonder of Wellness* speciality treatment, an indulgent spa experience of Swedish massage, full body scrub and private yoga. Bookings need to be made at least seven days in advance to enjoy the hotel's therapeutic treatment.

03

Fifth Time's the Charm!

The Surin Phuket was recently inducted into the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence Hall of Fame, after winning the gold medal for the fifth consecutive time. The Certificate of Excellence is only given to hospitality establishments that consistently achieve great traveller reviews on TripAdvisor, while the Hall of Fame consists of those who have won the certificate for five consecutive years. A true testament to the continuous top-notch service and hospitality by the dedicated staff, you know where to head to the next time you're looking for the perfect relaxing getaway to the Pearl of the Andaman.

04

Honouring Heritage

YTL Hotels' impressive portfolio of hotels and lodgings from Europe to South-East Asia and China is the highlight of **The Classic Collection**, a tribute to its collection of heritage properties. Presented through the words of Singapore-based British writer Kim Inglis and the camera lens of Danish photographer Jacob Termansen, the book is a thoughtful introduction to heritage and travel, where the reader learns the rich history of the properties as well as fantastic travel ideas that range from the ancient walkways of Bath to the perennially verdant hills of Cameron Highlands. The book retails for MYR125 (GBP25) at Kinokuniya, Waterstones, Amazon and Book Depository.

05

Welcome Back

If you find yourself longing for an escape to a place of serenity, with the glittering azure sea at your doorstep, then it's time to rejoice as the **Tanjong Jara Resort** will be reopening its doors on 1 February 2016. Following its yearly end-season closure, the resort is ready to welcome guests to experience age-old Malay traditions amidst architecture inspired by the grandeur of a 17th-century Malay palace. Culture and tradition is honoured with the Malay concept of *Sucimurni* at the heart of the resort, highlighting purity of spirit, health and well-being. The resort's reopening brings back the distinct Terengganu experience with diving, snorkelling, nature walks and cooking classes, along with exciting new offerings and experiences.

06

Knowing Thyself

December is the time to escape the burden of responsibilities and put oneself first. The **Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali** experience, *Return to Yourself*, is a yoga and wellness retreat specially crafted for the busy woman to reconnect with her true self and regain her vitality. For four days, indulge in relaxing spa treatments as you expand your mind with guided meditation, explore your body with speciality yoga classes and experience Bali in the company of new like-minded friends. To keep you on the path of bliss, guests will receive an e-copy of a self-care manual that is packed with inspiring ideas to continue nurturing your soul back home. ■

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

With an average snowfall of 18m a year, Niseko is a dream for those seeking the best skiing pistes.



life on the cover //

Cold Play

It's all white when one is wintering in the skier's dream of Niseko Village, Hokkaido.

Text **Kim Inglis**

Averaging an incredible 18m of snowfall per annum, the skiable area of Niseko United is every powder hound's dream. Renowned for its super light, super dry and absolutely reliable powder snow, it has long been a draw for those in the know. Every winter, regular as clockwork, winds from Siberia sweep across the Sea of Japan, interact with moisture there, and form a mass of snow crystals. These hit the sweeping volcanic slopes of the mighty Mount Niseko Annapuri – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Unfortunately for those in the know, this annual event is now well publicised – and Niseko is no longer a little-known destination. With four areas arranged around the base of the volcano, numerous accommodation options and 2,191ac of skiable terrain, the cat is truly out of the bag! What was once a diehard backcountry destination is now a popular ski station with pistes and facilities to suit all levels of capabilities. In fact, since the World Ski Awards were launched in Kitzbühel in Austria in 2012, Niseko United has consistently won the award for Japan's *Best Ski Resort*. Often referred to as 'the Oscars of the travel industry', this is no mean feat.

So, what does all this development mean for Niseko? Of course, there are pros and cons. On the plus side, access is far easier. The resort is well served by Sapporo's New Chitose Airport, the largest commercial airport in Hokkaido, with plenty of domestic and international flights operating on a daily basis. Trains, taxis, coaches and more ply the well-maintained route from Sapporo to Niseko, and the journey is scenic and peaceful. On arrival, infrastructure on the ground is much better these days too.

Development has also meant improvement in the lift system and better maintenance of terrain, more places to stay, greater choice in retail, food and beverage, as well as first-class ski tuition, guiding and the like. Demand for luxury apartments has seen a decline in options for the budget end of the market, but expansion has resulted in infinitely more choice in hotel and apartment offerings, as well as for *après-ski* options.

The village of Hirafu is the main hub for international holidaymakers as it is the most developed. However, with plentiful restaurants, a very active nightlife and lots of shops, it can get over busy. Other

villages around the base of the volcano offer more in terms of peace and quiet, less lift queues, easier access to the mountain — and a somewhat more 'authentic Japanese' experience.

Take Niseko Village, for example. It offers an English ski school at the base of the lift and more than a few options for accommodation, wining and dining. Also, in an area renowned for its *onsen*, you'll probably find the prettiest hot spring bathing options here.

The Hilton, at the base of the gondola, and the ski in/ski out Green Leaf Niseko Village are popular accommodation options, with repeat visitors making up a decent percentage of guests. For those with a penchant for boutique lodgings, the art-inspired Green Leaf nestles amongst trees and overlooks a run that is floodlit until 8pm for an eerily quiet, yet unique, night skiing experience. There's a cosy lounge and bar, decked out with alpine and Japanese touches, and the first-class restaurant has wonderful views of the perfect Fuji-lookalike, Mount Yotei, on one side and skiable terrain on the other. A five-minute drive round the base of the mountain brings you to the Hilton, a monolithic building that dominates the surrounding landscape. Inside, there are no less than eight dining options, as well as spacious guest accommodations.

Both hotels are also well located for a hot spring bathing experience. Niseko's volcanic geology results in an abundance of hot springs (*onsen*) that range from simple stone baths to vast

luxurious pools. Some of the suites at the Hilton have their own private dipping pools, full of mineral-rich spring water — soothing muscles over-worked from a day on the slopes is bliss here. For the communal experience (but segregated into Women's and Men's sections) is the Hilton's traditional indoor and outdoor *onsen* that overflows into a large pond stocked with sleek carp. The outdoor pool, called a *rotenburo*, contains sodium-filled waters — useful for joint pain — and superb Mount Yotei views.

For a more intimate experience, head to the Green Leaf's *onsen*, where the baths are found within natural rock pools. Fed by a 1,000m deep spring that is packed with minerals, it is what the Japanese term a *bijin no yu* or 'onsen of beauty'. Certainly, there is nothing quite like sitting in its super-hot, steaming waters, all the while looking out over a freezing, white landscape interspersed with evergreen trees, the branches of which are laden with powdery snow.

More recently, the Hilton and Green Leaf have been joined by another high-end accommodation option — the Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse. Consisting of eight exclusive double-storey townhouses, their architectural style is inspired by Japan's heritage townhouses that were inhabited by craftsmen and wealthy merchants towards the end of the Edo period. These are no old-fashioned homes though, as the luxe interiors were designed by the award-winning Singapore interior design firm,



Clockwise, from above: Niseko is renowned for its super dry and light powder snow; end your day out on the slopes with a relaxing soak in the Hilton Niseko Village's *onsen*; The Green Leaf Niseko Village's Tomioka White lounge is perfect for an après ski gathering.

“Every winter, regular as clockwork, winds from Siberia sweep across the Sea of Japan, interact with moisture there, and form a mass of snow crystals.”

“Even with the retail, dining and accommodations, it is really Niseko Village's pristine natural surrounds that so beguiles.”

morning mountain orientation, can be arranged. Kasara also complements our high family returnee market, allowing all members of the family to stay under one roof versus staying at the Green Leaf and Hilton. In simplicity, we offer options based on their budget and needs while improving their experiences.”

As such, members of staff are incredibly helpful, delivering first-class service in the form of a personal concierge and complimentary on-call driver. They will also undertake restaurant bookings, organise massages, advise on lessons and so on.

The facilities of Niseko Village have recently been given a boost with the construction of a fresh dining and retail concept. Built to mimic traditional Japanese artisan architecture, with a paved walkway lined by wooden townhouses, or *machiya*, this is the perfect place for a bit of *après-ski* dining, drinking or shopping. Hokkaido is famed for its fresh, organic produce, so you can't go wrong. Ranging from tapas and fresh seafood to traditional *sushi*, *tempura* and *teppanyaki*, as well as a scrumptious *patisserie*, you'll be well catered for here. Ratnavale says that the 2014/2015 season benefited from the added variety of cuisine. “The Crab Shack has been a hit due to the popular Japanese live seafood harvest served there from seafood hot pots, to grilled crabs, fish and shellfish.”

Niseko Village is still a work in progress, with more townhouses planned and development underway to improve some of the older lifts on the mountain. One of its strengths is that there is plenty of space and solitude to be found here – even though there is first-class retail, dining and accommodations, it is really the pristine natural surrounds that so beguiles. Adrian Camp of The Powder Guides, a local guiding company, has been working in Niseko for the best part of a decade. He's seen the staggering rate of development around the base of Mount Annupuri first hand, but still raves about the area's unprecedented skiing and boarding experience.

“In terms of lift-access ski resort areas around the world, without doubt Niseko receives the most consistent and largest snowfalls anywhere on the planet,” he notes. “Its combination of snow quality, consistency and sheer volume is simply unmatched.” He is more than happy to take guests to all the mountain's secret spots so they can ski fresh powder all day long – an experience I have enjoyed on more than one occasion. Whether it is climbing to the top of the volcano and dropping down the other side, or accessing many of the off-piste areas through the 'gates', there is nothing quite like a day out with a guide. The plentiful tree coverage means visibility is more often than not pretty good (even if it is snowing, which it is frequently); and if you fall over, it doesn't matter... you are always guaranteed a soft landing! ❧



Clockwise, from above: There is plenty of entertainment options in Niseko Village, including Two Sticks, a hip Asian tapas bar; the new dining and retail concept in Niseko Village mimics traditional Japanese artisan architecture; the Kasara Niseko Village Townhouse offers both comfort and unobtrusive beauty.



Design Intervention. Custom-crafted furniture and furnishings combine with Japanese artworks to create relaxing, yet elegant, spaces.

Easily accommodating up to six adults, each townhouse has three luxurious bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, a designer kitchen and a *tatami*-floored dining area that can be converted, Japanese-style, to accommodate two futons for children if required. Marrying traditional form with contemporary function, the designer has taken the Japanese concept of *shibumi* as its starting point. This refers to a particular aesthetic of simple, subtle and

unobtrusive beauty – one that is sensitive to setting. Obviously, this is a sensible approach in a place of such outstanding natural beauty.

The experience at the townhouses is not just one of comfort and aesthetics, however. “The townhouses give more options to families or small parties of friends to experience a more homely feel,” explains General Manager, Panch Ratnavale. “For example, skiers and snowboarders have more space to stow away equipment in their own heated storage room. Self-driving visitors can park their vehicles in the privacy of their own garage, and in-residence ski and snowboard fittings, as well as a





visitbath.co.uk Copyright: Bath Tourism Plus

FESTIVE DELIGHTS

There's a wealth of surprises and fun this December at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bath, all conveniently located around YTL Hotels' recently opened The Gainsborough Bath Spa.

Author Fennel Hudson was only partly correct when he wrote: "December, being the last month of the year, cannot help but make us think of what is to come." It's also a time for reflection, looking back at the year that is coming to an end. It's also, apropos Andy Williams, "the most wonderful time of the year" and with good reason too.

December carries with it so many connotations – holidays and making merry, family and friends, shopping and presents, and Christmas and preparing to meet the New Year. It's about staying warm in the cold weather – if you're in temperate climates, that is – and feasting with loved ones. And, if you're looking for the one place to do all of these, you wouldn't go wrong if you spend this very festive period in Bath.

Historic Setting

This beautiful city, set in the countryside of south-west England, is famous for its thermal hot springs and gorgeous, honey-coloured Georgian architecture, both of which draw millions of visitors from all over the world. This UNESCO World Heritage Site has a history that dates back more than 2,000 years, and is justifiably proud of its legacy. Landmarks like the Roman Baths, Bath Abbey, Pump Room and Royal Crescent testify to this city's appreciation for its cultural inheritance, one that it is always careful to preserve, even as it strides into the future.

Bath is colourful and filled with fun activities for the whole family during the festive season.

This balancing of the old with the new is personified with the recently opened The Gainsborough Bath Spa, YTL Hotels' latest

jewel, located in two refurbished 18th-century buildings in the heart of the city. Here, within the carefully maintained façades of where the Royal United Hospital and Bellott's Hospital used to operate, is Bath's most luxurious hotel, a composition of 99 custom-furnished rooms and suites built around the Spa Village Bath, which draws its healing waters from the thermal springs, the very ones that drew the Romans to this very site nearly 2,000 years ago.

While its architectural and historical settings are a great draw for any visitor, Bath is also a burst of activities throughout the year, home to festivals and events that range from the literary and cultural, to the gastronomic and recreational. December in Bath is just as active, but of a more relaxing and traditional kind. It's a time for simple pleasures, the ones you linger over as you savour the luxury of time and well-being.

Winter Wonderland

It's winter, of course, and what could be more evocative of the season than ice-skating? Overlooked by the architectural marvel that is the Royal Crescent, the Royal Victoria Park has been a draw for both residents and visitors to the city since its opening back in 1830. The 57ac park boasts attractions like a skateboard ramp, bowling green, adventure golf course, boating pond, and botanical garden. In winter, however, the park is transformed by **Bath on Ice**, the city's seasonal outdoor ice rink, located at the Royal Pavilion. Apart from the skating, Bath on Ice also features an indoor **Ice Lounge** bar and café that serves mulled wine, ciders, spirits, hot chocolate, mince pies and pizzas. An additional treat this year will be the **Glow in the Dark Mini Golf Course** set alongside the ice rink.

For something more spectacular, take a trip to Longleat House,

the stately home and seat of the Marquess of Bath. Located less than 20km south of Bath, Longleat is open to the public and home to one of the first safari parks outside of Africa. The estate's annual **Festival of Light** features hundreds of illuminated designs, measuring up to 20m in height and 70m in length, that transform this world-famous Wiltshire estate into a glowing winter wonderland. This year's festival is centred on China's Qin and Tang Dynasties, with recreations of the Terracotta Army, the Great Wall and the Monkey King, among others. Don't forget to catch the Santa Express here, with a stop at the 'North Pole' to visit Santa Claus' snow-covered woodland grotto.

Advent Time

December is also about Christmas, of course, and Bath is really the perfect place to mark this occasion, with a series of activities that are both spiritual and pleasurable. **Bath Abbey** has been the cornerstone of the city's religious life for more than a thousand years, and celebrating the birth of Christ is an especially significant affair for it. While you can expect the usual Christmas carol performances, there are also some special and uniquely British activities, including the *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*, which takes place on Christmas Eve and is performed by the abbey's choir, as well as the BBC broadcast service on Christmas Day. The abbey will also host a performance of Handel's *Messiah* by the Bath Choral Society as well as a special Christmas concert by the Bath Music Society.

You can also catch carols by the abbey's choir at the annual **Bath Christmas Market**, one of the highlights of the city during this season. The market, consistently voted the best festive fair in the UK, takes place in the streets around the abbey – and just around the corner from The Gainsborough Bath Spa



Clockwise, from right: There are plenty of shopping opportunities in Bath, especially for locally handcrafted products; the choir of Bath Abbey will be performing carols throughout the festive season; the abbey will also host a special performance of Handel's *Messiah* by the Bath Choral Society.

“Bath Abbey has been the cornerstone of the city’s religious life for more than a thousand years, and celebrating the birth of Christ is an especially significant affair for it.”



visitbath.co.uk Copyright: Bath Tourism Plus/Colin Hawkins



– and will feature 170 chalets that offer food and drink as well as unique gifts handcrafted by local artisans. This magical shoppers' paradise will allow you discover all the very best that Bath has to offer as you wander around the picturesque streets of Bath, soaking in a truly unique atmosphere. Right in the heart of the market is **The Lodge**, an indoor venue reminiscent of a rustic snow lodge, that serves heart-warming food, hot drinks, cakes and locally produced ales.

The Right Stage

December is also when the city holds the annual **Bath Film Festival**. Held in various locations in the city centre, including the atmospheric **Little Theatre Cinema**, one of Bath's iconic arts venues, this year's festival, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary, will feature 40 films, documentaries and shorts from all around the world, many of which are not on general release, director talks and talent awards. This year's line-up will include *Room*, based on Emma Donoghue's bestselling novel, *High-Rise*, which stars Tom Hiddleston, Jeremy Irons and Sienna Miller, the Michael Caine and Harvey Keitel vehicle, *Youth*, and *Janis: Little Girl Blue*, which documents the life of rock and blues singer Janis Joplin.



Clockwise, from above: The atmospheric Little Theatre Cinema is one of the venues for the Bath Film Festival; the Bath Christmas Market has been consistently voted the best festive fair in the UK; members of the Jane Austen Centre keeping their balance at Bath on Ice.



The Gainsborough Bath Spa's central location makes it the perfect base when visiting Bath; all the rooms and suites are custom-furnished with the luxurious touches YTL Hotels is known for; The Gainsborough Bar is a classy alcove devoted to the best ales, wines and spirits.

“The Gainsborough Bath Spa's central location in the heart of the city makes it the ideal base when discovering Bath.”

therapies. The *Freedom* treatment, for instance, will have your body gracefully moved through the water by a therapist and dynamically stretched into a state of relaxation. The self-guided Bath House Circuit, on the other hand, includes dips into two natural thermal pools of varying temperatures, before moving on to traditional and infrared saunas, a steam room, an ice alcove and elegant relaxation areas – all at your own pace.

There are 99 rooms and suites, created by award-winning Champalimaud Design, at The Gainsborough Bath Spa to enjoy, all custom furnished while including all the lavish touches that YTL Hotels are known for. The amenities range from the usual luxurious bedding and generous wardrobes to tiny details like the Roberts radio with Bluetooth connectivity and the Asprey toiletries. Fuelling up at the hotel's **Johann Lafer at The Gainsborough** is both a treat and a privilege. Under the guidance of Michelin-starred Chef Johann Lafer, the menu utilises the very best local produce with Asian touches for delightful exoticness. The adjoining **Gainsborough Bar** is a classy alcove devoted to local craft ales, innovative cocktails, and an outstanding selection of champagnes, wines and spirits.

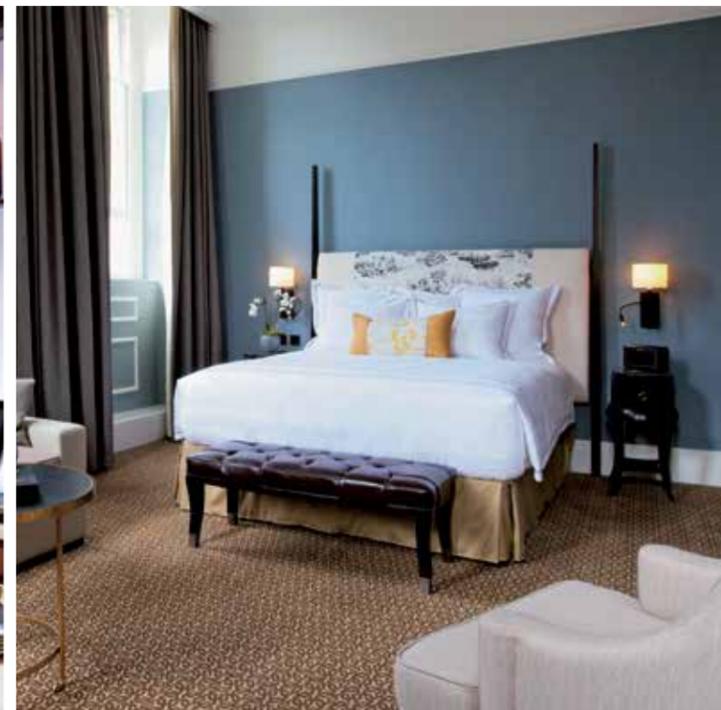
And, just to sweeten things further, The Gainsborough Bath Spa has lined up some special treats during this festive period. Enjoy a personal escort to Bath Abbey for **Midnight Mass** on Christmas Eve and be greeted by warming hot chocolate, hot whisky toddy and mince pies upon your return. The concierge will also help get you tickets to attend the BBC broadcast service on Christmas Day, while there will be movie screenings in the hotel's Chapel Room throughout the day. As for New Year's Eve, there will be a champagne and canapés reception, followed by a five-course gourmet celebratory dinner at Johann Lafer at The Gainsborough before toasting in the New Year with champagne at midnight. That, definitely, will be the perfect cap for all the delights Bath has to offer during this most wonderful time of the year. ■

A more seasonal attraction, however, would be the annual pantomime at **Theatre Royal Bath**. The venerable theatre's production this year is *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and features the expected lavish costumes, sumptuous sets and all-round fun for both children and adults.

The Place To Be

Just as there are many reasons to spend the festive season in Bath, staying at **The Gainsborough Bath Spa**, the only member of The Leading Hotels of the World in the south-west of England, during this – or any other – time is just as compelling. Easily the most luxurious hotel in the city, its central location on Beau Street makes it the perfect base during your discovery of Bath. The major tourist sights of the **Roman Baths** and Bath Abbey are, literally, around the corner, while the shopping precincts of **Union Street** and **Milsom Street** are less than a five-minute walk away.

The Gainsborough Bath Spa is also the only hotel here to have direct access to Bath's natural thermal mineral waters, which makes the **Spa Village Bath**, housed within, unique. Here, you will find signature classic spa therapies as well as those that combine the thermal waters with private aquatic body



CELEBRATION TIME

There're lots going on at YTL Hotels throughout the world this festive period. Make sure you don't miss out wherever you are.



MALAYSIA

The Ritz-Carlton, Kuala Lumpur

Be part of a new Ritz-Carlton festive tradition and enjoy a limited edition Christmas dessert with the hotel's 'Dessert Boy', inspired by the 'Lobby Boy' from the movie *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. You can customise the chocolate ribbons with your favourite print or colours when you order these beautifully constructed cakes, available at The Pâtisserie. There's also a Gingerbread House, big enough for you to wander inside and enjoy sweets and goodies, in the lobby. Purchase a brick to support the National Autism Society (NASOM) and have it inscribed with your name – all for a good cause. Have a fun day out with your children at the *Teddy Bear Afternoon Tea*, at The Cobalt Room, filled with activities including a Teddy Bear Workshop, Christmas tale readings with Santa Claus and gingerbread man decorating.

ENGLAND

The Gainsborough Bath Spa

YTL Hotels' newest member has also prepared a special roster of activities for this festive period. Stay on Christmas Eve and enjoy pre-dinner champagne and canapés in the cosy surroundings of The Canvas Room, followed by a three-course dinner at Johann Lafer at The Gainsborough. You will then be personally escorted to Bath Abbey for Midnight Mass, after which you can look forward to a warming spread of hot chocolate, hot whisky toddy and mince pies. Start your Christmas with a special festive gift, compliments of the hotel, before attending the BBC broadcast service at Bath Abbey. Join the other guests for a pre-lunch champagne aperitif in The Canvas Room, followed by a traditional four-course Christmas Lunch at Johann Lafer at The Gainsborough. Take it easy for the rest of the afternoon or catch a movie at The Chapel before returning to Johann Lafer at The Gainsborough for a festive evening buffet.

If you're in Bath for New Year's Eve, be sure to pack your lounge suit or cocktail dress to join in the celebration at The Gainsborough Bath Spa. Start with a champagne and canapés reception at The Somerset Room, followed by a five-course gourmet celebratory dinner at Johann Lafer at The Gainsborough, before toasting in the New Year with more champagne. That, we think, would be the perfect way to start 2016!



Silk & Style

Blue Tie, Hugo Boss. Green Tie, Canali. Orange Tie, Hermès. Handkerchief, Hackett London. Handkerchief, Canali. Bowtie, Brooks Brothers.



Bag It!

Clockwise, from top left:
 Ginny Bag, Salvatore
 Ferragamo. Serpenti Flap
 Cover Bag, Bvlgari. Mini
 3Baguette, Fendi. Petite
 Malle Epi Anthracite Nacre,
 Louis Vuitton.



JAPAN



Niseko Village

You'll be guaranteed a white Christmas if you're in Niseko but, if you're in Niseko Village on Christmas Eve, look out for Santa Claus, who'll be doing his rounds. While waiting for him at either Hilton Niseko Village or The Green Leaf Niseko Village, have your – or your children's – picture taken with real reindeer, a pretty unique photo op. End the evening with a fireworks display, which will also light up the sky on New Year's Eve, and it's really worth staying up to catch the New Year sunrise gondola to welcome in 2016.

THAILAND



INDONESIA

Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali

Enjoy the tranquil surroundings of Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali as you tuck into a specially curated menu for the resort's Christmas Eve Dinner. Adding to the atmosphere will be traditional Balinese dancers, accompanied by a *gamelan gong gebyar* orchestra. There will be another special menu for New Year's Eve, with a live band and fireworks display, to prepare you for the year to come.



The Surin Phuket

If you prefer a more tropical climate for this festive period, head out to The Surin Phuket, which recently won the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for the fifth consecutive time. Enjoy a sumptuous Christmas Eve Set Dinner at the Beach Restaurant, which features the best local ingredients as you are entertained by Thai classical dancers and a live band. Christmas Day opens with carol singers from the local school while you enjoy traditional breakfast sweets like panettone, pandoro and Yule Log at Lomtalay Restaurant. Christmas Dinner is an international buffet around the pool with live cooking stations where you can fill up on roast turkey and charcoal BBQ. The restaurant also has a Christmas tree decorated with wishing tags that guests

can write Christmas messages on, and make donations that go to Phuket Had Been Good to Us, a charity that helps underprivileged Thais learn English.

The countdown to the New Year begins with The Surin Phuket's annual White Night Party on the Beach. Remember to dress in white for the party of the year and you can look forward to a BBQ on the sand while a fire show and DJ entertain you. The New Year's Eve Gala Dinner takes place at the Beach Restaurant, facing Pansea Beach. Start with bubbles before tucking into a lavish buffet fuelled by a selection of wines, beers, cocktails and spirits as you wait for the fireworks display that heralds 2016.

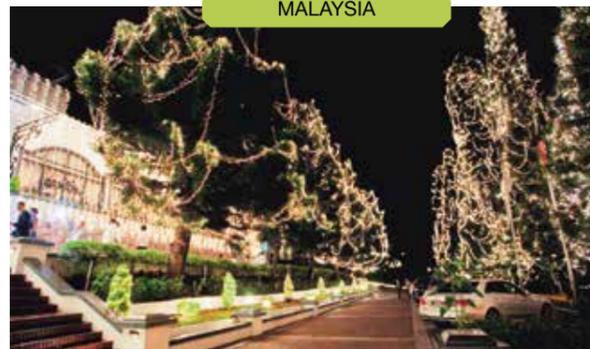


MALAYSIA

The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur

Relive the halcyon days of the planters of Malaya in a classic setting at Colonial Cafe as you indulge in special wine-paired menus filled with classic festive dishes such as Traditional Roast Turkey, Lamb Loin Au Gratin, Pot Roasted Spring Chicken and Christmas Pudding. Adding to the warm and cosy ambience of plush leather chairs, crisply starched white tablecloths and classic timber panelling are The Solianos, who will serenade you with their renditions of classic holiday jingles.

Alternatively, head for The Smoke House, where you can enjoy facilities like a pool table, lounge and cocktail bar, cigar room, private dining room and even a card room for a game of bridge or cribbage. Explore the impeccable selection of vintage cocktails and collection of single malt whiskies, or head downstairs for a private screening of black and white classics like *Gone with The Wind* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

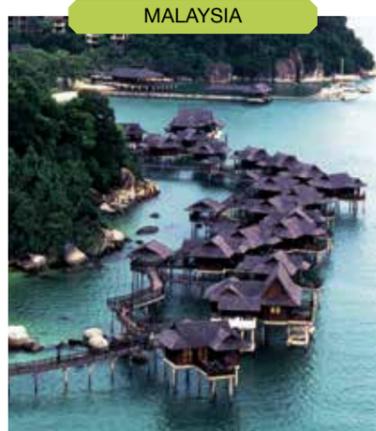


MALAYSIA



Cameron Highlands Resort

It's the ambience that makes spending this period in Cameron Highlands Resort so special. Enjoy the crisp and fresh highland air and scenery, or sit by the fireplace with a cup of BOH Tea to accompany your book. Tuck into a special Christmas Eve dinner, replete with all the traditional trimmings, in the Dining Room. And, the only word to describe the sight of the giant trees lining the front of the resort, sparkling with Christmas lights to herald the festive season, is 'magical'.



MALAYSIA

Pangkor Laut Resort

Take on some exclusive dining experiences throughout the festive season at Pangkor Laut Resort. Share a romantic picnic lunch with a loved one on board the resort's sailing yacht, *The Impian*, or opt for a sunset cruise, with canapés and free flow of soft drinks, wine and beer, on the teakwood Oriental junk or the luxurious yachts, *YTL Kura-Kura* and *YTL Lady*. The teakwood Oriental junk will also be serving a gourmet dinner cruise throughout the period. On Christmas Eve, you can share cocktails and carols with Santa Claus at

Lantern Courtyard, and there will be more carolling later that evening at Royal Bay Beach Club, as well as during breakfast at Feast Village on Christmas morning. On New Year's Eve, join in the party at the hotel lobby, where you'll be entertained by clown and strollers shows as well as live music. Dance the night away and enjoy the magnificent fireworks display at midnight. Alternatively, you can nip off for a midnight cocktail cruise, with free flowing sparkling wine, wine, beer, petits fours and snacks, as you wait for the New Year.

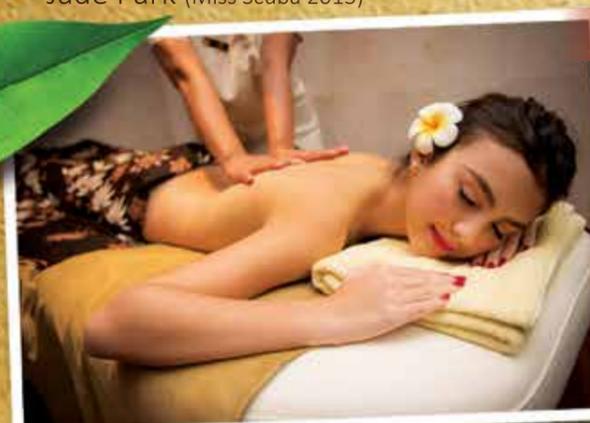


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Relaxation for Body Mind & Soul

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EXCELLENT DONNA MASSAGE
(Best Traditional Massage) 2013

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

60 minutes RM260 nett • 90 minutes RM360 nett • 120 minutes RM480 nett



HOT COMPRESS PACKAGE (2hours)
(Most Rejuvenating Spa Experience) Harper's Bazaar 2012

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

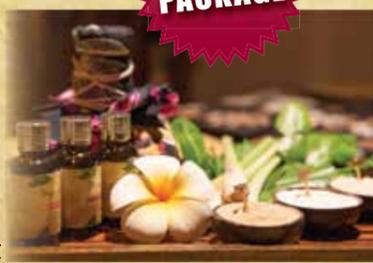
Usual Price: RM530
PRICE: RM420 nett



FLOWER BATH PACKAGE (2hours)

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

Usual Price: RM580
PRICE: RM420 nett



SCRUB PACKAGE (2hours)
(Best Stress Relieving) Harper ' Bazaar 2012

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

Usual Price: RM550
PRICE: RM420 nett

NECK & SHOULDER MASSAGE
• 40 minutes RM150 nett

FOOT MASSAGE
• 40 minutes RM120 nett
• 60 minutes RM150 nett

MANICURE
• 45 minutes RM110 nett

PEDICURE
• 45 minutes RM110 nett





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* **Best Traditional Massage Award**
(Harper's Bazaar 2013)

* **Things to Do in Kuala Lumpur**
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Knock-On Effect

In two short years, Malaysian singer Elizabeth Tan has gone from being a YouTube sensation to being the Best New Female Artist at the 2015 Anugerah Planet Music. The 22-year-old shares with *YTL Life* her childhood, ambitions and memories of Bath, where she performed recently at the grand opening of The Gainsborough Bath Spa, alongside jazz legend Freddy Cole.

Photography **Robin Liew** Hair & Makeup **KF Bong/Chanel** Dress **Kenzo**

Tell us more about your childhood.

I grew up in Melawati, Kuala Lumpur, near the zoo. I'm the youngest of three and both my siblings are far older than me. So, when I was growing up, I spent a lot of time with them and their friends. My parents are pastors, so church also played a big part in my childhood – it still does now.

What was your childhood ambition?

Honestly, I wanted to be a spy! I've always loved spies and their gadgets – you know, like those watches or sunglasses that were also cameras, and I wanted one for my own. More realistically, I thought I would become a designer – I love drawing and even went to design school for one

semester, where I discovered people who were so much more talented at designing than I would ever be. I guess I wasn't born for that!

You think you were born to be a singer, then?

I'm still figuring that out. I did want to be in entertainment but as a host. I was advised by (Malaysian actress and television personality) Sarah Lian that, in order to do so, I would need to be comfortable speaking to a camera. She suggested making videos and posting them online, which I did. I then realised I wasn't very good at it – I'm not that much of an extrovert and I can't really talk spontaneously. After



that, I decided to make music videos instead and post them on YouTube. That went viral and, now, I'm here.

So, how do you manage when you perform live on stage?

Well, it's a bit hard for me. On stage, you need showmanship and it's really pushed me out of my shell. I've only been performing for two years, so it's something I'm still learning.

How did you go from YouTube to the Best New Female Artist at the 2015 Anugerah Planet Music?

It's crazy – it came as a great surprise to me! I think it (the award) was really not about me but more about the song – *Knock Knock* took me to the next level in the industry. I believe that song made a difference and won me that award. I'm blessed to be able to work with Faizal Tahar (writer and producer of *Knock Knock*), who's very creative and humble.

How would you describe your music?

That's a tough one – pop, I guess. The plan for now is to concentrate on pop as I need a strong image; not many people know who Elizabeth Tan is, and often they just know me as the girl on YouTube, or the one who plays the ukulele, which I don't anymore. I want people to know that I'm a unique performer and I can do that with pop.

What kind of music do you personally like?

I like folk and jazz, as well as indie and alternative music. If I could, I would love to sing jazz. Although, I wouldn't mind being an actor as well! I would like to act in movies but that's going to be difficult. People say to follow your dream but I need to be realistic and do what I can and excel at it. Maybe in the future?

How do you spend your free time?

I play a lot of computer games when I have the time! That's because I grew up very

closely with my brother, who's now lecturing in computer games programming. He's a real supergeek! I also watch movies. Both aren't very productive but that's ok.

What's the most interesting thing you've ever done?

I jumped off a 60ft cliff in Texas, where I studied for two years. I didn't know how to swim but I just took this big leap. Of course, I had no experience at diving and landed really badly. I made a big splash but bruised my legs badly. It was the craziest thing I have ever done.

Who are the people that have inspired you the most?

My brother has been a role model for me. He's a very good human being. He's very disciplined and holds on to his beliefs and values, and he has taught me a lot. I definitely look up to him. I also admire Taylor Swift – I used to hate her but, now, with her change of direction and genre, and the things she's done, I think she's been very smart in the way she's branded and marketed herself. She's building her own empire!

How would you like to be remembered?

That's difficult to answer as I've only started my journey. I'm starting to make an impression as a performer and there's still a long way to go. But I think I want to be able to make a difference and do some good. Maybe change things for the better. I can't say what yet though!

Tell us about your recent experience in Bath, when you performed at the official opening of The Gainsborough Bath Spa.

Everyone was so friendly, and not just people in the hotel but also on the streets. It's a nice small town and, after being there for a week, it felt like you knew everyone. I can't wait to go back.



Clockwise, from far right: Performing at the official opening of The Gainsborough Bath Spa; Elizabeth with her mother Irene Chong and Tan Sri Dato' (Dr) Francis Yeoh in Bath.

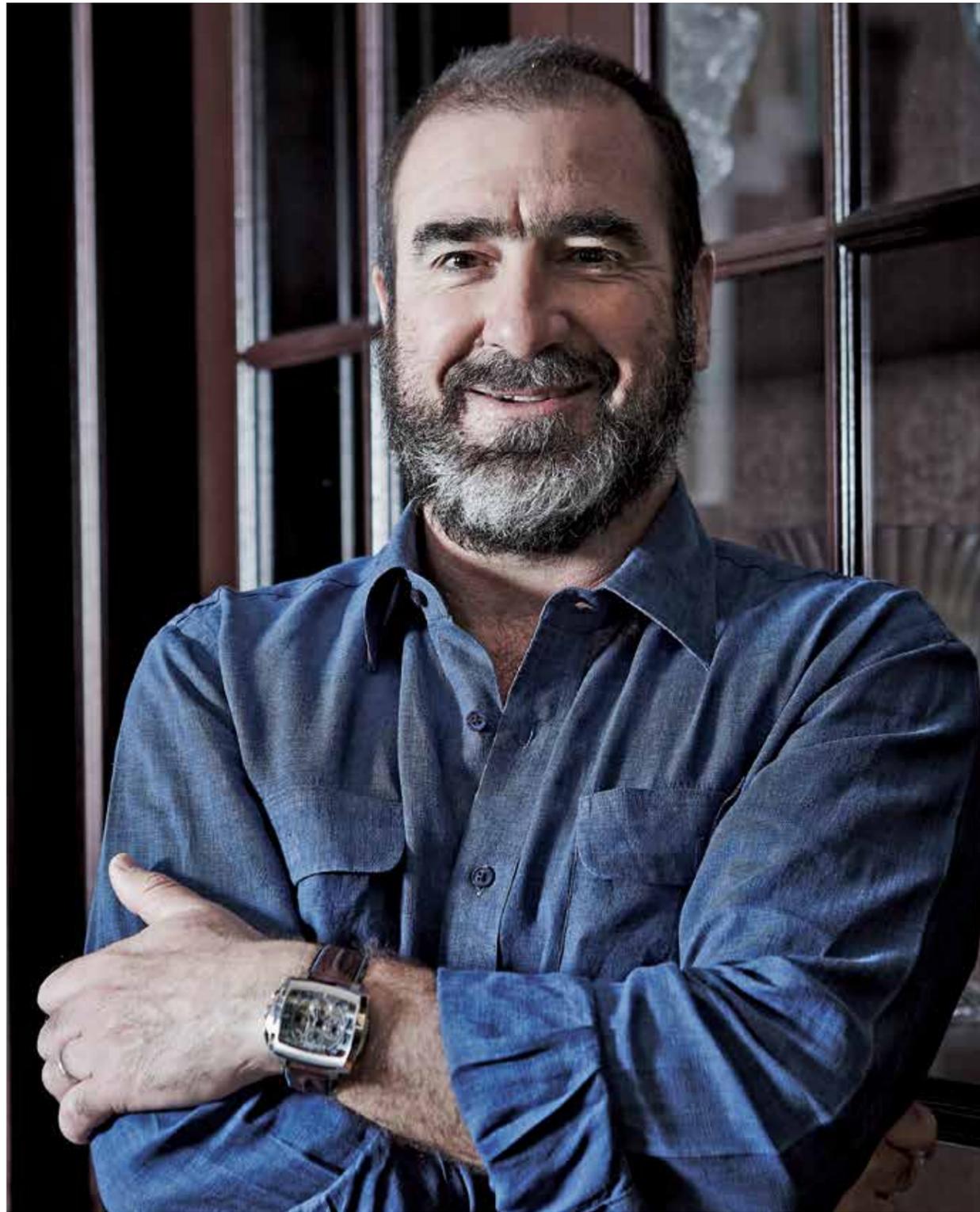


Share with us your impressions of The Gainsborough Bath Spa.

It's a really nice hotel. I love the staff at the hotel and, especially, the restaurant – the desserts are some of the best I've ever had! I also love The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, in how its heritage has been maintained. There's really nothing like it in Malaysia.

What do you bring along when you travel?

I always make sure that that I have my Hippo. He's a soft toy, so that makes him useful as I can use him as a pillow. Also, he reminds me of home. ■



Hail to the King

Former Manchester United football extraordinaire and Hautlence Ambassador, Eric Cantona, recently visited Malaysia to commemorate the independent's official partnership with Cortina Watch and début in the country. At The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur, *YTL Life* speaks with Cantona and Guillaume Tetu, CEO and Co-Founder of Hautlence, to discuss what their partnership means for the brand.

Text **Weng Sheng Thong** Photography **Patrick Chan**

Chances are, unless you have a passion for horology, you may not have heard of an audacious little independent watchmaker named Hautlence. However, it's very likely that even the most apathetic football fan would have heard of former French international Eric Cantona, whose legendary stint with Manchester United earned him the moniker 'King Eric'. And this is why Hautlence, founded more than a decade ago by Guillaume Tetu and Renaud de Retz, seized the opportunity of a lifetime to partner with the 'king' when it presented itself.

"Having Eric Cantona with us has been beneficial to the brand. It has helped increase our visibility tremendously," says Tetu. "With Cortina Watch as our exclusive partner in Malaysia, we now have everything necessary to expand the brand in this market."

Before you groan "oh great, another watch ambassador", it's important that we stop you right there and explain why Cantona isn't just "another watch ambassador". Brand ambassadors may be a dime a dozen nowadays, being frequently employed by the industry's big players to spearhead their advances into new markets or increase awareness. It's a simple yet effective strategy: give an ambassador a pay cheque, get him to read out a script about why that particular brand meshes so well with his lifestyle, and have him stand around looking dapper with a timepiece on the wrist in front of the adoring masses.

However, Cantona's partnership with Hautlence goes beyond that. In fact, his association with an independent brand is exceptional in itself. It would be commonplace for individuals of his calibre

After an extremely successful career as a footballer, Eric Cantona has now become a brand ambassador for independent watchmaker Hautlence.



“We call ourselves the Gentlemen Rebels Club because it’s an easy way for us to explain our brand’s DNA. Gentlemen represents the sophistication of our products; Rebels embodies our spirit of doing things differently; and Club stands for our exclusivity.”

– Guillaume Tetu, Ceo & Co-Founder of Hautlence



to seek out big brands for ambassadorial duties. Because of financial constraints or lack of gravitas, most independents are unable to draw the support of well-known celebrities to serve as their ambassadors and, as a result, are forced to lurk in the industry’s periphery and survive by word of mouth among collectors.

Up until a decade ago, this was Hautlence’s fate – struggling to eke out an existence as a fledgling independent, where every month was a battle to make ends meet. Today, after more than a decade of perseverance, Hautlence has achieved a level of recognition that few independents can match.

“We won’t deny that being an independent is tough work. There are many who have been forced to close down over the last decade. As the big groups grow stronger, it places more pressure on us to perform,” says Tetu. “But what we have learned is that as long as we do the best we can and focus on creativity, we will continue to hold the interest of the collectors.”

This is where Cantona steps in. While his role as a Hautlence ambassador does fulfil the usual checklist of signing autographs and posing for photo shoots, he also does much more. Cantona is involved in designing Hautlence’s avant-garde timepieces, and was in fact the driving force behind the brand’s new *Invictus Morphos – Limited Edition by Eric Cantona*.



Designed by Eric Cantona himself, the *Invictus Morphos* presents itself in a 42 x 49 x 14 mm titanium case, which houses a skeletonised Dubois Dépraz chronograph movement within. Viewed on the right and left sides of the dial are brilliant blue mother-of-pearl inserts finished with an intricate motif that evokes the wings of the Morphos butterfly. Turning this timepiece over reveals an engraving of Cantona’s signature and digital fingerprint, which serves as an automatic ‘entrance pass’ to Hautlence’s owners club, known as the Rebel Gentlemen’s Club. Only 250 pieces have been created for the global market.

Like the rest of Hautlence’s pieces, the *Invictus Morphos* offers the brand’s trademark 3D architecture and contemporary design alongside traditional finishing that brings together the best of the past and future of horology. It also marks itself as another milestone achievement for Hautlence as the *Invictus Morphos* takes the mantle as its first-ever chronograph. However, what sets the watch apart is the fact that Cantona contributed to its design.

But when was Cantona ever a designer? Behind his gruff, moustachioed and bear-like physique is a soul with a deep affection for art. In fact, Cantona is also an actor, but like everything else he commits himself to, his role as an actor is driven by a desire to create something new through his observations of the world around him. “I was born with an interest in art. My parents were also very keen about art and they had always encouraged me to create my own world through my imagination,” reveals Cantona, when we met recently at The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur.

It was this same passion that drew Cantona to Hautlence in May 2014, with their partnership being announced with the *Cross The Line* advertising campaign.

“At the time, I didn’t know much about horology but I wanted to learn more about it. I was immediately attracted to Hautlence because it has a very strong design and personality,” recalls Cantona. “As an independent brand, we’re like a family and I value this intimate face-to-face relationship.”

On this journey to explore the universe of high horology, Cantona also found himself awed by wonders of the natural world, more specifically the Morphos butterfly.

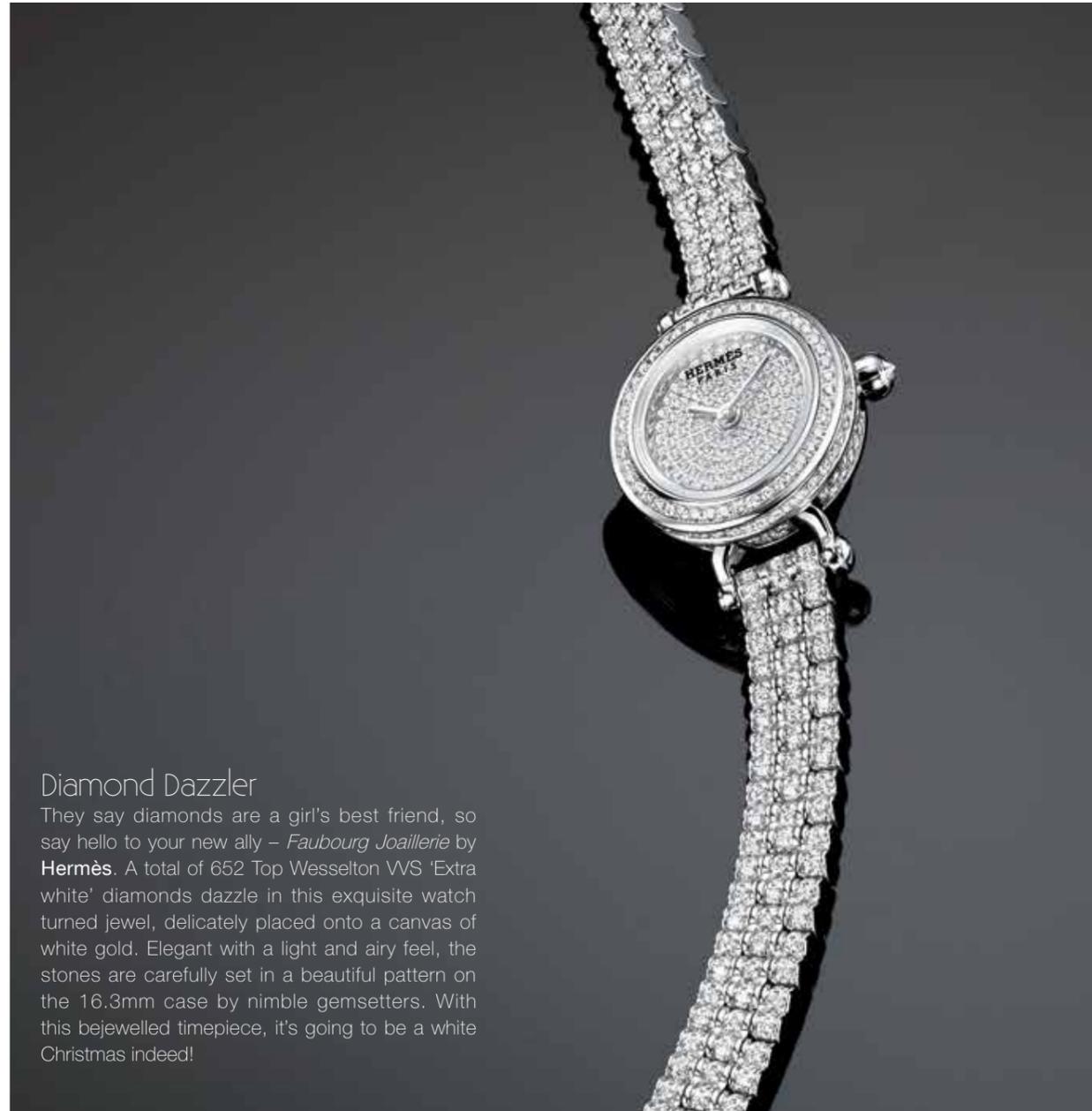
Renowned for its iridescent blue wings, Morphos butterflies are revered for their stunning beauty. “I was fascinated by the sky-blue colour of their wings and how butterflies represent the notion of metamorphosis and being reborn again,” says Cantona. He then sought to integrate the pattern of the Morphos butterfly’s wings into a timepiece, and thus the *Invictus Morphos* was born. “I decided to combine the pattern of their wings with a skeleton design for the *Invictus Morphos*; I think showing off the inner mechanics of the movement gives this timepiece a unique design,” Cantona adds. While he derives great joy in being involved in designing timepieces at Hautlence, Cantona says the journey of creation is what matters most.

“When you have to search for an idea or try many different things to make something work, it becomes very exciting,” says Cantona with a smile. “It’s the challenge, the sense of adventure and accomplishment when you overcome obstacles.”

It is in this statement that one finds a mirror of Hautlence’s own journey as an independent brand founded by individuals looking to create something new in the face of immense challenges. Given how Hautlence has continued to grow in the last decade, we can only expect great things from the brand in the years to come. ■

Twinkle, Twinkle

Sparkle and shine like the star you are this holiday season with these stunning ornaments.



Diamond Dazzler

They say diamonds are a girl's best friend, so say hello to your new ally – *Faubourg Joaillerie* by **Hermès**. A total of 652 Top Wesselton VVS 'Extra white' diamonds dazzle in this exquisite watch turned jewel, delicately placed onto a canvas of white gold. Elegant with a light and airy feel, the stones are carefully set in a beautiful pattern on the 16.3mm case by nimble gemsetters. With this bejewelled timepiece, it's going to be a white Christmas indeed!



Garden of Gold

Capturing the style and glamour of the French Riviera, **Piaget's** Mediterranean Garden collection brings the elegance of the 1960s to the modern world. The timelessness of gold is celebrated by pairing it with exquisite gems, manifesting in elegant pieces. Yves Piaget's fascination with roses birthed the *Piaget Rose* while the clear blue waters of the Riviera are reflected on the *Twisted Gold* cuff with Paraiba tourmaline and blue sapphires.



Dainty Drops

Omega ventures into the feminine world with the *De Ville Prestige Dewdrop*. This wonderfully ladylike watch features dewdrop-shaped 18K red or yellow gold pieces that weave together to form a stunning jewellery bracelet. Available in 32.7mm and 27.4mm cases, the *Dewdrop* features diamonds on the bezel and dial. A white mother-of-pearl dial with butterfly motifs adds to the timepiece's femininity. Powering the larger timepiece is the Co-Axial Calibre 2500, while the other ticks on with the help of the Omega Quartz Calibre 4061. ■



Jewels of Fire

Carrera y Carrera draws inspiration from its fiery Spanish roots for its Origen collection. The collection of rings, necklaces and earrings are designed to represent fire as the key element in the creation of the world. In homage to the elements, diamonds, amethysts and prasiolites represent the earth, surrounded by scrolls that emulate flames of fire. The Spanish jeweller's signature matte-gloss effect on gold and organic shapes enhances the collection's spirited aura. Avant-garde with a vintage finish in white and yellow gold, the fiery pieces deserve a place on a woman who burns with passion.



“Emperor's Fine Jewels’ cheekily-named Boudoir Mayhem Collection features an intricately designed ring, hairpin, pendant and necklace with earrings set.”

MAJESTIC MAYHEM

Emperor's Fine Jewels debuts a collection that's bound to cause a commotion, but in the best way possible.

Who wouldn't want to be that person who turns heads, melts hearts and has everyone buzzing? That's no easy feat to accomplish but it's exactly what happens when you don Emperor's Fine Jewels' Boudoir Mayhem Collection. The cheekily named collection features an intricately designed ring, hairpin, pendant and necklace with earrings set. At the heart of the collection are Ceylon royal blue sapphires that are amongst the most sought-after gems in the world for their distinct deep intense blue combined with their high lustre. Ceylon sapphires are also amongst the oldest finds in the world, steeped in history symbolising celestial hope, protection, good fortune and spiritual

insight. Even the Duchess of Cambridge's famed engagement ring purportedly features a Ceylon sapphire, which is not surprising looking at the stone's unique colour, clarity and lustre.

Without a doubt, the *Boudoir Mayhem Hairpin* and *Ribbon & Bows Pendant* are the stars of the collection with their exceptional design. The *Boudoir Mayhem Hairpin* is an absolutely gorgeous hair accessory, perfectly complementing shining locks with its sparkle of pink and white diamonds set in 18K white gold. Suited perfectly for a chignon, it's an evocative piece, reminiscent of an English society soirée. One can almost smell the

cigars and cognac while picturing fair ladies in corsets and French lace. The *Ribbon & Bows Pendant* tell a different story, though. Delicate in its design of swirls, it's for the hopeless romantic who seeks a piece that's feminine and flirty. The bows somewhat resemble a butterfly daintily perched on a flower, albeit a magnificent flower of white diamonds, sapphires and 18K gold.

If you're seeking the perfect company for a gala dinner or even for an intimate date, the *Boudoir Mayhem Necklace* and *Earrings* are there for you. Yet again, the stunning Ceylon royal blue sapphires are exalted in these complex pieces. The gemstones are executed with finesse where the blue of

the sapphire looks richer when surrounded by brilliant cut white diamonds on a bed of 18K white gold. Cleverly handcrafted as a flat cuff, the necklace draws attention to the gentle slope of the neck where it sits gracefully. The neck, after all, is among a woman's best features.

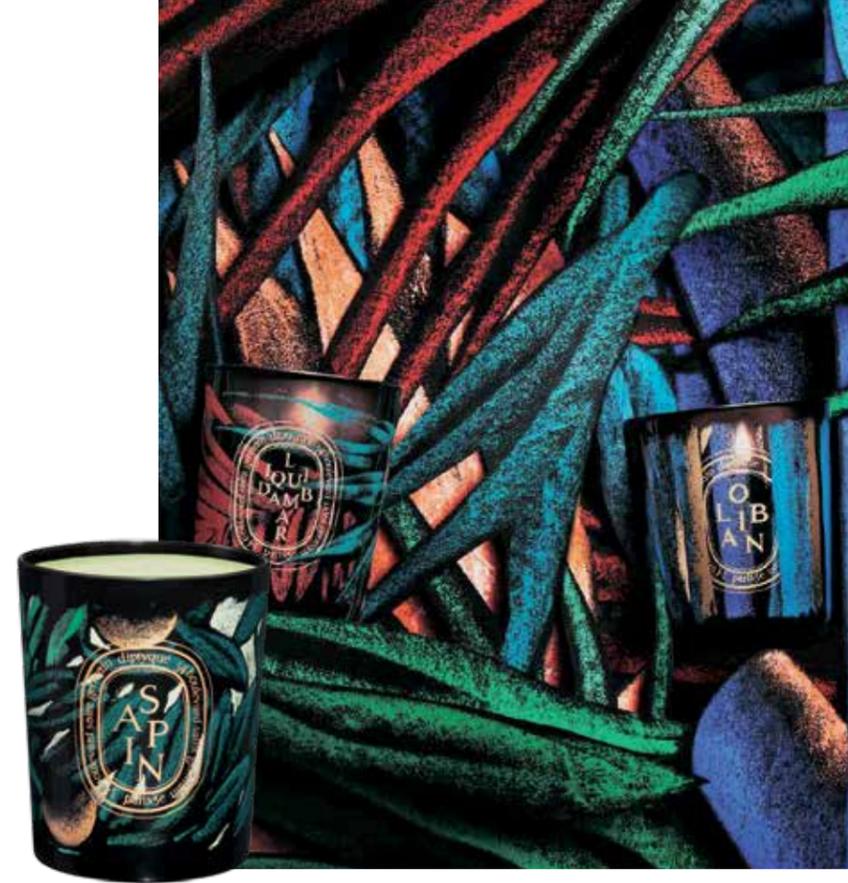
Though new to the jewellery scene, Emperor's Fine Jewels is certainly making a strong impression with top quality gemstones presented on an alluring canvas. These striking jewels, available at the Emperor's Fine Jewels boutique in Starhill Gallery Kuala Lumpur, is bound to cause mayhem both in the boudoir and out! ■

Let There Be Light!

Where there is light, there is cheer! Brighten your holidays with these illuminating pleasures.

Inner Light

It's not enough just to illuminate spaces this festive season, because you need to shine too. Let your face reflect your inner light with *The Illuminating Powder* by **La Mer**. This limited-edition shimmering pressed powder harnesses the sparkling power of gemstones and pearls to give your skin a luminous glow. Powder your nose and give a whole new meaning to the phrase 'light up a room'.



Light Of The Jungle

To brighten up this holiday season, **Diptyque** has launched three new candles inspired by nature – *Sapin*, *Liquidambar* and *Oliban*. This time, the perfume house has invited Julien Colombier, a painter dedicated to mysterious forests and enchanted jungles, to accompany it on this new sensory adventure. The limited edition collection focuses on delicate wood aromas that are highly evocative of the holidays during childhood. With its colourful exterior and heavenly perfume, these candles are certainly a fun addition to your home this season.



Joy To The World

Candles possess a magical ability to make everything it casts its light upon softer and more beautiful. It's the ethereal glow and divine scent that puts a smile on one's face, so celebrate that bliss with **Amouage's** *Joy* candle. This festive addition to the Midnight Flower Collection is a delicious blend of rose liquor, liquorice, milky coffee and amber notes. To spread more joy, a portion of the profits from this collection is donated to an organisation against animal cruelty. Joy to the world this Christmas, indeed! ■



Noël, Noël

For the holidays this year, **Annick Goutal** wants your home to be a warm and welcoming abode with its limited-edition candles. The latest additions to the Home Collection are the perfumed *Noël* and *Ambre* candles, resplendently decked in festive hues of gold and midnight blue. With notes of bitter orange and Siberian pine, the *Noël* candle is refreshing while the *Ambre* candle is a warm embrace of vanilla and patchouli.



Martin Yan's new TV series focuses on Malaysian cuisine.



YAN CAN TRAVEL

Malaysia has always proven to be a favourite destination for celebrated chef, Martin Yan. *YTL Life* catches up with the world-famous foodie in-between filming for his latest television series, *Taste of Malaysia*.

Text **Diana Khoo** Photography **Edmund Lee**

Who hasn't heard the famous quip, 'Yan Can Cook, So Can You' – the chirpy, encouraging dictum that's forever embedded in the culinary ethos of celebrated Guangzhou-born, US-based chef, Martin Yan? For many people outside of Asia, their initial experiences with Chinese food would, no doubt, have included watching Yan on television, where his *Yan Can Cook* show counts itself as one of the most popular cooking programmes to ever be shown on public television in North America as well as on the global stage. *YTL Life* catches the globetrotting gourmet for a quick chat during the filming of his latest series, *Taste of Malaysia*, which includes several episodes filmed at YTL Hotels' equally-celebrated resorts, particularly Pangkor Laut Resort and Tanjong Jara Resort in Malaysia.

You've been visiting Malaysia fairly regularly over the past few years. What have been the most outstanding memories to date?
It's impossible to pick because there are just sooooo many: the stunning natural scenery, the incredibly hospitable people and, of course, the great multi-ethnic cuisine. Maybe I should say that my most outstanding memory is something that still awaits me. That will keep me coming back to Malaysia again and again, and, if that is so, I will be the happiest travelling chef in the world.

What brings you to Malaysia this time?
We are almost finished with the *Taste of Malaysia* series. The wide scope of this 26-show series has made it necessary for us to make this a multi-part production. We are now on the home stretch.

Gaya Island Resort is YTL Hotels' newest Malaysian property. How did you like it?
I've been to Borneo and Sabah before, but have never stayed long enough to truly appreciate the natural wonders that make up the fabric of this part of East Malaysia. In so many ways, Gaya Island



Yan with Tanjong Jara Resort's Chef Ann during the filming of *Taste of Malaysia*.



Resort embodies the essence of Sabah, with its rustic beauty and abundance of indigenous wildlife.

You participated in a variety of activities at various YTL Hotels around the country. Can you tell us what each experience was like and how each hotel visit brought forward the spirit of the destination to you?

Each YTL property has its own unique way of integrating luxury with local elements. But the one thing that all of them have in common is that, no matter where it is located, guests are always made to feel totally at home. The entire staff sees to that personally and that is a much harder standard to reach than just providing your guests with new gadgets and spectacular views.

How different do you feel it is, compared to Peninsular Malaysia?

Since my visits to the Peninsula have often taken me to large cities such as Kuala Lumpur and Penang, my impression of the Peninsula is more urban. In Sabah, one gets more of the sensation of the unexplored frontier.

Are you more a fan of the beach or jungle?

Everyone loves the beach – myself included. I don't know much about jungles but a day in a rainforest is a truly unforgettable experience. The experience is multi-dimensional. It is also multi-layered, integrating sight, sound and smell.

What are your favourite seafood ingredients to cook with and why?

I have loved seafood all my life. I love all varieties, as long as they are fresh. Around Malaysia, I have been fortunate to taste some of the best and freshest seafood. As I said, it doesn't matter what they

are – lobster, shrimp, fish, squid – you name it. When it's fresh, it's going to be good.

Did you share or receive any tips from the chefs at the YTL properties?

I was so lucky to have the opportunity to work with two brilliant chefs from YTL. Chef Ann from Tanjong Jara Resort and Chef Wai of Fisherman's Cove are true professionals, and their creativity and imagination will take them far in the cooking profession. They were also kind enough to offer me tips and to share the stage with me and a few of their winning recipes. The best lesson I came away with is how we need to integrate local ingredients into every dish that we prepare. Eat local always!

What do you want the viewers to experience when they watch your new *Taste of Malaysia* programme?

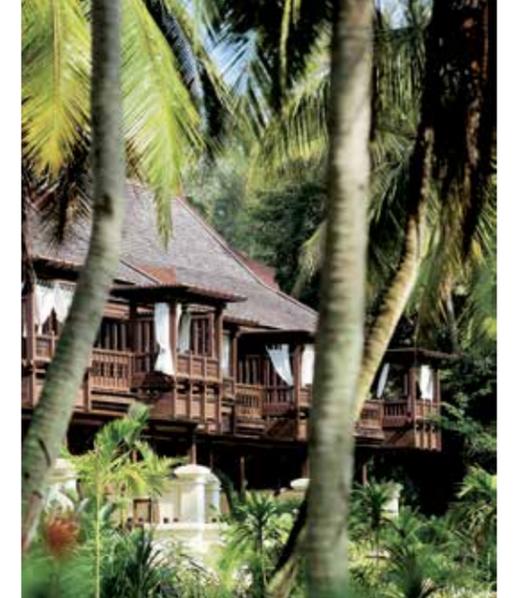
It's a pity that we haven't reached a point when technology will enable us to send the aroma of food through the TV monitors. I love what I have discovered on the Malaysia dining table and I would love my fans to be able to share that experience. But, more than food, I wish my viewers can share my experience of everyday living in this peaceful and harmonious country. Malaysians are irreplaceable. They are generous and warm, and I wish the whole world can see, feel and live that.



“Life is all about discovery. We have been endowed with a sense of curiosity...”



In the new TV series, Yan uses food and food culture to tell the story of Malaysia.



What's your idea of comfort food? What do you eat when you get back home, after a long time abroad?

I will share with you a secret known mostly to successful chefs. We all like simple things. Simple food. It makes sense. After sweating buckets for half a day in front of a hot stove, the last thing you need is to slave over the wok for another two hours. At home, I often prepare a simple dish of stir-fried Chinese broccoli or other leafy green vegetables.

When travelling for work, what are your absolute travel essentials, for the journey as well as for shooting?

A good sense of humour will come in handy anywhere. Oh, and insect repellent!

You also travel often to exotic, obscure locations. Any travel tips for the adventurous among us?

Do not hesitate when an opportunity opens up. Who knows, it could easily turn into a once-in-a-lifetime element.

Are there any places left on your travel wish list you've not been to?

In all honesty, there is only a small handful of places which have not experienced a *Yan Can Cook* footprint. I will, however, say that there are several places where I wouldn't mind returning to as often as possible. For instance, this morning, I wished I was waking up in a private villa on Pangkor Laut island.

Why do you think it's important to travel and experience new things and tastes?

Life is all about discovery. We have been endowed with a sense of curiosity, and we should explore as much as possible when we are given the opportunity.

If people were to ask you for advice when travelling to Malaysia, what would you tell them and why?

Only one word – GO! And when they get here, meet up with all the wonderful hosts, enjoy the breathtaking sceneries and taste the best food in the world, and then they will know why they came. ■

Tell us a little about the creation of this exciting new show. How did it all start?

I must give credit where it is due. The *Taste of Malaysia* project began with the grand vision of Tan Sri Dato' Sri Barry Goh, who had wanted to create a platform on which he could promote the best features of Malaysia as a harmonious, multi-ethnic nation. I came into the picture because using food and food culture as a storytelling conduit is a perfect fit to that concept.

How do you relax when you're not working?

I have learned a long time ago that the secret to a good life is to pursue your true passion. That way, what you do will never be work. And when it isn't work, you are always relaxed. I am fortunate to be able to make a living out of what I truly love, which is the culinary arts.

In The Footsteps of Legends

Athletic events and luxury rarely go hand in hand, but this was just the case at Pangkor Laut Resort, which recently hosted the preview of The Chapman's Challenge. **Weng Sheng Thong**, along with Malaysia's top triathletes and local Reebok ambassadors, discover some surprises along the way.

Photography **Edmund Lee & YTL Hotels**



The Chapman's Challenge features a 6.2km run and 1km swim amidst the luxurious settings of Pangkor Laut Resort.



A Legend Forged in the Fiery Crucible of War

The year is 1942 and there isn't a worse time to be a soldier of the British Army deployed to the Pacific Theatre of War. Malaya has fallen to the Japanese and the hasty retreat of defeated Allied forces had left many personnels stranded behind enemy lines. One of them was Lieutenant Frederick Spencer Chapman. Having being trained in the art of guerrilla warfare and jungle survival, Chapman wasn't one to back down from a good fight and, unlike many, willingly opted to stay behind to harass and hinder occupation forces. Here, he was joined by other surviving British soldiers and local resistance fighters, to form an ever-present thorn in the sides of the Japanese Army for three long years.

However, disease and fighting inevitably took their toll, and, by 1945, Chapman was the sole survivor of the resistance cell. With the noose tightening around him, Chapman decided his luck was running out and that now would be a good time to retreat. After putting a working radio together from stolen parts, Chapman managed to contact Allied forces involved in the liberation of Malaya. The *HMS Statesman* submarine was dispatched to rescue Chapman, but it would only be able to surface off the coast of Pulau Pangkor for fear of detection by the ever watchful Japanese. In the meanwhile, Chapman, who was already suffering from dysentery, malaria and all manner of foul ailments, remained stranded on the mainland.

Disguising himself as a Chinese labourer, Chapman was able to sneak past the

Japanese and reach Pangkor Laut Island. From here, he made his way through the untamed jungles of the island before reaching Emerald Bay, where he swam out to meet the *HMS Statesman* in the middle of the night and was finally rescued. In the later years of his life after the war, Chapman would then go on to pen *The Jungle is Neutral*, which chronicles his harrowing escape from Malaya.

It is stories like these, of ordinary human beings overcoming adversity against all odds, that have continued to inspire mankind since the dawn of civilisation. To ensure that Chapman's achievements are not lost to time, Pangkor Laut Resort has chosen to honour the soldier's feats of heroism with The Chapman's Challenge. As its name suggests, the challenge



recalls Chapman's daring escape from Pangkor Laut, and consists of a 6.2km road and trail run, and a 1km swim around Emerald Bay. The inaugural Chapman's Challenge is set to take place next year, from 13 to 15 May 2016, and, to ensure that everything goes as smoothly as possible, Pangkor Laut Resort invited a group of Malaysia's top triathletes and local Reebok ambassadors for a preview of The Chapman's Challenge.

The Great Escape

As any athlete will tell you, fuelling one's body with the proper nutrition on the morning of any sporting event is not something to be taken lightly. Thankfully, the breakfast spread offered at Pangkor Laut Resort's Feast Village was one of the finest I'd ever laid eyes upon. Options ranged from muesli, à la minute omelettes, freshly baked breads and pastries, juices and yogurts, and even *dim sum*. Following a breakfast fit for a warrior, it was time for battle. With the distance being only a 6.2km run and 1km swim, The Chapman's Challenge would be a different kind of race from what most long-distance athletes are used to. It wouldn't be a battle of mental

The inaugural Chapman's Challenge allows you the chance to enjoy a demanding sporting event while indulging in all the comfortable luxuries within Pangkor Laut Resort.



fortitude and endurance; instead, it was a contest of strength and speed.

From the moment the starting pistol banged, it was a sprint from start to finish. The first portion of the road run was manageable enough, although there were precious few stretches of flat ground as the route took us up and around the resort's hilly grounds. After zipping past Uncle Lim's Kitchen – named after its eponymous head chef who has spent the last three decades there – and the Spa Village, we were directed into the very same jungles Chapman ventured into to evade his Japanese pursuers.

As it had rained the night before, the already brutally steep terrain became all the more treacherous, having transformed into a muddy quagmire. All but the most seasoned trail runners had their pace significantly checked. To put the nature of these trails into perspective, where it would take normally an average person approximately two to three minutes to run 500m on a flat road, it took five times as long to cover the same distance in the jungle. With the trees closely surrounding me making it impossible to accurately gauge the distance I had traversed, it was indeed a relief when I heard the first sounds of waves crashing against the beach. It was now time for the final, and perhaps the most difficult, leg of The Chapman's Challenge: the 1km open water swim.

The first part of the swim was a gnarly battle against the tide despite relatively calm conditions. Had we done The Chapman's Challenge just one day earlier, the tides would have been much rougher and fighting through the surf would have been a messier affair. We were then directed to swim across the length of the bay and, as I no longer had to face the tide head on, I decided it was time to increase my pace. Slowly but surely, I began to close the distance with one of the veteran Ironman athletes in front of

me, probably by virtue of the fact he is at least twice my age. In the end, it was all about perseverance and, before you know it, I was back on the beach. From here, it was a short trot to the finish line, where I was soon greeted with a platter of cold drinks and freshly prepared coconuts by the helpful staff at Chapman's Bar.

This is, perhaps, what sets The Chapman's Challenge apart from the host of other endurance events out there. In a conventional marathon or triathlon, athletes usually have to fend for themselves after crossing the finishing line. However, participants of The Chapman's Challenge will find an environment that is decidedly more civilised. In addition to having a selection of refreshing beverages prepared for them, finishers also have the option of having a sumptuous, made-to-order lunch at Chapman's Bar, which serves a wide array of local and international dishes. After this, getting back to the main resort grounds is as simple as hopping onto the readily available shuttle service. It doesn't get any easier for athletes to reward themselves after taking on The Chapman's Challenge.

To The Victor Go The Spoils

When it comes to R&R, few do it better than Pangkor Laut Resort's Spa Village. While I don't usually indulge in such luxuries, after battling my way through the unforgiving jungle and sea, I felt I deserved it. And was I in for a treat. It began with the Bath House Ritual, which encompasses bathing and cleansing traditions from across Asia. After finishing a glass of ice-cold lemonade, we started things off with a soothing footbath followed by a brief Chinese Foot Pounding session, which is actually a lot nicer than it sounds as it stimulates lymphatic drainage and helps boost the immune system.

Following this, I was guided to the traditional Malay 'circulating' bath, where

the cold, crisp water provided immense relief from the humidity and mugginess of the afternoon. My therapist then led me to a cluster of bubbling cauldrons for the steam facial treatment. There are four different and unique invigorating scents provided, which are sure to awaken one's senses and cleanse blocked sinuses. From here, I proceeded to the Japanese bathhouse for some deep-skin cleansing with a *goshi-goshi* cloth before dipping into a heated *rotenburo* pool – an experience of pure bliss for my aching and weary muscles. After stepping out, I was led to the Chinese bath house for the signature Shanghai Scrub treatment, which consisted of a gentle exfoliating wash that left my skin as clean and soft as that of a newborn babe's.

Then it was time to top off the cherry on this very wonderful proverbial cake with a massage. The treatments offered include Thai, Shiatsu, Swedish and Malay, in addition to a combination of Malay and Thai styles, which was what I opted for. It brings together the best of both worlds, using a combination of heated herbs and scented oils to complement the gentle kneading of pressure points. It is no exaggeration when I say this was the most enjoyable and invigorating spa treatment I've ever experienced. Guests are, literally, treated like royalty, with the attention to detail and level of pampering being second to none. Finally, I was also gifted with the beautiful batik sarong, worn during the spa treatment.

All too soon, it was time to pack and board the ferry that would take us back to the mainland. Still, March 2016 is not so far away and it's more than likely that we'll be back for the official debut of The Chapman's Challenge. Should you wish to join us the next time round, I can assure you that the entire experience will be as good, if not better, than what I have described in this article. I hope to see you there. ■



“The Chapman's Challenge would be a different kind of race from what most long-distance athletes are used to.”

The Chapman's Challenge emulates the feats of Lieutenant Frederick Spencer Chapman, who led a group of resistance fighters in Malaya during World War II.

Registration for The Chapman's Challenge is now open at www.pangkorlautresort.com. The full package starts from MYR999 per night, with a minimum stay of two nights. The package includes scheduled speedboat transfers, daily meals, two race entries and post-race barbeque dinner at Emerald Bay.

Love, Actually

Misty mountains provide the perfect backdrop for this season's new romantics. Explore the look of love at the Cameron Highlands Resort in embellished ensembles, delicate colours and soft, flowing lines.

Photography Chuan Looi/Yipieyaya Styling Max Mak Hair Garrie Bobs/Shawn Cutler Makeup Sharman Yee/Plika Makeup Models Kateryna/Icon Model

Knitted sweater with embroidered flowers and skirt, Shiatzy Chen.



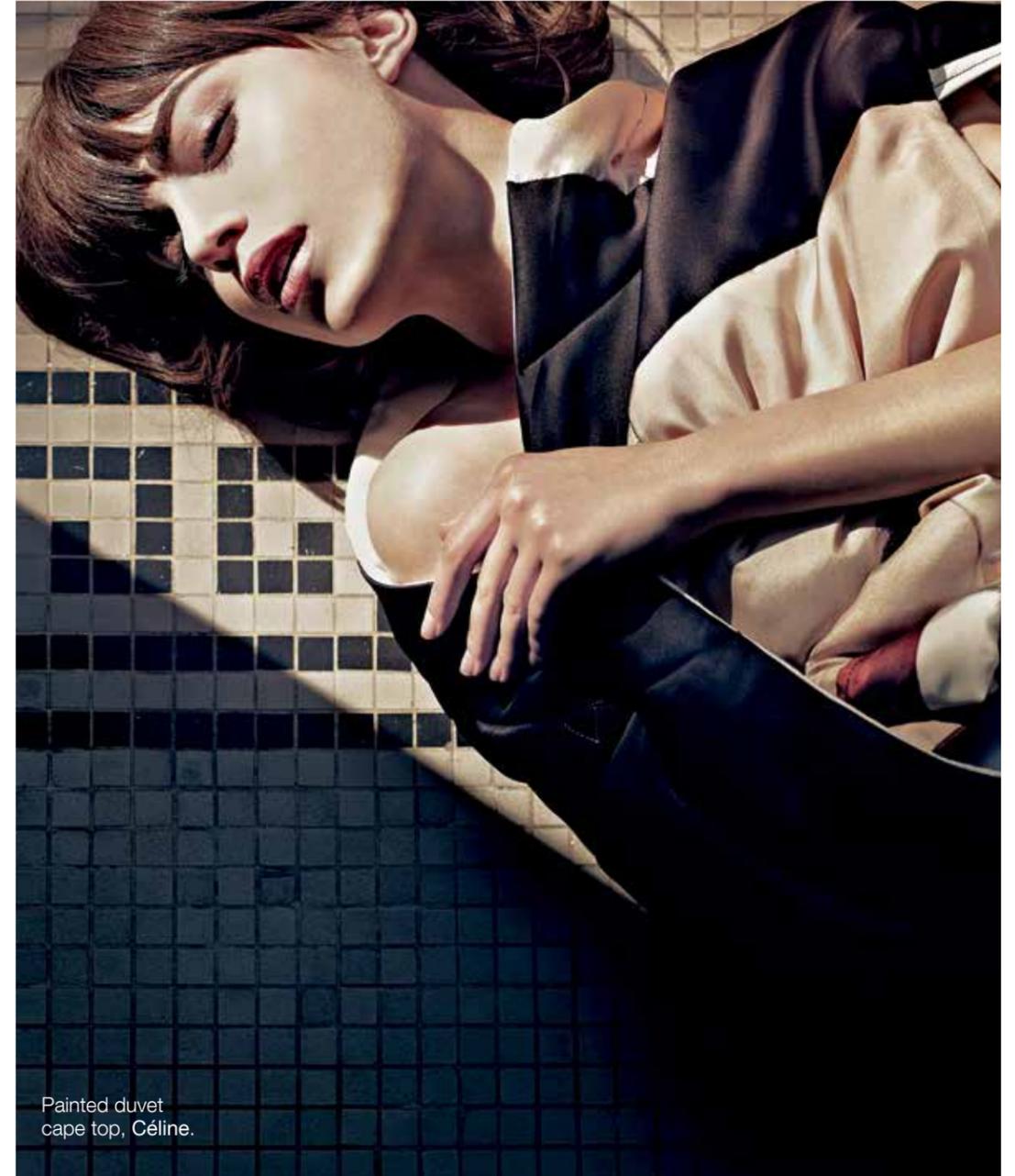
Turtle neck sweater,
fitted knitted dress,
M Missoni.



Kaftan with
embroidered bird
motif, fitted pants,
Khoon Hooi.



Oversized two-tone dress, gold clutch, Kenzo. Platform pumps, Céline.



Painted duvet cape top, Céline.

Pink organza
blouse, flora
printed skirt,
Shiatzy Chen.



Paint print
multicolour
fitted dress
McQ Alexander
McQueen,
Oversized trench
coat, Khoon Hooi





Maroon silk blouse
and flora printed
pant suit, Gucci.

Festive Fashion

With so many beautiful options, dressing up this holiday season is guaranteed to be a jubilant affair.



Haute To Trot

When the French meets the Flemish, the **Dior** Haute Couture Autumn/Winter 2015/6 collection is the exquisite result. In this collection, old masters of Flemish painting and artisanal maestros of haute couture influenced the drapery and silhouettes of historical sleeves and patterns. Luxurious and sensuous, the collection uses unusual techniques like intricate pleating systems of the *flo* in *crepe de chine* as inner linings for capes. Dior jewellery also finds a new home in the collection in the form of *Cannage* chainmail in gilets worn over garments, lending a warrior-like feel to the feminine pieces.



Bag It

Designed for the contemporary woman while celebrating her evolution, **Valentino's** Fall/Winter 2015/6 collection is a beautiful blend of old and new. Stealing the spotlight are the bags that come in a *mélange* of striking designs. The duality of women's roles is expressed through the use of contrasting colours in geometric shapes, while floral prints and butterfly motifs pay homage to her femininity. "Which bag is for me," you ask? All of them! Each is perfectly suited to your every mood.



Holiday Charm

This festive season, **Kenzo** wants you to look impeccably stylish while celebrating the holiday with the Holiday Capsule Collection. Long gone are the days of tacky Christmas jumpers with Kenzo's graphic design of architectural and text motifs. With the use of an eye as a print, it's a subtle yet clever indication that all eyes will no doubt be on your modern Christmas wardrobe.



Look Good Doing Good

Sergio Rossi has collaborated with Eco-Age, the brand consultancy specialising in sustainability, to launch the first-ever Green Carpet Collection of luxury accessories. Inspired by butterflies, the collection includes elegant evening shoes and matching pochettes lovingly handcrafted in Italy from locally spun and woven organic silk. Sustainable luxury materials of European chrome-free leather and lead-free Swarovski Advanced crystals are also used in the collection. Eco luxury has never looked so good. ■

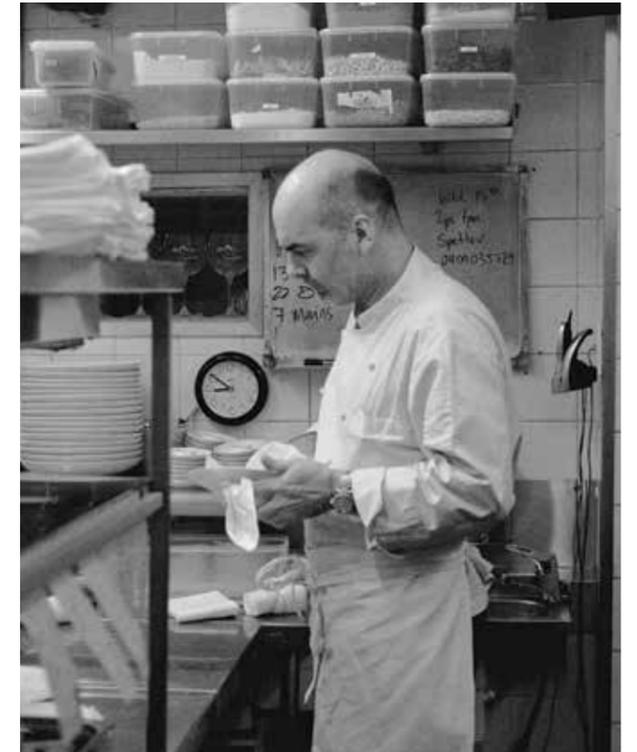
A Slice of Sydney, Please!

While the purists among us might consider Tokyo or Hong Kong as the frontlines for preferred gourmet destinations in the region, Sydney is fast gaining traction. Here are nine reasons why.

Text: Diana Khoo



life feature //



Marque

Where: 4/5 355 Crown Street, Surry Hills.

What: Mark Best's lovely, minimalist Surry Hills dining room is moody, subdued and restrained in its décor. But the food is anything but. One of Australia's most critically-acclaimed restaurants, Marque has received numerous accolades, including three hats (no mean feat) in the *Sydney Morning Herald's Good Food Guide* and *Restaurant of the Year* in 2011. It might surprise many that Best initially worked as an electrician in the gold mines of Western Australia. It was only after helping out at a friend's restaurant that he discovered he liked cooking. And the rest, as they say, is history. Today, no foodie's trip to Sydney is complete until dining here.

Why: If the sound of crispy Jerusalem artichoke skins topped with smoked salmon mousse and ocean trout roe, Fraser Island spanner crab with almond jelly, smoked eel with parmesan gnocchi and octopus with prawn custard and *witof kimchi* (a veritable *umami* party on the palate, this dish has to be tasted to be believed) is music to your ears, there's no further need to ask why. Marque's resident sommelier is also intuitive and adventurous. Work with him to ensure each stunning dish finds a worthy oenological match to elevate the evening to an even greater high. We sampled a very fresh Viognier Nouveau to a crazy, fragrant Riesling as well as a deliciously intriguing red made from a blend of Rondinella and Corvina grapes

From left: Sydney is a serious mecca for food and drink enthusiasts. Superchef Mark Best heads two of Sydney's best restaurants, Pei Modern and Marque.



Coogee Pavilion

Where: 169, Dolphin Street, Coogee.

What: Almost right on Coogee Beach, this bright and breezy beachside destination bar is the perfect place to head to for delicious cocktails, tasty tapas-style treats, inspired by the Eastern Mediterranean, and a vibe that is pure Sydney: sun-kissed skin on show, salt-tinged air and, provided you choose the right place to sit, all the beauty of the surf and bronzed bodies in your line of sight.

Why: Sydney wunderkind Justin Hemmes' creation (he isn't known as the 'Bar Czar' for nothing) is the perfect base at which to spend a whole day out. Think along the lines of a beach club but friendlier and more family-oriented. You can play ping-pong, petanque or Scrabble on a giant magnetic board with the kiddos on the ground level as well as get a treat for the topper – gents can get a haircut while ladies may opt for a blowout. There are fresh-cut flowers to buy as well as an in-house theatrette and opportunities for caffeine shots. The Rooftop, however, is where the PG-18 fun is to be had. The balcony offers the best views of the shoreline and is the perfect place to tuck into charcoal-grilled bites, like salted pork neck skewers, charred harissa-dusted octopus and blistered padrón peppers, with something spiked, tall and cold waiting by your side. Our pick? *The Pavilion Piña Colada!* Life's a beach, indeed.

Pei Modern

Where: Four Seasons Hotel at 199, George Street.

What: It might be a Melburnian import but Mark Best's Pei Modern demands your attention. And rightfully so. Architectural aficionados would appreciate the name, in honour of the great IM Pei, who designed the latticework at the original Pei Modern at the Sofitel Melbourne, which opened in 2012. Best's Sydney outpost isn't even a year old but it's already winning accolades from all who dine here. Meals begin with fresh-baked sourdough and hand-churned butter but if it's real taste of New South Wales you're after, dive straight into a platter of Clyde River rock oysters served atop a bed of samphire paired with tangy, flavourful Cabernet Sauvignon vinaigrette. And if you've ever lusted after the dazzling meats on display at the carnivore's dream that is Victor Churchill's, order the whole Holmbrae chicken (one of their bestsellers), served complete with head and legs.

Why: Best places a lot of emphasis on using, pardon the pun, only the best ingredients so expect to be wow-ed by a host of other good things, many locally sourced, like the Milly Hill lamb shoulder cooked in chamomile, beef tartare with local sea urchin, duck egg Sauternes custard and an incredibly refreshing sorrel sorbet with honeycomb and meringue. One of Best's favourite quips is "too much yummy". After dining here, you'd know how he came up with it.

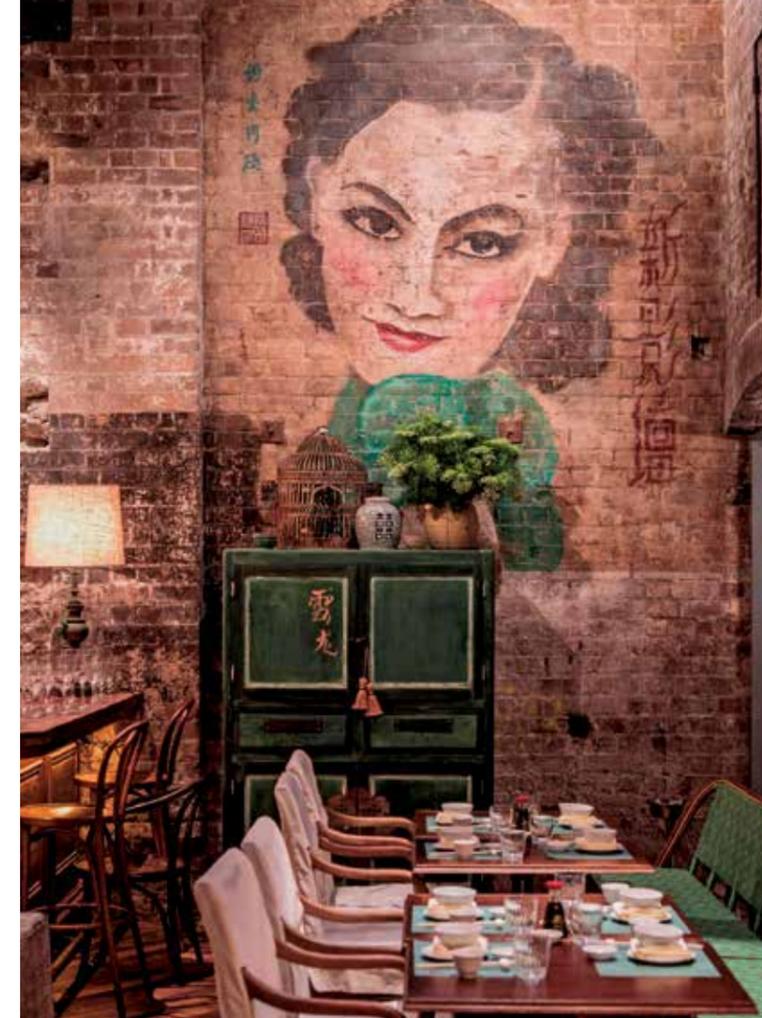


Mr Wong

Where: 3, Bridge Lane.

What: Tucked away, it takes determination to find Mr Wong. But if you're stumped, simply perch yourself at a suitable vantage point along Bridge Street and wait for it. Inevitably, a gaggle of beautiful people will be seen making their way into or emerging from a narrow alleyway. That's the cue to follow the Louboutin trail that'll lead you to Mr Wong – a dreamy, colonial-inspired dining room that evokes Suzie Wong, Hong Kong *tai-pans* and a Wong Kar-Wai movie all at once. Imagine a 1920s Shanghai-style speakeasy and you'd have nailed the feel down pat. Yum cha culture is also alive and vibrant in Sydney and, really, Mr Wong is the only place to consider. Its *dim sum* selection is unrivalled and, if you're feeling particularly peckish, the rows upon rows of glistening roasted ducks, all gleaming and gorgeous through glass windows, would let you know that a banquet worthy of an emperor may also be had amidst the gorgeous interior, a former nightclub-turned-oriental tea room and resto par excellence.

Why: Etymologists have long known the story behind *dim sum*. Legend has it that a great general, moved by the heroism of his soldiers, sent parcels of small baked pastries and dumplings as a reward and token of his esteem. This act, stemming from the Cantonese words for 'to touch one's heart', is now forever linked to the ritual of *yum cha*. So, if you're hankering for basic *har gow* and *shu mai*, there are, of course, several other places to consider. But, if you're looking for innovative parcels of pleasure (if you're really serious about touching one's heart, you should always endeavour to do it in style), Mr Wong is your go-to *dim sum* destination. To truly enchant your guests, be sure to order the crispy fried Balmain bugs with spicy salt, wild mushroom dumplings, prawn toast with foie gras and almonds and the snow crab *xiao loong bao*. Another dish that stood out was the bamboo leaf-wrapped black and white rice rolls with abalone and snow crab. Pair your dumplings with Mr Wong's clever cocktails, featuring drinks that represent



"Mr Wong is a former nightclub-turned-oriental tea room and resto par excellence, and the only place in Sydney for *dim sum*."



Clockwise, from above: Sino-style at Mr Wong; Pei Modern's clever and delicious cuisine; Pei Modern has been winning accolades since its opening; Mediterranean-inspired nibbles at Coogee Pavilion.



David Chang's Momofuku outpost in Sydney offers guests the full experience of the chef's creativity.

different Chinese provinces via fruits, herbs or spices unique to the region, like the tea-infused *Yunnan Negroni*, which gives a distinctively Chinese twist to the famous aperitif.

Momofuku Seiōbo

Where: The Star at 80, Pymont Street.

What: Consider yourself a *momofuku* (lucky peach) if you get to dine in this rock-erific outpost of international chef-restaurateur David Chang. Named in honour of the Shinto goddess of immortality, the link between Momofuku Seiōbo and the heavenly queen is her celestial garden, in which a peach tree grows. Legend has it the tree blossoms only once every 3,000 years, producing one perfect fruit – the peach of immortality – which bestows eternal life upon the one who bites into it. While creating the nectar of immortality is impossible, even for the multi-talented Chang, diners at Momofuku would at least be satiated by a meal of divine proportions. Although the restaurant seats around 40 people, only 18 lucky ones will get to sit at the counter, in plain view of all the kitchen action. And, despite its tranquil name, this Pymont dining room is fashioned more like a rock star's canteen, with framed pictures of AC/DC on the walls. Forget about ordering here as the 10-course tasting menu is the only way to go, which offers guests a 360° experience of Chang's creativity, fusing technique and texture, star-rated ingredients and an East-meets-West flavour. What stood out on our visit? An ethereal

cep floss toast with hazelnuts, morsels of wagyu with salted black beans and radish that resembled the Malaysian dish of fruit *rojak*, roasted partridge with seaweed-crust ednive and Chang's take on the Hong Kong *pau* but filled with ewe's curd and rose syrup.

Why: If you've been craving for Chang's signature pork buns, you have to agree that the eight-hour flight to Kingsford Smith is far more tolerable than to JFK. Also, Momofuku Seiōbo's wine list guarantees a dining experience to remember. After all, any restaurant with Jacques Selosse on the menu deserves applause. So, don't sit back (the bar counter chairs have short backrests and are pretty high) but, instead, sit up, focus and ready the senses for a trip to remember. After you're done, go ahead and duckwalk out *à la* Angus Young (guitar is optional). None of Momofuku's team will judge you. Heck, they might even cheer you on.

Le Petit Flot

Where: Level 2, The Tank Stream Hotel, 97 Pitt Street.

What: Sydney's latest go-to spot for the culinary cognoscenti is this darling new restaurant and wine bar in the heart of the historic Tank Stream district. It got its unique name from the nearby Tank Stream, a fresh water tributary of Sydney Cove,



while it also means 'little ripples' or 'stream' in French, perfectly tying in with the dining room's French-inspired cuisine. The area is also very historical as it sits on the site where the first convict arrivals to Sydney dug their first-ever fresh water well. Today, there are guided tours available for those who want to visit and see where the stream still flows on through. For those who come for the food, though, do know you're in for a gustatory experience. With Le Petit Flot's concept and menu conceptualised by the talented Malaysian-based Japanese-born chef, Takashi Kimura, long celebrated for his unique take on cuisine using Japanese ingredients prepared *à la Française*, the restaurant also emphasises on using the best seasonal local ingredients, sourced from the *crème de la crème* of Sydney's purveyors, including gourmet butcher Victor Churchill, artisan baker Sonoma and De Costi's for nonpareil seafood. The kitchen itself is headed by the young and talented Jun Wong, truly a star-in-the-making. The dining room seats 80 pax while another 20 may be accommodated in the deli, for more casual nibbles.

Why: To know Le Petit Flot is to love Le Petit Flot and, surely, a quick once-over of the menu is enough to send you scurrying to secure a table post-haste. The menu does feature bold streaks of Kimura's Franco-Japanese flourish, which may be detected in a dish of lightly-cured Saikou salmon with salted egg yolks and red *shiso*, decadent prawns heads, battered and fried till crispy and served on skewers, lightly anointed with a dusting of Aonoriko salt and, perhaps the main reason to dine here – the cold angel hair pasta studded with Amaebi sweet prawns and the unforgettable *umami* kick of truffle *konbu*. *Oishi!* You betcha, mate.

Sepia

Where: Darling Park, 201, Sussex Street.

What: Having just been awarded the 'One to Watch' in San Pellegrino's World's 50 Best Restaurants 2015 list, Sepia offers what is one of Australia's most gracious gourmet experiences. The food is exemplary, naturally, but the service is remarkable – friendly, flawless and good enough to still have me beaming several months after dining there. Headed by Martin Benn and Vicki Wild, both of whom met while working at Tetsuya's, dining here is like being in a dream, with each course or glass of wine unfolding in a series of thoughts, images and sensations, except that Sepia throws in flavour, which may range from caress-like to positively explosive, texture, creativity and an innate sense of intuition as to what would please, excite and thrill the palate that very moment.

Why: There are many reasons why one must dine at Sepia while in Sydney. Apart from the impeccable service, terrific ambience and marvellous wine list (among the stellar names, there's also Tesseron cognac, an extensive selection of saké and no less than seven expressions of Kracher), it is, ultimately, Martin Benn's cuisine that seals the deal as sweetly as a noble



Martin Benn heads the kitchen at Sepia, which offers one of Australia's most gracious gourmet experiences.





The iconic Icebergs offers sweeping views of Bondi Beach.



Peter Gilmore letting the ingredients shine at Quay.

Sauternes. It's not often that a palate cleanser is mentioned so prominently but Sepia's is unmatched – a perfect 'pearl' filled with gingerade and finger lime, and paired with *yuzushu* that's served 'smoking', only to be cracked open to reveal taste sensations at differing temperatures. Chef Benn's reverse *nigiri sushi* is also not to be missed – a genius starring of kingfish, *aburi* smoked ocean trout and poached Queensland banana prawns. I also almost swooned over the butter-poached Port Lincoln squid with barley-miso cured egg yolk and the Yasa caviar-topped smoked bone marrow with horseradish leaf and cream. Our mains featured a charcoal-grilled David Blackmore *wagyu karubi* topped with Tasmanian samphire, giving Victor Churchill devotees a reason once more to rejoice. *Oish!* Oh, yes. Sepia also only offers two menus – both fixed; one offering the full 10-course monty or a no-nonsense four. But, just as size matters, length does too and, trust me, you'd regret not making time or stomach space for the other, each one-a-masterpiece, six courses.

Icebergs

Where: 1, Notts Avenue, Bondi Beach.

What: Quintessentially Sydney, this iconic venue sums up all that we love about the city in one elegant swoop. The views are unrivalled (imagine sipping champagne while watching, to steal a line from Helen Macdonald, "the pointsource glitter on the waves" or perhaps the surf crashing onto the landmark Bondi Baths), the food delicious and the vibe, languorously laidback with an insouciant elegance about it. The food is Italian-inspired and it's really a great way to while away an afternoon in this sea-loving city, knocking back a Ciroc-spiked *aperitivo* or ordering a third bottle of bubbles while keeping energy levels up (who knows? You might just want a quick dip in the outdoor ocean pool or go surfing later) with platters of Hazelgrove oysters from Pambula Lake (judged Australia's best) or creamy burrata with Sorbello tomatoes. If your schedule permits, Sunday brunch is a near-perfect way to soak up the Icebergs experience. Book a table by the louvered windows before sitting down to champagne, Osetra caviar and classic brunch favourites like hot smoked Petuna ocean trout with *crème fraiche* and a sinful, earthy frittata studded with porcini mushrooms.

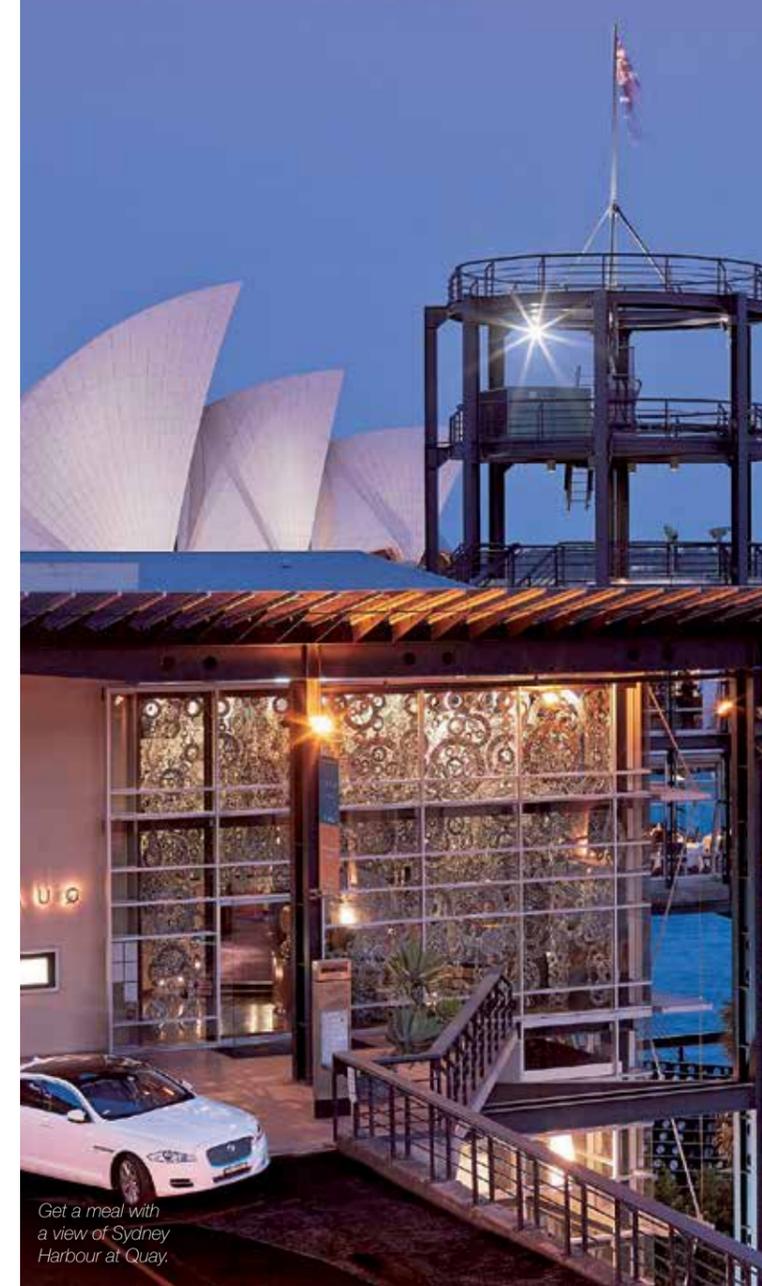
Why: There have been some grouses about Icebergs – from its designer-centric crowd to fusses over the menu. But none of that matters, really, when you're basking in the sun, watching the oceanfront activity below, with a glass of something tipsily tasty in hand. And if you're feeling cheeky and want to up the luxe experience by more than a few notches, ask the waiter to bring the wine list over again. Since the atmosphere all around is shimmering, the drinks should be likewise. There's Cloudy Bay's yummy Pelorus, for those feeling patriotically Antipodean, to a 1983 Salon 'S' *cuvée*. However, if an oligarch is shouting the next round, there's no better time to order the 1995 Clos d'Ambonnay by Krug. A snip at AUD10,175.

Quay

Where: Upper level, Overseas Passenger Terminal, The Rocks.

What: Peter Gilmore's lauded dining room has several things going for it. Firstly, his reputation as one of Australia's greatest chefs is not unfounded. Secondly, given the country's reputation for fresh, top quality produce, it's safe to say Gilmore's philosophy of letting the ingredients shine is a sound one. Thirdly, a meal with a view is fine and dandy. But imagine a near-holy trinity of the Sydney Harbour and its iconic opera house and bridge to look out onto, in-between courses? No one would fault you if you let the conversation lapse a bit just to stare and stare.

Why: Gilmore is known for his *métier* in 'embracing nature's diversity to achieve a sense of balance and purity through produce, technique, texture, flavour and composition' – note the order. Hence, it isn't surprising that some of Australia's most talented and passionate *providores* supply to Quay. A quick look at the line-up is like a Hall of Fame of farmers and growers – Anthony Puharich of Victor Churchill for beef and poultry, Paul Lee for artisan Asian ingredients and Tim and Elizabeth Johnstone of Johnstone Kitchen Gardens for bespoke veggies – although Chef Gilmore is known to incorporate edible flowers from his own garden as well. Several dishes stood out during my visit, including my first-ever non-Asian congee – made with mud crab, heart of palm and egg yolk emulsion – that's been a starring dish of Quay for over a dozen years. The taste of contemporary Australia can also be detected in a dish of young northern bamboo shoots served with black-lipped abalone, eggplant and smoked eel, Flinders Island lamb with native coastal greens and raw smoked Blackmore *wagyu* with fermented rye crisps. And no one leaves without trying Gilmore's signature Snow Egg, whose icy filling reflects the season (ours was cherry granita). Cold play? At its best, we say. **W**



Get a meal with a view of Sydney Harbour at Quay.



DINE & STAY

When it comes to finding a place to stay in Sydney, you can't do better than the Sydney Harbour Marriott, located in Circular Quay and a breath away from both the Harbour Bridge and the city's iconic Opera House. Choose from 595 perfectly-appointed rooms and don't forget to make special arrangements if you want a room with an unforgettable view. Gourmets would also appreciate the hotel's proximity to the best of Sydney, including Peter Gilmore's Quay Restaurant, just a short stroll away, as well as all the liveliness of The Rocks district, with its F&B options and colourful weekend markets.

Gaya's Magnificent Seven

Nature lovers are in for a treat at Gaya Island Resort when they go in search of the island's seven flora and fauna wonders.

Text **Kim Inglis**

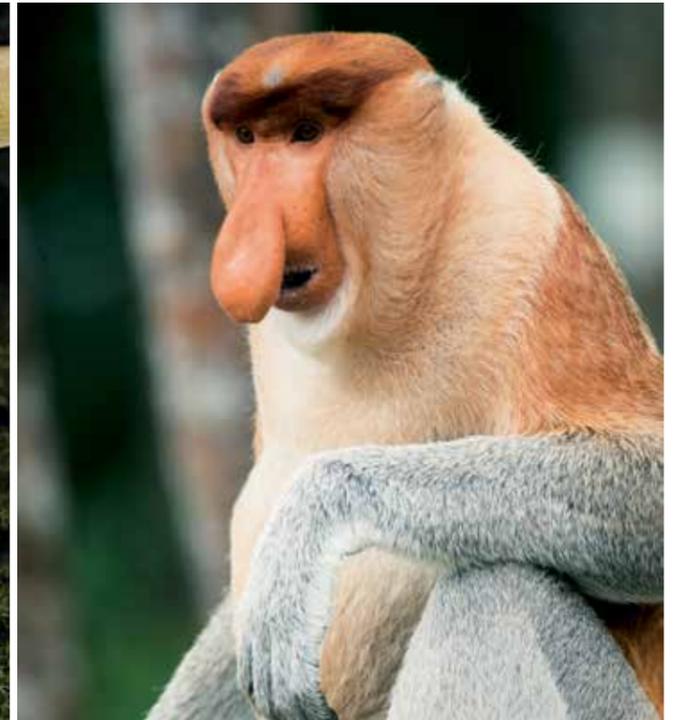
First came the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World — a list of antiquities that included, amongst others, the Pyramids at Giza and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Then came a number of more contemporary lists, cataloguing the world's most spectacular natural sites and manmade structures. Extraordinary locations such as the Great Wall of China, Stonehenge and the Grand Canyon featured. Now, however, there is a list that outlines the Seven Wonders of Gaya Island Resort, off the coast of Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, Malaysia.

If this sounds a tad ambitious, think again. Sometimes, what is on your doorstep can elicit as many 'oohs' and 'ahs' as an internationally acclaimed historic or environmental treasure. And small can be as great as big — as I found out on a recent weekend stay at the luxe, yet eco-friendly, resort.

I'm walking along one of three trails in Gaya Island's interior with my husband and two of the resort's resident naturalists, Justin Juhun and Jamie Era, attempting to spot one or more of these marvels. We have a list that includes two types of monkey, a couple of unusual botanicals, a flying squirrel, amongst others (see sidebar



Nature lovers will find plenty to explore in the rainforest that surrounds Gaya Island Resort.



“Daily nature treks are one of the highlights at Gaya Island Resort, a destination that has impeccable eco-credentials.”

Clockwise, from above: Gaya Island Resort's resident naturalist Justin Juhun has documented 16 species of mammals so far on the island; there are 25 dive sites that snorkellers can enjoy around the island; a Borneo angle-headed lizard; fungi to catch the eye; there are around 100 proboscis monkeys on the island.

on page 88) – but we're getting sidelined by any number of other species. Who would have thought there is so much to see in what looks like a silent, mysterious blanket of green?

There's the outer casing or exoskeleton of a cicada still clenching tightly to a leaf; a tiny jumping spider with a single white stripe down its back; a Borneo angle-headed lizard, a muscular chap with a prehistoric look... he's just next to my foot; another lizard darting at insects on a slim branch; and any number of interesting botanic species. We inspect areca palms bearing the nuts used in the once-ubiquitous mild stimulant with slaked lime wrapped in betel leaf; long, arching branches of rattan bearing lethal spikes; a massive *Shorea gibbosa* tree trunk dripping resin used for varnishing furniture; and plenty of fungi, including a bright orange agaric mushroom that has sprung up overnight and is correctly identified by Justin as *Agaricus crocoseplus*. There is no shortage of flowering species too, a cymbidium orchid being the leader in my book.

And all around is the tropical rainforest, peculiarly quiet yet totally alive, with a pulsing lung that is literally keeping our planet alive. Dense, lush, munificent, it's estimated that at least five million species live in tropical forests. In this patch, Justin has documented 16 species of mammals so far – and he believes that there are probably more – and numerous plants, trees and birds, of course.

Daily nature treks are one of the highlights at Gaya Island Resort, a destination that has impeccable eco-credentials. Set within

the boundary of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park on land that was largely undisturbed by the building process, there are no buggies or on-site laundry facilities. Instead, there is an aircon system that powers the heating of water, a desalination and water recycling programme, and restaurants that serve only line-caught fish. The resort prides itself on spearheading environmental research on the island and in its surrounding seas, and imparting some of the knowledge gleaned to guests as well.

“When we arrived at Gaya Island prior to the resort opening in 2012, we realised there is lots of nature here that we don't have at Tanjong Jara and Pangkor Laut, our two other flagship Malaysian resorts,” explains Resort Manager, Kirinjit Singh. “So, we decided to invest in research, publicise these unusual species that are endemic to the island and educate the general population on conservation.”

Such has been the success of the conservation policies – caring for and adding to the coral near the hotel jetty; rehabilitating injured species both marine- and land-based, then re-releasing them back into the wild; extending the island's mangrove forests; propagating an *Excoecaria indica* grove in order to attract a critical mass of fireflies; collecting flora and fauna specimens for further research – that Sabah Parks' personnel now work closely with the resort's naturalists on both conservation and education policies. Visits to local schools and talks on the environment are weekly events. This is a huge boon to guests like myself who are interested in the natural world. In addition to the first-class dive

and marine research centres, a nature centre is being planned, which will further the guest experience. Justin has already built an observation platform for viewing monkeys and birds deep within the forest, and a trip to the resort's private beach at Tavajun Bay is more than likely to result in a sighting of wild boar. Birders will not be disappointed either: Borneo has a count of 622 resident birds, with 32 endemic species, and, during my stay, I spotted some hornbills, a lovely grey heron fishing off one of the jetties and numerous smaller species.

The sea surrounding the resort is no less spectacular. With a choice of 25 dive sites and plenty of snorkelling above shallow coral reefs, conditions couldn't be better. We went on a snorkelling trip some 15 minutes' boat ride from the resort and found the underwater world totally magical: a large variety of soft and hard corals, plentiful populations of reef fish, including a small black-tip reef shark and a Moray eel, and only a little current. A Dive Master from the resort's dive centre is cautiously optimistic about the Marine Park's progress in the eight years he has been diving here. He notes an increase in pelagic populations (larger fish usually only found in open seas) and says that, even though litter is a problem, it is less problematic than when he first arrived.

Back on land, the jungle beckons again. The resort occupies only 35 per cent of the 75ha of land allocated to YTL Hotels, so there is plenty of green to explore. With three trails of varying difficulty and private tours easily arranged, longer-staying guests do have a good chance of spotting some – if not all – of this island's Seven Wonders.

Seven To Spot

For guests with a special interest in the natural world, Gaya Island Resort's Seven Wonders programme is both a challenge and an education. "We crafted something special for guests who are staying for a long time," explains the resort naturalist, Justin Juhun. "We wanted them to have a list of things that are unusual, but not necessarily easy to find or see."

Proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*): Tourism Malaysia's mascot for 2012, this reddish-brown arboreal Old World monkey is endemic to Borneo. Justin estimates that there are around 100 such monkeys, known for their long noses and pot bellies, on Gaya Island. A specially built observation platform has been constructed within the resort's 75ha of rainforest to give guests a chance to spot this unique primate.

Red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*): Living in hollow trees more than 25m above ground, resort personnel have built an artificial nesting box to attract this elegant mammal that can glide up to 75m from tree to tree. Guided evening walks allow guests to spot this 'flying mammal' as it travels from one branch to another foraging for food.

Wild boar (*Sus barbatus*): A bearded pig found in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, this large mammal has bred very successfully on the island, so much so that park rangers are now trapping some of them and

shipping them to the mainland. An almost guaranteed sighting is to be had at Tavajun Bay, where these gorgeous, bewhiskered beasts forage for tubers, fallen fruits and the occasional guest lunch!

Boobook owl (*Ninox scutulata Borneensis*): When one of the resort's maintenance team found a two-month-old boobook owl, abandoned and alone on the ground, he immediately took it to Justin. Rehabilitation included teaching the juvenile how to forage, feed and fly, and, even though the little bird had wormed its way into everybody's hearts, it was re-released into the wild when fully grown. After a month or so in the resort vicinity, it obviously felt confident enough to head into the jungle to find a mate! Guests are unlikely to see the *Ninox* now, but an evening sighting of a boobook is certainly possible.

Twilight firefly (*Pteroptyx sp*): Establishing a firefly habitat is a work in progress, as staff members experiment with seed planting of the main host plants, *Excoecaria indica*. Seeds planted in early November

2014 are thriving well in their chosen habitat, but it will be about six to seven years before flowering and fruiting take place. It's only then that fireflies will be attracted to the nectar for protein ingestion and nesting in the foliage.

Elephant foot yam (*Amorphophallus paeoniifolius*): A bizarre-looking plant that boasts the world's largest un-branched inflorescence is one of Borneo's gems. Many seeds have been collected and planted within the resort grounds – but this is another long-term project as maturity (and flowering) comes only after six years or so.

Mangrove (various species): Tending to, and extending, the resort's 100-year-old natural mangrove cluster on the shore behind the spa is another long-term project, but enjoying what the area has to offer now is easily arranged. Kayaking through these 'green caves' is a sublime experience: expect to see mangrove crabs, oriental pied hornbills, monitor lizards and many other species while enjoying the peace and calm found here. ▀



Clockwise, from left: Boobook owls; elephant foot yam; wild boar; proboscis monkey.



The Tao of Tara

Need a little more motivation to dust off that yoga mat? Perhaps a weekend jaunt to the tranquil paradise that is Pangkor Laut Resort will inspire you to get your *om* on. Here's what reigning international yoga sensation Tara Stiles has to say about her blissful stay during Wellness Week.

Text **Maya Michael** Photography **Edmund Lee**

Just three hours away from the bustling city of Kuala Lumpur sits a small island along the Straits of Malacca known as Pangkor Laut. A former refuge for local fishermen, sailors, merchants and pirates, this island is now home to a five-star luxury resort that draws in hundreds of locals and tourists to explore its serene surroundings. Pangkor Laut Resort offers mouth-watering cuisines, pampering spa sessions, exciting watersports, educational jungle treks and even a secluded beach to gallivant about all day.

With such a plethora of activities available, it was only natural that the resort would be selected to conduct a special wellness

retreat known as Wellness Week. Organised by Reebok, *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, dozens of yogis from all walks of life journeyed to Pangkor Laut to participate in an exclusive yoga workshop helmed by none other than world-renowned yogi and Reebok Global Ambassador, Tara Stiles.

Yoga Rock Star

Once deemed by *Vanity Fair* magazine as 'the coolest yoga instructor', this former fitness model has certainly come a long way from her early days of posting yoga videos online. "I started back in 2006, which was around the same time that YouTube was released," says Tara. "My idea back then was to reach out to those

who weren't familiar with yoga. The thing about most people is that even if they want to start, they're not sure how to go about it."

When not conducting classes at her studio in New York or brainstorming on funky new designs for her yoga collection with athletic attire giant Reebok, the 34-year-old prefers travelling around the world to broaden her horizons. "I love meeting different people and experiencing different cultures and cuisines. I'll usually go where the locals are and observe the surroundings. I especially love it when nature is involved, which is also one of the great things about Pangkor Laut Resort – you're just surrounded by nature here."



The 'coolest yoga instructor', Tara Stiles, was in Pangkor Laut Resort recently to conduct an exclusive yoga workshop.

"I've been to Malaysia before, but this is the first time I've visited Pangkor Laut. I remember arriving and just feeling blown away by how beautiful everything is here. I was put up in one of the Sea Villas and

it's an amazing experience, especially when you're being still and listening to the sound of the waves smashing against the giant rocks. I never knew what it felt to be completely relaxed until I arrived here," she explains.

Moving With The Times

One of the other reasons behind Tara's constant travelling is to promote 'Strala'. For the uninitiated, Strala is a yoga movement that was founded by Tara in 2008, which focuses on making yoga fun, open and accessible. "The thing about yoga is that there's really no need to learn or do everything within a certain time period. You can do it for the rest of your life," says Tara, whose list of avid followers includes best-selling author Deepak Chopra, iconic actress Jane Fonda and pop music sensation Madonna.

When asked for advice on yoga, Tara says: "There's this common misconception about yoga that you have to look a certain way in order to perfect a pose. This can be incredibly stressful for some people, which is the opposite of what yoga is all about. If something doesn't feel good, it's perfectly fine to try another variation of the pose. The best thing is to just move based on how you feel instead of trying to keep up with everyone else."

Such a dogma-free approach certainly comes across as a refreshing change, especially for those more attuned to traditional forms of yoga. With a background in choreography and ballet, Tara gracefully flowed through each pose without skipping a beat as the dozens of participants – ranging from first-timers to advanced yogis – hung on to her every word.

Despite the relatively fast pace, there was still plenty of time to take in the serene surroundings during the freestyle portion of the session, wherein participants were encouraged to practise their own moves. Despite occasional stumbles by some participants, Tara's calm presence and jovial demeanour made the entire session felt less daunting and, by the end of it, there was a feeling of complete relaxation and energetic comradery.

Finding Balance

Besides yoga and travelling, Tara's other major passions include simple pleasures such as knitting and reading. "I've just picked up *The Google Story*, and it has really opened my eyes on how I can further expand Strala. Now that I'm managing more people, I want to ensure that all the right decisions are made but still remain compassionate towards the people I work with. A lot of the books from this genre tend



"This is the first time I've visited Pangkor Laut. I remember arriving and just feeling blown away by how beautiful everything is here"

to encourage readers to follow their gut instincts and go with the flow, which I find to be very similar to what Strala is all about."

Tara also happens to be the author of two top selling books: *Slim Calm Sexy Yoga* and *Yoga Cures*. Her recently released third book, *Make Your Own Rules Cookbook*, highlights the joys of preparing food that not only nourishes the body but also the soul. "It's a cookbook that will feature various recipes that were shared by the people I met during my travels – but with a healthy twist. There's also a couple of Malaysian recipes in there such as *chee cheong fun* (rice noodle rolls)."

With so many ongoing projects on her plate, it can be hard to envision how Tara actually finds the time to do it all. "My publishers are constantly urging me to keep going, but I've realised that I need to pace myself – the last thing I want to

do is to burn out," she says. It is then that Tara is reminded of a quote shared by one of her biggest inspirations and dearest friends: Tao Porchon-Lynch – a veteran yogi who studied under the renowned Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar.

"She's about 96 years old, yet she still makes it a point to practise yoga every day. She has such a youthful spirit, almost like a teenager! Her favourite saying is, 'Don't procrastinate. Do what you want to do today.' Hopefully, I'll be just as happy and energetic as her once I reach that age." ❖

Experience the wonders of total wellness at Pangkor Laut Resort, a luxurious oasis with scenic views, unique accommodations, amazing dining options and the award-winning Spa Village. Visit pangkorlautresort.com for more information.

BEND IT LIKE TARA
Here are the top yoga poses that Tara Stiles recommends for ultimate wellbeing.

WARRIOR II:
"This a great pose to start off with because it not only lets you feel your body but also taps into your inner strength and energy."

TREE POSE:
"Not only does it help to improve your balance, it's also very relaxing."

EAGLE POSE:
"It's really good for loosening up any tight shoulder muscles. I recommend adding this to Tree Pose for that little extra challenge."

MAGIC AMONGST THE MANGROVES

Flanked by the mystical Mount Kinabalu and the shimmering waters of the expansive South China Sea, cocoon yourself in the sybaritic sanctuary that is Spa Village Gaya Island.



It's hard not to fall in love with Sabah. Although it's known to Malaysians as *negeri di bawah bayu* or 'land below the wind', it really should be called 'the land which has it all'. The country's second largest state (the first is neighbouring Sarawak), Sabah received its moniker from seafarers of bygone times, due to its geographic location, just south of the region's typhoon belt. Its capital is Kota Kinabalu – a colourful city that pulsates with the buzz and hum every Asian city seems to possess innately. Weekends see Gaya Street come alive with a celebrated open-air market, while the locals go about their business in a languid, carefree way, speaking a dozen dialects – from Kadazandusun to Rungus and Bajau – all at once. Not far away is Jesselton Point, the traditional hopping-off spot to the quintet of islands closest to Kota Kinabalu, comprising of Gaya, Sapi, Manukan, Mamutik and Sulug.

Those in the know would instinctively head for Gaya, where the Gaya Island Resort, a little jewel of nature, is almost hidden away amidst the island's lush natural jungle. Accessible only by the resort's fleet of private speedboats, the resort offers immediate intimacy with nature. The island itself has been protected as part of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, which comprise the aforementioned quintet of islands, since 1974 and is actually a sprawling paradise, surrounded by deliciously emerald waters. It is said to take its name from the Bajau word for big – *goyoh*. Although we prefer to believe it stems from the Malay word for style (*gaya*), which is almost palpable, given YTL Hotels' reputation for carving out luxurious resorts all around the world.

Gaya Island is part of a quintet of islands that make up the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park

Many guests come to Gaya Island to escape the madding crowds of everyday life. Here, amidst laidback luxe and natural splendour, it is easy to slip back into a kinder,

gentler pace of life, where decisions revolve around: to laze by the private beach of Tavajun Bay or the glistening swimming pools; to sip on fresh-cut coconuts or a minty Mojito with lunch; or to spend the day sun-worshipping or cocooned in the award-winning spa. The latter, though, it must be said, is almost irresistibly tempting. Nestled amidst a small mangrove forest on one side of the resort, Spa Village Gaya Island is a beautifully crafted oasis in Malohom Bay that seamlessly blends in with the lush nature, yet offers all the tranquillity and elegance of a world-class spa. Wooden decks, spacious gazebos and glass-walled treatment rooms beckon you to step in, away from the sun, as a therapist quickly hands you an icy towel and a refresher made from guava, pineapple, lime and green chilli, known simply as 'the elixir'.

Although a wide and varied spa menu invites you to try each and every one listed, one not-to-be-missed treatment would be the indigenous massage called *Urutan Pribumi*. Drawing inspiration from the local healing traditions of the multiple tribes that inhabit Sabah, this deeply therapeutic massage was traditionally used to restore the vim and vigour of the menfolk, who spend their days farming, at sea or, way back when warfare was a way of life, in battle. Here, guests will first be asked to select their oil of choice. Choose from *Clearwaters* (a mixture of sage and mint designed to help one de-stress as well as to release tension), *Coconilla* (a yummy blend of coconut and vanilla that's deeply relaxing), *Island Spice* (using ginger and ylang-ylang to energise) or *Mountain Forest* (whose top note of lemon is a great detoxifier).

After you make your selection, follow your therapist as she leads you along a wooden walkway, past mangroves rich with the sound of nature. Over 40 species of birds, including



Spa Village Gaya Island is set amidst a mangrove forest in Malohom Bay.



Massages begin, first, with a frothy foot soak and scrub.



OTHER TREATMENTS TO TRY

Tadau Kaamatan – A couple’s treatment that honours the element of rice, which is sacred to most communities in Asia. This includes a body scrub, avocado and coconut hair masque, massage, and a honey and avocado seed facial.

Deru Laut – Inspired by the traditions of the seafaring Bajau people, this marine-inspired spa journey involves a sea bird’s nest body wrap, a facial incorporating Sabah’s famous pearls, a seaweed hair masque and a seawater bath.

Rolling Waves – This deeply relaxing and rhythmic massage mimics the ocean’s waves to transport your mind and body right to the water’s edge, while also releasing deeply held muscular tension and stress.

Borneo Vanilla Orchid & Honey Cocoon – If you’re all out to be a glowing beach goddess, this is the treatment for you. Get buffed with yoghurt and crushed vanilla pods, followed by a vanilla honey hair masque and a full body massage using delicious-smelling Coconilla oil.

migrating birds during the northern hemispheric winter, call Gaya Island home. According to Justin Juhun, the affable resident naturalist, some of the more commonly spotted ones include the white-chested babbler, scarlet-backed flowerpeckers and black-naped monarchs. Part of the cacophony of sounds might also include the buzzing, rasping and clicking of innumerable insects, frogs and lizards – all part of nature’s glorious orchestra.

Before your massage begins, get into the right frame of mind with, first, a frothy foot soak, coupled with a quick shoulder massage, after which your feet will be scrubbed with a paste made from ground ginger, chilli, black pepper and sea salt. Once you lie face down for the journey towards bliss to begin, your therapist will proceed to use soothing yet invigorating strokes to reach deep down into the layers of muscles to provide relief, relaxation and, finally, rejuvenation and restoration. This technique of massage is also aimed at boosting circulation, while releasing countless therapeutic benefits via the age-old art of healing via touch.

As you waft away on a cloud of wellness, it is sometimes easy to forget that Spa Village Gaya Island also offers yoga, stretching as well as guided meditation. If you do take up this chance to commune with nature while working on raising your self-awareness, you might find a unique peace enveloping you as well as a heightened sense of clarity and purpose. After all, we, each of us, are born in nature and part of a beautiful world, formed by the divine. Looking around at all the natural beauty and bountiful life that surrounds you in this magical part of Borneo, you can’t help but know the divine is all around. ▀

Spa Village Gaya Island is located at Malohom Bay, Gaya Island, Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.



THE ISLANDER

Ross Sanders, General Manager of Pangkor Laut Resort, shares with *YTL Life* some of his favourite things about living in paradise.

One & Only

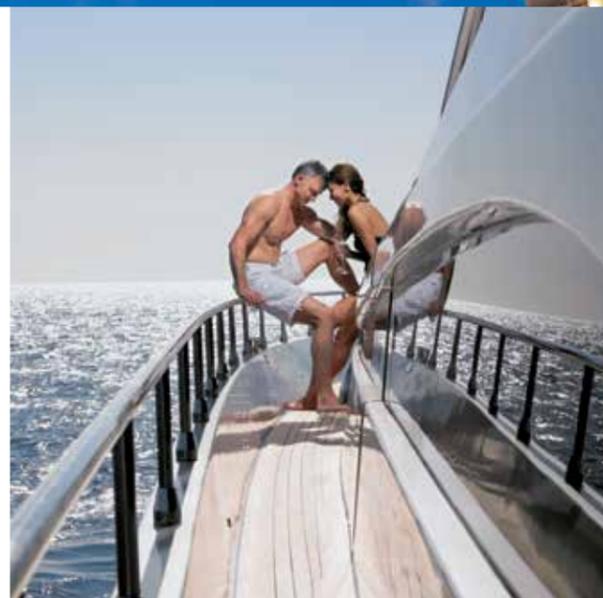
As you already know, Pangkor Laut lives up to its tagline of 'One Island, One Resort'. To be able to have stewardship of this beautiful, 300ac island is something not many resorts can match. Also, it's truly an unbeatable pleasure to unwind amidst the sense of pure privacy Pangkor Laut affords you.

Buy It Like You Mean It

As General Manager, I often find myself hosting VIP guests and the media for dinner, and I find that the one experience that always guarantees a 'wow' result is having dinner on Emerald Bay. It's a delicious pleasure enjoying the best food, wine and service, while digging your feet deep into the bay's soft, grainy sand.

There's No 'I' In 'Team'

I count it a great privilege to work with an incredible team of people who take such great passion and pride, day in, day out, to ensure each and every one of our guests leave the island resort with a specially-crafted memory and continue to return... again and again.



life moments //

The Man Called 'Uncle'

The legend of Uncle Lim is as real as it gets on Pangkor Laut. Uncle Lim (below), after whom our award-winning Chinese restaurant is named, has been thrilling the palates of our guests for over 30 years. He is a truly remarkable man and an example we, all of us, could learn from. Everyone on the island greatly admires, respects and loves Uncle Lim, as do the thousands of guests he has cooked for over the years – and still does, even at the grand old age of 81. He is a one-of-a-kind man who truly makes Pangkor Laut Resort such a special place to work in, not to mention visit as a guest. My favourite dish of his, however, has to be his special roasted duck, prepared in truly authentic style!



In Cruise Control

Again, just like the first glimpse of the island when arriving by speedboat, I can never tire of going on a sunset cruise around Pangkor Laut. There's always something new to see, and each experience is unique and tremendously enjoyable. I particularly love seeing the island from the top deck of our traditional Chinese junk, while gently cruising along with a cold drink in hand. It's hard to describe the feeling of being surrounded by the most amazing scenery while sea eagles soar overhead. You have to experience it for yourself. Also, finishing the cruise at Emerald Bay, just in time to catch the egg yolk-like sun dip into the Straits of Malacca, is always a genuine pleasure.



Estate Of Grace

One truly special experience on Pangkor Laut Island would have to be a stay at our exclusive villas – the Estates at Marina Bay. I always enjoy showing guests around the Estates and seeing their reactions as to how incredible architecture can seamlessly blend in with the rainforest and sea in perfectly private and luxurious harmony.



Cleansing Waters

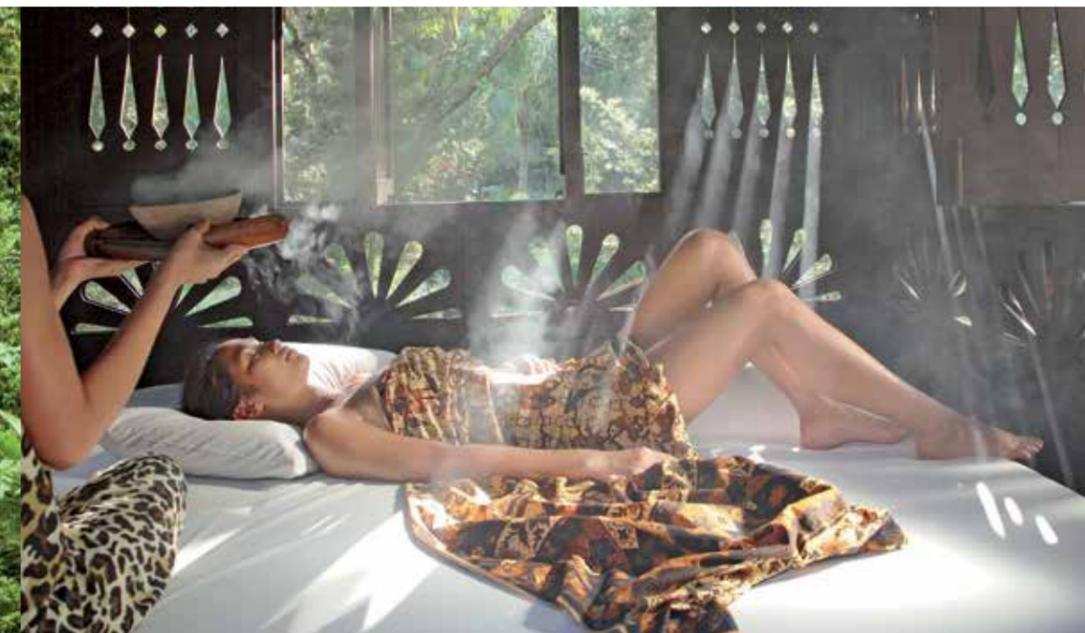
No guest should miss our spa's completely unique Bath House experience. Any treatment booked at Spa Village Pangkor Laut will be preceded by this beautiful journey that takes you through ancient bathing styles inspired from cultures around the region. I am also currently partial to the *Tui-Na An Mo* massage offered, due to its healing benefits. Here, the therapist places special focus on accu-pressure points and the directional flow of the energy channels in the body. It's not exactly relaxing but it will leave you feeling realigned and reenergised for sure. 🌿

Green Peace

One of the outstanding features of Pangkor Laut (and, believe me, there are many), would undoubtedly be the spectacular ancient rainforest around which the resort is situated. The surrounding jungle is also a precious sanctuary for no less than three endangered species – the Great Hornbill, the pangolin and the Malaysian flying fox – all of which can be spotted daily. I'd highly recommend going on a guided walk with Aris, our resident naturalist. It's a 'must do' activity for anyone wishing to learn more about Malaysian flora and fauna.



Nature, in the shape of the rainforest surrounding the resort, is one of Pangkor Laut's outstanding features.



Sun Salutation

One of my favourite aspects of island life has to be my early morning walk to breakfast, just when the sun is rising over the hills of neighbouring Pangkor Island. It's a special time when you hear the hornbills just beginning to call loudly in the trees. I also enjoy observing and participating with all our staff who greet our guests with huge smiles and lively 'Good mornings'. Throw in the awesome variety of food that's ever-changing at our live action buffet stations at the resort's Feast Village and I can't think of a better way to start your day, surrounded by such positivity!



Ross Sanders is General Manager of Pangkor Laut Resort.



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DISTINCTIVELY BORNEO



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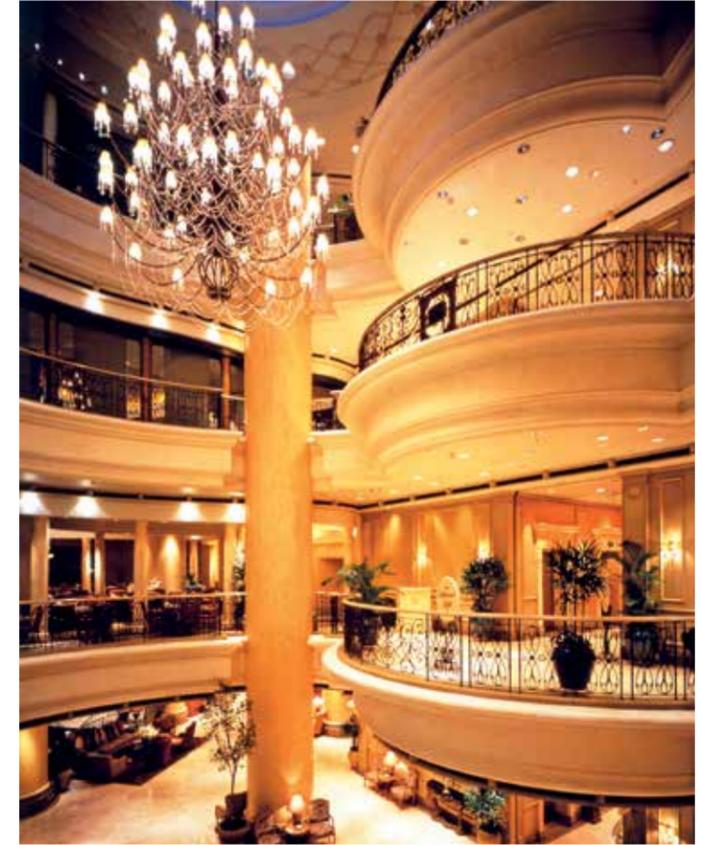
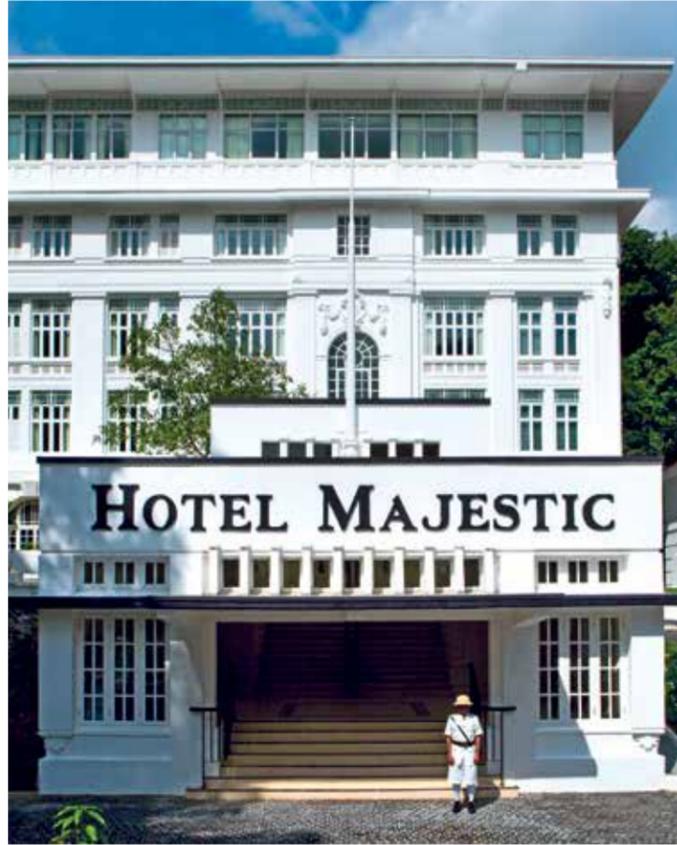
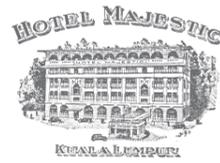
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Always in Season

KASARA
NISEKO VILLAGE
TOWNHOUSE



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WWW.NISEKO-VILLAGE.COM

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

THE
GREEN *gb* LEAF
Niseko Village



Located in the heart of Niseko Village in Hokkaido, Japan, this premium contemporary resort offers guests a seamless experience of stay, snow and ski. Goshiki offers a wide range of flavours to suit every palate while après-ski drinks are best enjoyed at the contemporary Tomioka White Lounge.
www.thegreenleafhotel.com

THE SURIN
PHUKET



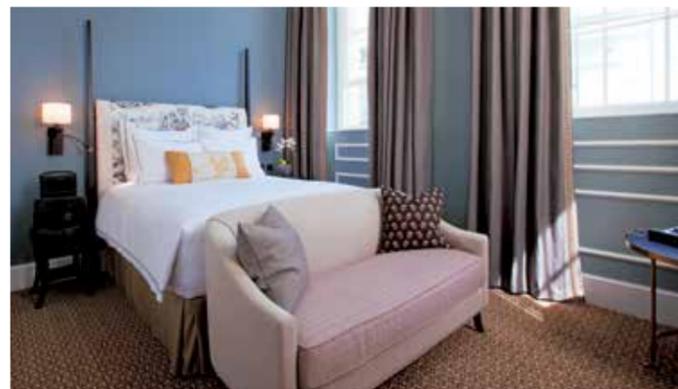
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SPA VILLAGE PANGKOR LAUT



SPA VILLAGE CAMERON HIGHLANDS



SPA VILLAGE MALACCA

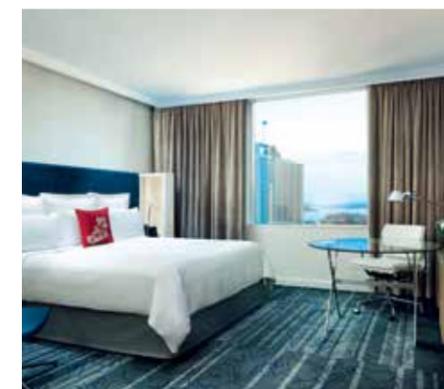
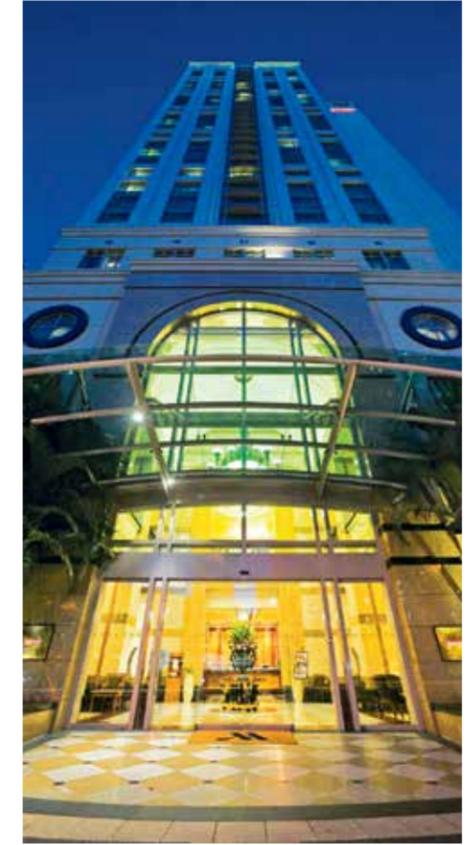
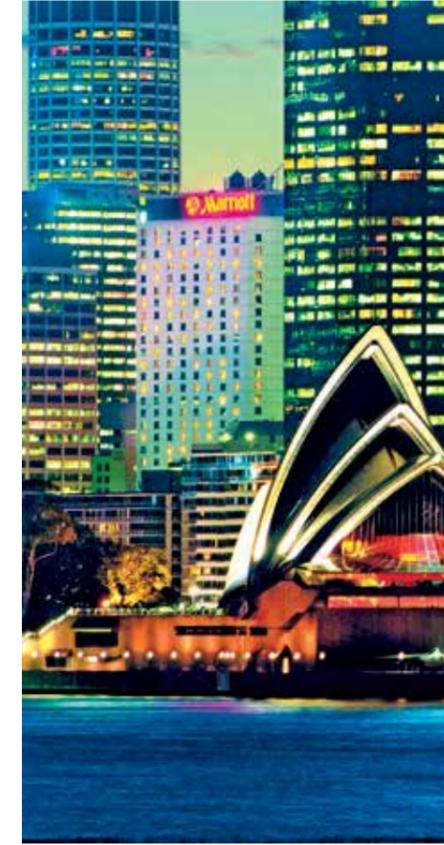


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SHOOK! SHANGHAI OCCUPIES THE PENTHOUSE FLOOR OF THE SWATCH ART PEACE HOTEL, A RENAISSANCE-STYLE 1906 HERITAGE LANDMARK ON THE BUND. THE CELEBRATED RESTAURANT FEATURES A SHOW KITCHEN WHERE SIGNATURE DISHES FOR FOUR DIFFERENT CUISINES ARE CREATED AROUND THE SENSES, FLIRTING WITH SEASONAL TRENDS.
WWW.SHOOKRESTAURANTSHANGHAI.COM

CHOICE IS THE KEY WORD WHEN IT COMES TO DINING AT SHOOK KL AND LOT 10 HUTONG. THE FORMER OFFERS FOUR CUISINES FROM FOUR LIVE KITCHENS, INCLUDING ITALIAN, JAPANESE, CHINESE AND THE GRILL, WHILE THE LATTER IS THE DE FACTO DESTINATION WHEN IT COMES TO ENJOYING THE BEST OF MALAYSIAN STREET FOOD UNDER ONE WELL-FORMED ROOF.
WWW.STARHILLGALLERY.COM
WWW.LOT10HUTONG.COM

EACH AUSTRALIAN MARRIOTT HOTEL IS SITUATED WITHIN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT OF ITS CITY AND IDEALLY POSITIONED TO SERVE BOTH BUSINESS AND LEISURE TRAVELLERS ALIKE. THE 563-ROOM SYDNEY HARBOUR MARRIOTT IS SET IN THE HEART OF CIRCULAR QUAY, OVERLOOKING ICONIC LANDMARKS THE HARBOUR BRIDGE AND OPERA HOUSE. THE 186-ROOM MELBOURNE MARRIOTT IS CLOSE TO THE CITY'S THEATRE PRECINCT, THE SHOPPING DISTRICTS AND CHINATOWN. THE BRISBANE MARRIOTT, WITH 263 ROOMS AND 4 SUITES, IS SITUATED BETWEEN BRISBANE'S CBD AND THE FORTITUDE VALLEY HUB, CLOSE TO SHOPPING, RIVERSIDE DINING, AND THE CITY'S CORPORATE AND CULTURAL LOCALES.
WWW.MARRIOTT.COM

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