

YTL *life*

The YTL Luxury Magazine

Bray Hooray

The Best of Berkshire
and Its Surrounds

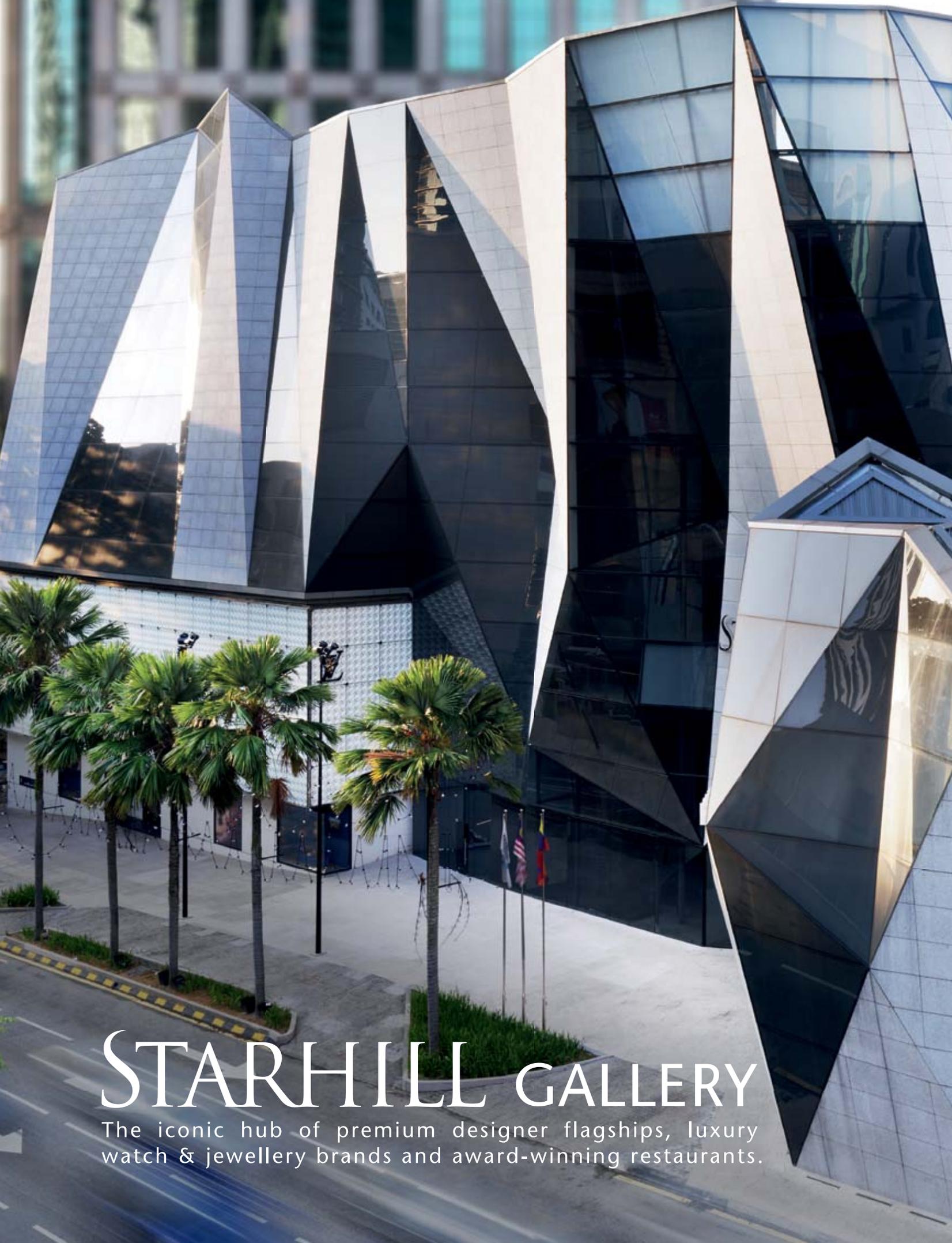
East Coast Allure

Turtle-Watching in
Terengganu

Summer Lovin'

Stylish Diversions
in Saint-Tropez

London Olympics 2012 • Onsen Experience • Climbing Kinabalu



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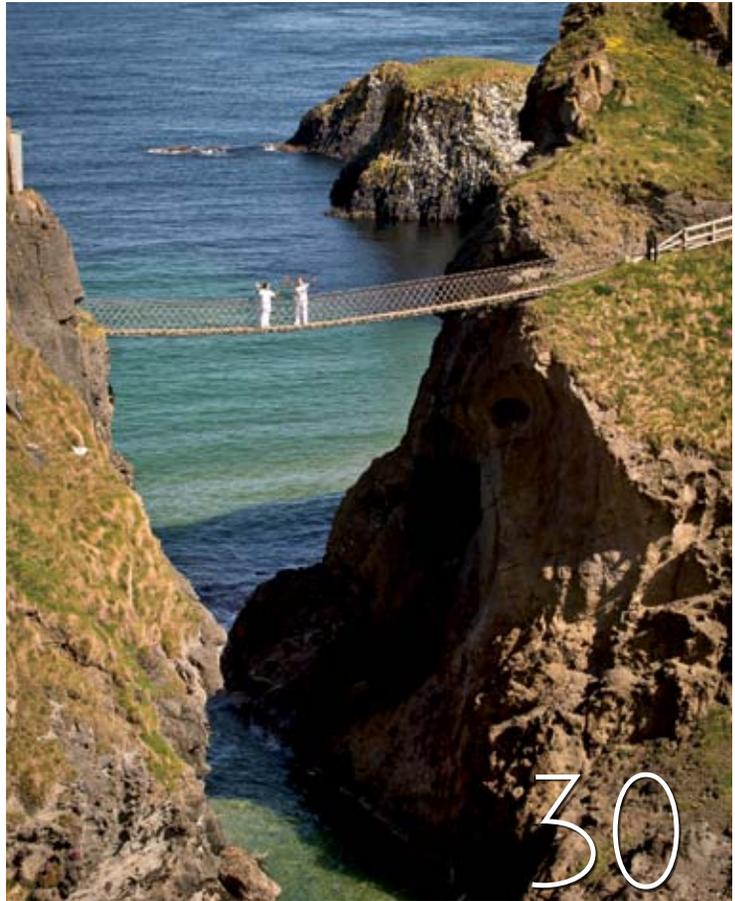
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The YTL Luxury Magazine

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A Note from Tan Sri (Dr) Francis Yeoh



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

It's high summer in Europe and few pleasures can compare with enjoying a well-deserved break, wherever in the world you may be. Certainly one of the key events this season is the 2012 Summer Olympic Games, taking place, for the third time, in London. Having previously hosted the Games in 1908 and 1948, it will be a fitting culmination to months of festivities, as seen in the grand celebrations of HM Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee. While London is not without its great attractions, I've always loved the English countryside. YTL Hotels' Bray House in the gastronomic village of Bray on Thames in Berkshire takes centrestage in this issue of *YTL Life* and showcases, not just what to eat, but also what to see and do in the vicinity.

Just a short flight away from London is the picturesque French Riviera, where yet another of our properties, the Muse Hôtel de Luxe, is located, this time in the glamorous village of Saint-Tropez. When we launched the property in 2010, it was an instant hit, quickly acquiring numerous distinctions, including making *Condé Nast Traveller UK's* Hot List 2011 and *The Sunday Times'* "20 Hottest New Hotels in Europe". Surrounded by all the luxurious distractions which capture the essence of the glorious and wonderful lifestyle offered by the Cote d'Azur, I think there's no better place to base yourself for your summer vacation on the Riviera. Closer to home, we are also proud to announce the opening of our first property in Borneo – Gaya Island Resort. The island is covered in a lush tropical forest, surrounded by coral reefs and features a golden sands beach fronting the Resort. Less than 35 percent of the Resort's 40 acre area is being developed, and its construction uses techniques that preserve the natural environment.

So, whether or not you choose to spend every afternoon at Saint-Tropez's famous beach clubs, in London to cheer on your favourite athlete during the Games, or even exploring the wonders of Borneo from our latest gem on Gaya Island, this promises to be a summer to remember.

God bless and enjoy the issue.



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Power Down for Nature

Recently, up on the verdant Rooftop of **Lot 10**, a couple of hundred people gathered to celebrate Earth Hour 2012. It was an evening which rekindled the magic of nature, with **YTL Corporation Berhad** powering down on non-essential lights, not just at Lot 10, but across its 36 properties and subsidiaries around the world. This year, the organisation went the extra length to observe not just an hour but 90 minutes of Earth Hour, cutting down on an estimated 1,398kg of carbon emissions in 15 of its properties across Malaysia-Singapore – an amount that translates into almost 8,290 hours or 1,040 working days of computer usage. Alongside this year's Earth Hour theme, 'I Will If You Will', YTL Corporation put on an energy-efficient show to entertain and inspire members of public gathered, with a mini petting zoo, a tribal fire show, a hypnotic percussion performance by **Tugu Drum Circle**, and local artists **Bo Amir Iqram** and **Diandra Arjunaidi** taking turns to thrill the crowd.

1. Joseph Yeoh, Vice President of YTL Hotels & Resorts and YTL Land, Yulia Dolmatova, General Manager of Starhill Gallery, and Ralph Dixon, Director of Environmental Investments, YTL Corporation. 2. An eco-dining experience with special menus was held at the adjoining Teeq Brasserie, with guests dining by candlelight and enjoying views of the city skyline. 3. Evian supported YTL Corporation's observation of Earth Hour 2012 with sponsorship of mineral water for the evening. 4. Bo Amir Iqram serenading the gathering with his unique brand of singing and guitar-picking. 5. The fire show included fire-eating and huge flames, drawing gasps from onlookers. 6. Alexander Krasnikov, Batyr Haytlyev and Zitoza Safazova. 7. The beautiful setting of the Rooftop of Lot 10 attracted an excited gathering of people from all walks to participate in Earth Hour 2012, a tradition for YTL since it began in 2009, the first year for Malaysia. 8. A member of the Tugu Drum Circle getting into the groove.



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life events //

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DEBENHAMS



1



2

Brit Chic

Kuala Lumpur's glamorous **Starhill Gallery** recently welcomed **Debenhams**, the iconic British retailer, to its space. Popular for its 'Designers at Debenhams' collections, which offers designer names and style at high-street prices, Debenhams' new store spans 37,000 sq ft and offers South-East Asia's largest 'Designers at Debenhams' collections. Among its stellar line-up of designers is **Julien Macdonald**, who flew in especially for the opening. One of the UK's leading names in fashion, Macdonald has also been awarded an OBE by HM Queen Elizabeth II for his services to fashion.



7



3

1. British High Commissioner HE Simon Featherstone, Julien Macdonald, Tan Sri Francis Yeoh, Francis McAuley & Joseph Yeoh. 2. Alexandra Rodriguez, Deborah Henry & Sherin Wong. 3. Serena Choong, Clement de Ligault & Rozie Mastor. 4. Yuan Yeoh, Craig Morraies & Joseph Yeoh. 5. Models presenting Julien Macdonald's Star and Diamond collections. 6. Andrew Kumah, Dato' Yasmin Yusuff & Amarjit Chhina. 7. Andrea Fonseka & Hans Isaac.



6



4



5

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1



8

The Lady and The Film

Dato' Michelle Yeoh, Malaysia's very own cinematic superstar and brand ambassador for luxury timepiece label **Richard Mille**, visited Kuala Lumpur recently for a special cocktail event prior to the exclusive premiere of *The Lady*, the **Luc Besson**-directed biopic of **Aung San Suu Kyi**. Held at the Richard Mille boutique in Starhill Gallery, *The Lady* is the story of how an Oxford housewife and daughter of Aung San, the martyred Burmese revolutionary, chose to remain under house arrest and endure separation from her family in order to bring democracy to Myanmar.

1. Dato' Michelle Yeoh 2. Dato' Tan Eu Lee & Datin Rosalind Lee. 3. Yen Lim & Johnson Ng. 4. A scene from *The Lady*. 5. Dato' Simon Low & Datin Karen Koh. 6. Felix Kim & Dato' Lennon Tan. 7. Dato' Simon Wong, Datin Michelle Wong & Ranshe Yeoh. 8. Some of the guests who turned up for the cocktail and preview of *The Lady*.



2



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5

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* Best Massage in Kuala Lumpur
(Time out Magazine 2010)

* Things to do in Kuala Lumpur
(Lonely Planet)



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



Moves Like Jaeger

Celebrated watch brand **Jaeger-LeCoultre** threw a party recently to celebrate the unveiling of its newly-refurbished boutique in Kuala Lumpur's Starhill Gallery. Measuring a whopping 1,500 sq ft, the expansive space is dedicated to a comprehensive collection of the brand's legendary timepieces, from iconic wristwatches like the *Reverso* and the *Master Compressor*, to its breathtaking *Atmos* clocks. Gracing the occasion was none other than **Jérôme Lambert**, the CEO of Manufacture Jaeger-LeCoultre, **Tan Sri Francis Yeoh** of YTL Corporation, **HE Dr Rolf Lenz**, Ambassador of Switzerland to Malaysia, and **Alexis Delaporte**, Managing Director of Jaeger-LeCoultre South-East Asia. To showcase the spirit of its location, a variety of cultural entertainment, including a lion dance, peacock dance and *kompang* performance, helped lend a local flavour to the glittering event.

1. Tan Sri Francis Yeoh and Jérôme Lambert. 2. Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen. 3. Lim Wei-Ling. 4. Alvin Tan and Emily Yip. 5. Debbie Goh, Elaine Daly, Jérôme Lambert, Dr. Rolf Lenz, Alexis Delaporte, Deborah Henry and Andrea Fonseka. 6. Sunil Kaul and friends. 7. Reverso Duetto timepieces on display. 8. Deborah Henry.

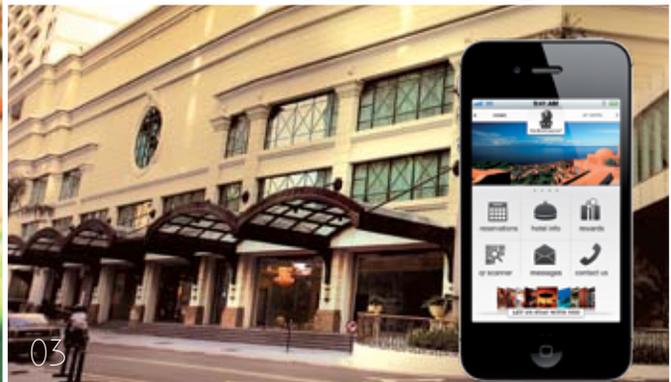


YTL's latest news, events, attractions and not-to-be-missed experiences.



Ramadhan Delight

To commemorate the breaking of fast during the Holy Month of Ramadhan, sacred to Muslims around the world, the **JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur** has prepared a wide variety of traditional Malay dishes for guests to experience. Over 130 dishes from all over Malaysia will be served as part of a sumptuous buffet spread at the **hotel poolside** and the **Starhill Conference Centre** on the sixth and fourth floors, respectively. Designed to resemble a traditional Ramadhan bazaar with a kampong ambience, the Ramadhan buffet is priced at just RM60++ per person at the conference centre and RM70++ at the poolside area. Held daily during the month of Ramadhan, from 7pm to 10.30pm, call 603-2719 8666 to reserve. ■



01

Happy Days

Begin your journey together as man and wife in paradise, literally. The beautiful private island of Pangkor Laut, just off the west coast of Malaysia, offers breathtaking locations for romantic ceremonies and celebratory dinners. Exchange vows under floral chandeliers or have a heartfelt ceremony right on the beach itself. For those wishing to have a wedding set amidst emerald waters, ancient rainforest and the luxurious architecture of **Pangkor Laut Resort**, the dedicated team at the resort will be only too delighted to help you plan your big day.

02

Starry-Eyed

With the recent release of Michelin's first-ever restaurant guide to Hokkaido, there's no better time than now to start planning a serious gustatory tour. The area now has four three Michelin-starred restaurants – Nukumi, Sushi Tanabe, Moliere and Michel Bras Toya Japan. With so much good food around, make it a point to check out the **Hilton Niseko Village's** excellent variety of outdoor sports and activities during your stay here, including golf, tree-trekking and horse-riding.

03

How App

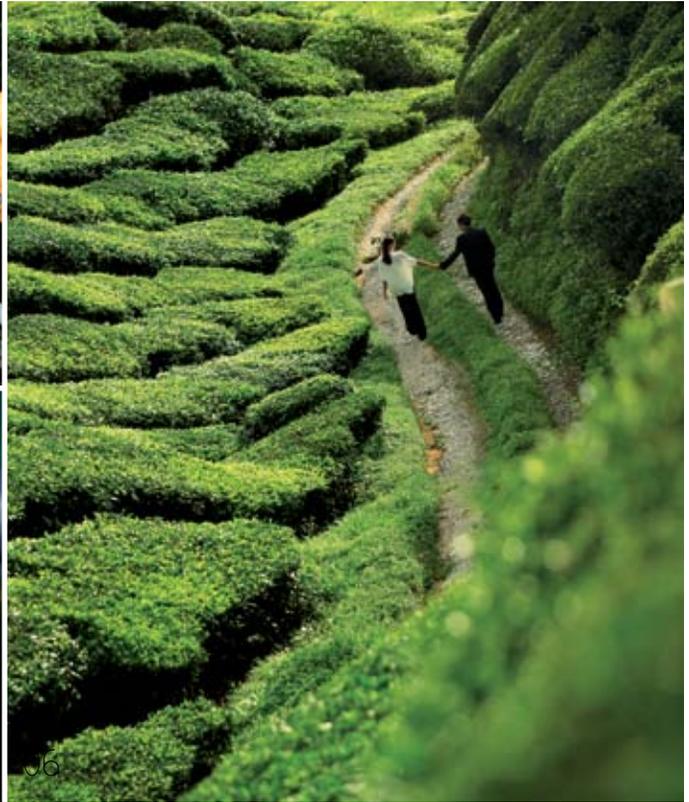
Luxury goes mobile as **The Ritz-Carlton App** now serves up exclusive tips and tours, and integrates with the brand's other social platforms like Foursquare and World Concierge. The thing to look out for, though, would be the Presidential Tips from Herve Humler, President of the luxury hotel chain himself, whose experiences and suggestions wouldn't go amiss. Turn your stay into something extraordinary today. The Ritz-Carlton App is compatible with Apple iPhones and Android smart phone devices.



04



05



06

04

Kampong Life

Unmistakably Malay, the **Tanjong Jara Resort** on Malaysia's east coast celebrates the best of kampong life with a medley of activities every Saturday evening. Held at the Anjung Garden, pop by to take part in a variety of complimentary activities, ranging from coconut-plucking demonstrations by a pig-tailed macaque to batik-painting and a chance to sample local tea-time treats, including *keropok lekor* (fish sausages), *cucur sayur* (vegetable fritters) and *akok*, a soft sweet cake that is a favourite of local Terengganu people.

05

Nyonya Tales

Bring home more than antiques and souvenirs from your next trip to history-soaked Malacca by signing up for **The Majestic Malacca's** Peranakan cooking classes. Experience an introduction to the aromatic ingredients that contribute to specialties like *Pie Tee*, *Ayam Pongteh*, *Itik Tim* and *Otak-Otak*. Each lesson promises insight into the history behind every dish, while students will be able to sample the fruits of their labour afterwards. Priced at RM250++ per person, hats and aprons are provided, and you also get to take home a set of classic recipes.

06

Head For The Hills

As the weather begins to heat up, retreat to the cooler climates of Cameron Highlands, one of Malaysia's legendary hill stations. While basking in the old world luxury of the **Cameron Highlands Resort**, take advantage of the cool weather to indulge in an al fresco meal of traditional Japanese *shabu-shabu* at its **Gonbei** restaurant, which is a sister outlet to Gonbei-San, the exquisite traditional Japanese restaurant located in Kuala Lumpur's glamorous Starhill Gallery. ■

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



Swept Away by Bray

Bray House, a private residence under the YTL Hotels portfolio, provides the ultimate base from which to explore the tranquil beauty of the gastro-village of Bray on Thames, as well as the many picturesque villages and towns that straddle England's Thames waterway.

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

The village of Bray needs no introduction amongst the coterie of global gourmets and other equally pampered palates as it is quite possibly the only village in the world that lays claim to having two world-class three Michelin-starred restaurants, namely Heston Blumenthal's seminal The Fat Duck and Michel and Alain Roux's equally-acclaimed The Waterside Inn. And, mind you, this tally doesn't include two other equally-renowned gastro-pubs, the Hind's Head and The Crown, both of which also happen to be owned by the enterprising Blumenthal. Bray, in a way, is a place of culinary pilgrimage. For those unfamiliar with it, Bray or, to be precise, Bray on Thames is located in Berkshire, the only county that could rightly call itself 'royal' in England, primarily due to its proximity to Windsor, the British Royal Family's principle residence outside of London. It is a small but perfectly-formed village and makes an ideal base from which to explore the beautiful countryside. The area is home to many charming villages and places of interest, all a short distance away from Bray, including Eton, home to the country's famous schoolboys; Cliveden, the setting for the infamous Profumo scandal; as well as Henley-upon-Thames, the country's de facto rowing capital, which bursts into nautical life every spring when the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge compete in the world-famous annual regatta.

Part of YTL Hotels portfolio of world-class properties, Bray House is its first property in England and is essentially a self-catering cottage, albeit with a luxurious twist – in keeping, naturally, with YTL Hotels' high standards of service and detail. With three luxuriously-appointed rooms, each exuding its own unique design style, it is also quite possibly the

Bray House is located right along the picturesque village of Bray's high street and just a stone's throw away from the critically-acclaimed restaurant, The Fat Duck.



“If you enter Bray House, look to the left and you will still see the original stable gate, now looking beautiful as an authentic design statement while serving as a wistful memory of the cottage’s past.”

most wonderful place to base yourself for a weekend in the country, either for a few days of sinful gastronomic hedonism, trying out all the world-class dining this small but mighty culinary village has to offer, or just for a much-needed break from the madding crowds of the city and the never-ending ‘ping’ of the BlackBerry – a haven to which you can retreat, rejuvenating mind, body and soul by simply enjoying the fresh air and great British countryside.

Bray House itself is a little bijou gem – a cottage filled with character and history and, within which, a unique Art Deco heart beats. It’s not a hotel per se; instead, you’ll instantly feel as if you are, already, at home. Although located along the village’s high street, there are no madding crowds. A saunter outside takes you, within seconds, to beautiful village lanes and green patches through which you may wander. The Thames is just a short walk away and the village itself has many interesting byways to explore. There are no naff shops selling tat, bar a pretty little gift shop that sells decorative items and there you have it. No newsagents, no dingy ‘shop around the corner’ – it’s all about eating and living well here. Dating back to medieval times, the parish church is a remarkable structure that was built 900 years ago, while the numerous cottages that dot the area each have a story to tell. Bray House itself dates back to the 1800s and used to be part of a larger residence named Green Shutters. The house today stands where the former barn and stables used to be. If you enter Bray House, look to the left and you will still see the original stable gate, now looking beautiful as an authentic design statement while serving as a wistful memory of the cottage’s past. Design-conscious guests will particularly appreciate Bray House’s whimsical mélange of traditional English cottage architecture and dramatic Art Deco-inspired interiors, conceptualised and brought to life by Denise Ellis and Kevin

This page: The entrance to the expansive kitchen and garden-courtyard. Opposite: The bright and vibrant hues of the Amber Room.





Clockwise, from above: Exquisite riverfront views at The Waterside Inn; Dining at Michel and Alain Roux's superlative Waterside Inn is a must-do while in Bray; The warm and cosy lounge, with the fireplace on the right and the statement bar on the left.



Snook, who manage the property for YTL Hotels. The living room is spacious and warm, while the cosy 1920s styled lounge, with its fireplace and statement bar, of an original sailor's mess rescued from a ship, became, in an instant, my preferred space within the home. Antique crystal decanters contain whisky, sherry and port for your enjoyment, while a stunning chaise lounge, designed by talented young designer Mark Brazier-Jones, competes with the antique bar for attention. Meanwhile, those who've come to Bray seeking the full gourmet treatment would invariably find themselves attracted to the light-filled, state-of-the-art kitchen, which overlooks the charming walled-in garden and pond. Look in and you will find several hopeful-looking *koi* peering up at you in the off-chance that you might just feed them.

The first level houses the cottage's three stunning bedrooms, each one strongly declaring its unique design style. The master bedroom is, naturally, the largest and is an elegant mish-mash of tradition and modernity, while the shower area, featuring a stunning zebra print mosaic by Italian masters Bisazza, is a work of art in itself. The White Suite, as its name implies, is an exercise in purity, with its dreamy white-swathed four-poster bed and decorative touches, all the while never veering from its ivory palette, while the Amber Room is nothing short of dramatic, splashed in varying hues of eye-popping red. Service at Bray House may be as unobtrusive (or not) as you wish, and all one really needs to do is ask if anything at all is needed. This may include ringing in for a massage, arranging daily excursions and meal reservations, or even getting someone to come in to prepare breakfast if you don't feel up to it yourself. The kitchen is fully-equipped and stocked with everything you'd need to whip up a full English fry-up as well as drinks and snacks. Should you wish to use the space to entertain, have canapés on the terrace, complete with a bottle of champagne chilling, or a picnic basket at the ready for a day out in the country, all that may be easily arranged with just a telephone call.

If you're looking for a few days of peace and quiet, do know the shelves here are well-stocked with books and magazines, and it really is the perfect place to finish up that



*Left: The Hind's Head is a great place for inventive gastro-pub grub with a molecular accent;
Above: Sweet dreams in Bray House's White Suite.*



novel you've been largely neglecting or perhaps to revisit a favourite playlist. Bray House offers top-notch wireless speaker docks, including the space-age looking Zeppelin Air by Bowers & Wilkins, while the bar and lounge area is kitted out with a Bang & Olufsen sound system as well as an antique gramophone. If live music is more to your taste, then simply fling open the windows on a Sunday morning to enjoy the delightful pealing of bells courtesy of St Michael's church just a stone's throw away.

History buffs would be chuffed to learn of the church's ancient past, dating back to 1293 when it was commissioned by Queen Margaret, the wife of Edward I. The parish of Bray itself predates the present church, while the Domesday Book of 1086 noted the existence of a Saxon church within the area, although the exact site of this original place of worship is uncertain. The church is adorned with beautiful stained glass windows, a lovely pipe-organ and woodwork, while a stone carving of an animal, near the entrance, is believed to have come from the original Saxon church.

Aside from Bray Village's numerous places in which to expand one's waistline in ultimate style, the surrounding areas are a must to explore, particularly since London is hosting the Olympics Games in summer and nearby Dorney Lake has been chosen as the venue of the rowing events. And, whether or not you're planning to visit to Bray for the Games, the best thing to do would be to make sure your PA has lined up all the restaurant reservations for you well in advance (particularly for The Fat Duck and The Waterside Inn), while you rent a car and leisurely coast along the countryside lanes – a great pleasure in itself. If you're inclined to spend an evening or two in, make it a point to first stop by the popular Windsor Farm Shop, just a short distance away, where you may fill Bray House's high-tech Maytag refrigerator with all sorts of fabulous edibles, including the very same Sandringham pressed apple juice served at all Buckingham Palace's garden parties and receptions, marvellous fresh fruit, meat and vegetables as well as the local gourmet cheeses, including Oxford Blue and the particularly-pungent Stinking Bishop.

For the many among us who live harried lifestyles according to over-filled diaries, it really does one good to just live a few genteel days experiencing life in the country. You might not know it just yet, but a few days at Bray House might be all you need to put everything right once again in your world. ■

“Bray House
is its first
property in
England and is
essentially a self-
catering cottage,
albeit with a
luxurious twist.”

Call in a chef or enjoy the pleasure of whipping up a home-cooked feast while at Bray House.



PLACES OF INTEREST NEAR AND AROUND BRAY

• Straddling the River Thames, the historically and architecturally-interesting town of **Reading** is nearby and is renowned, or should we say notorious, as being the place where Oscar Wilde was jailed for a few years, as are **Newbury** and **Lambourn**, homes to a world-class racecourse and famous racehorse training town, respectively.

• Few schools occupy a place in the history of English education as **Eton**. Founded in 1440 as a collegiate church, the world-renowned **Eton College** is still one of the most famous and prestigious public schools in the United Kingdom, while its history is inextricably linked to the country's political, social and religious changes, ranging from the Wars of the Roses to the Reformation era. Its alumni roll rattles off a string of celebrated names and has lost few of its numerous anachronistic traditions. If you visit today, you'll find the College Hall and kitchen the only surviving parts of the original school structure. Still, it's definitely worth a visit, if only to see the schoolboys going about their day in the iconic uniform that is now instantly-recognisable the world over.

• If you come in spring, in late April or early May, the surrounding woods might be covered in bluebells, turning the woodlands into a lovely carpet of lavender blue. Try going to nearby **Cookham Dean** or **Burnham Beeches**, where the forest, filled

with oaks dating back centuries, silver birch trees and ancient rock monuments left behind by druids, are wonderful for an exploratory ramble.

• The beautiful royal town of **Windsor** is famous for its 13-acre castle which, incidentally, is Britain's largest. There are many charming things to see and do here, including several wonderful pubs, restaurants and tea houses to revive travel-weary spirits. Shoppers would also delight in the many charming shops, all set within beautiful buildings and lining cobblestoned alleys and pathways. For those who like to ramble, the castle grounds and surroundings are wonderful to explore. And don't miss the regal spectacle of the daily changing of the castle guards during the warm summer months.

• For those with a penchant for fine millinery, don't miss the great spectacle of hats and horseflesh that is the **Royal Ascot** meeting, held every summer over four fabulous days and starring world-class thoroughbreds, Philip Treacy headwear and various members of the Royal Family, who turn up daily from nearby Windsor Castle in marvellous carriages along a driveway laid out by Queen Anne.

• Originally conceived as a hunting lodge for George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham, **Cliveden** is an architectural stunner set on a little hillock overlooking the River Thames. Famous or, some say, notorious, for being a place where

pleasure, power and politics are pursued in equal measure, visitors marvel at its ornate interiors and 376 acres of stunning formal gardens and parklands. Those who enjoy tales with more than a whiff of scandal would be intrigued to know that Cliveden was the setting for the Profumo affair in the 1960s. Make sure to come for afternoon tea and expressly request a table by the window, where you can sip Earl Grey or Lapsang Souchong while nibbling on a cucumber sandwich as your eyes feast on the visual delight that is Cliveden's gardens.

• The picturesque town of **Henley-on-Thames** is renowned for its annual Royal Regatta and rowing heritage but, if you happen to be visiting this July, try not to miss the Henley Festival, a celebration of music, art and cuisine, which is into its 30th year already. This year's highlights include performances by Sting, Katherine Jenkins, Alfie Boe and Tim Minchin, as well as spectacular fireworks displays nightly.

GETTING THERE

Bray House is located in the village of Bray on Thames in Maidenhead, Berkshire. If you're arriving in England via Heathrow Airport, do know it is surprisingly close, taking just about 30 minutes by car.

To book Bray House, please contact Denise Ellis at +44 (0) 7710 039058 or e-mail info@braycottages.com

Welcome, World!

With less than a month to go before the biggest show on earth comes to town, *Elle Chan* offers a guide to making the best of London during the Olympic Games 2012.

Photography by London 2012 Olympics





From Kobe Bryant to David Beckham and James Bond, the stars are out in full force for the London Olympics 2012. They will join the 10,500 athletes competing for the 302 medals, 70,000 volunteers, 21,000 journalists and 5.5 million day visitors throughout the 17-day Games.

London last hosted an Olympics in 1948, in the aftermath of World War II. Known as the Austerity Games, 59 nations competed for 136 events and athletes stayed in army barracks. Athletes are luckier today, with a brand new Athletes Village in the culturally fascinating East End of London.

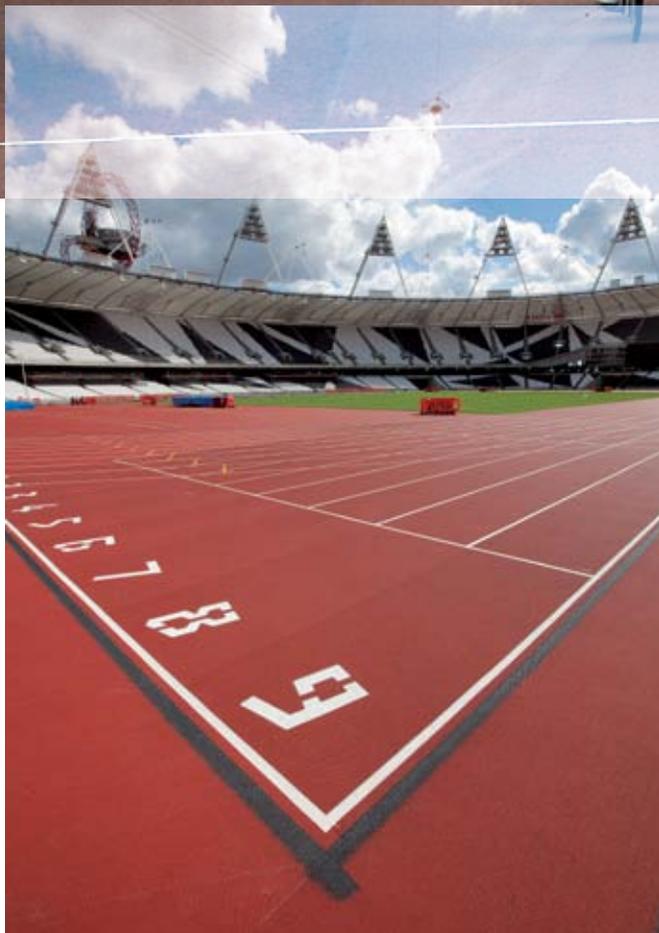
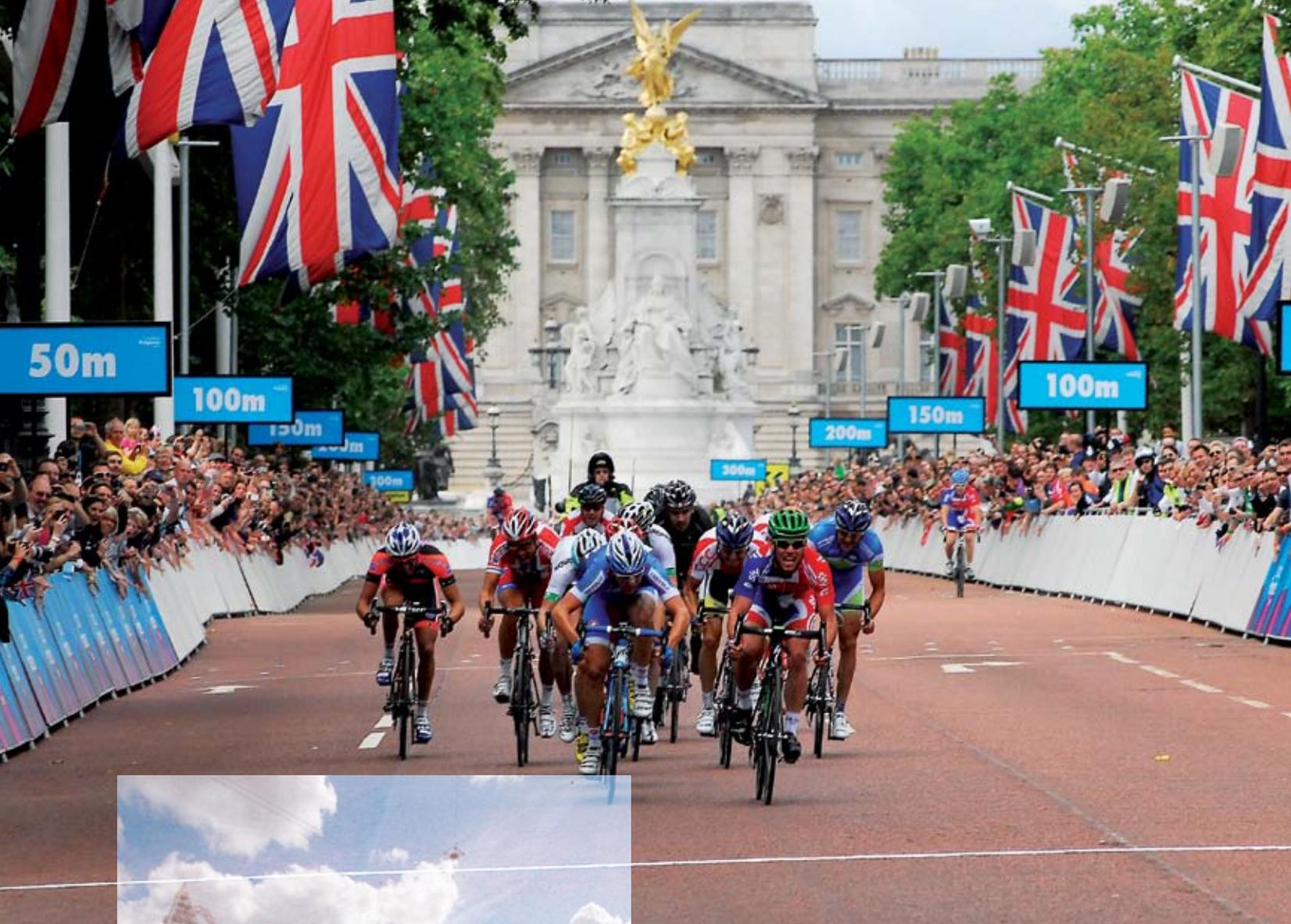
Lest you think that you'd be paying grossly inflated prices, rest assured that London Mayor Boris Johnson had launched the London Visitor Charter, a first for any Olympic host city, that guarantees fair pricing for visitors, including for attractions and in restaurants.

International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge praised London's preparations in a media interview: "There is no doubt about that. London is very well organized... the team is very strong. We are very optimistic."

Should you be the lucky few who are present in London for the Games, here's what you can look out for.



Clockwise, from left: The Olympic Stadium; A member of the crowd waves the Union Jack in Land's End at the start of the Olympic Torch Relay in Cornwall; Wenlock, the mascot of the London Olympics 2012; The volleyball event will be held at the Horse Guards Parade.



Stargazing

The world's greatest sport spectacle kicks off on 27 July, with *Slumdog Millionaire* director **Danny Boyle** choreographing a grand opening along an 'Isles of Wonder' theme at the 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by **Prince Philip**, the Duke of Edinburgh, will open the Games as well as the following Paralympic Games on 29 August. **Prince William**, the Duke of Cambridge, his wife, **Catherine**, the Duchess of Cambridge, and **Prince Harry** are official ambassadors of the UK's Olympic and Paralympic teams.

A galaxy of stars will carry the Olympic torch around Britain leading up to 27 July, including Aussie crooner **Kylie Minogue**, Hollywood star **Will Smith**, football legend **Pele** and Hong Kong star **Jackie Chan**. Former Beatle **Paul McCartney** will present the final touch at the star-studded opening ceremony.

Many famous faces will lead the athletes' contingents, including flashy Jamaican sprinter, **Usain Bolt**, who is expected to repeat his golden haul in Beijing in the 100m, 200m and sprint relay.



From left: British rider Mark Cavendish leads the pack down the Mall during the London-Surrey Cycle Classic. The Mall will be the venue of the marathon during the Olympics; The Olympic flame; View inside the Olympic Stadium.



Another draw is 26-year-old American swimmer, **Michael Phelps**, who won eight gold medals in Beijing. With 16 Olympic medals in his career, Phelps just needs three more medals to become the most decorated Olympian in history.

The oldest competitor is 71-year-old Japanese equestrian rider, **Hiroshi Hoketsu**, who was 23 when he participated in his first Olympics in 1964. South African double-amputee, **Oscar Pistorius**, 'aka the Blade Runner', as he runs on carbon fibre blades, will make history as the first amputee to compete in the Olympics after qualifying for the 400m with a time of 45.30 seconds. **Kevin Durant** is a key player for the star-studded American basketball team, while five-time Chinese All England and reigning Olympic gold medallist, **Lin Dan**, is expected to face a fierce challenge from Malaysia's **Lee Chong Wei** on the badminton courts, although at press time, an injury sustained during the All England Badminton finals puts the latter's Olympics appearance in doubt.

Some sexy stallions are expected to steal the show with their looks as much as for their sporting prowess. Italian fencer **Aldo Montano** doubles up as an underwear model, while **Ryan Lochte** is more

than a match in and out of the water for compatriot Phelps. As for the ladies, another Italian fencer, **Elisa Di Francisca**, has brought a sexiness to her sport, while Russian tennis player **Maria Sharapova** can always be expected to stir up more than patriotic feelings.

For moments of glory

Organisers are cleverly making use of London's sterling sporting facilities and public spaces, some of which are historically significant, and blend it with spanking new attractions to save a lot of money and draw visitors. Archery is held at the **Lord's Cricket Ground**, while the marathon is on the Mall, equestrian in Greenwich Park, shooting at the Royal Artillery Barracks and cycling at **Hampton Court Palace**. Tennis will naturally feature at **Wimbledon**.

Beach volleyball will be battled at the Horse Guards Parade in Whitehall, beside Buckingham Palace, where the Queen's birthday is celebrated annually with the Trooping of the Colour. The triathlon takes place in Hyde Park, the largest of London's meticulously maintained Royal Parks, while badminton and rhythmic gymnastics will be staged in the Wembley Arena, one of the world's most famous concert venues.

New venues are the Aquatics Centre in the Olympic Park, identifiable by its stunning wave-like roof spanning 160m long and 80m wide, which is longer than Heathrow's Terminal 5. Another new facility is the 80,000-capacity Olympic Stadium for athletics.

The Olympic Village was designed after London's tradition of homes around communal squares and courtyards. There are waterways crossed by bridges, with tree-lined promenades, biking trails and an odd-looking Orbit Tower built of red steel. Post Games, the village will become 2,800 new homes for East Londoners.

Beyond sports

Tired of crowds and competitions? Then explore this great city that manages to hold together its past, present and future remarkably. Check out exhibitions and cultural events this summer on visitlondon.com, which include the **BBC Proms** (13 July to 8 September); **The World Shakespeare Festival** (23 April to 9 September) and the **London 2012 Festival** (21 June to 9 September), a colourful celebration of the world's artistes in dance, arts, music, theatre, film and digital innovation.

London also has numerous gems that warrant a visit. Join an hour-long free art tour at the **National Gallery** at Trafalgar Square, led by gallery art experts, or catch a complimentary concert at **St Martin-in-the-Fields** that hosts free lunchtime concerts on most Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays by emerging talents. For unique back-in-time experiences, drop by **Dennis Severs' House** in

“In 1948, 59 nations competed for 136 events and athletes stayed in army barracks.”

Spitalfields, an 18th century townhouse that appears as if the family of Huguenot silk weavers has just left a moment ago. Alternatively, take part in a candlelight tour of **Sir John Soane's** unusual museum in Holborn, which was the 18th century home of the eccentric architect.

There is no other more quintessential English experience than traditional afternoon tea offered at top-end hotels like the Savoy and Dorchester, with silver-tiered trays of dainty open-faced sandwiches and scones served alongside hot teas. And don't miss the opportunity to view Tower Bridge, especially when it is raised, or ride London's original Routemaster buses' heritage route 9 from Kensington to Trafalgar and route 15 from Tower Hill to Trafalgar Square.

To escape the crowds, drop by **Postman's Park** in the City of London, a quiet spot that commemorates simple acts of bravery with ceramic tiles detailing selfless acts. It's surprisingly captivating and moving.





Clockwise, from above: The Aquatics Centre; Frances Johnson carries the Olympic flame on the leg through Liskeard in Cornwall; The triathlon will take place in Hyde Park, the largest of London's Royal Parks; Metropolitan Police and Royal Navy personnel carry the Olympic flame in a lantern inside a Royal Navy helicopter as the flame makes its way to Land's End for the start of the Torch Relay; David Beckham with the torch during the ceremony to mark the arrival of the Olympic flame; Torchbearers passing the Olympic flame on the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge in Northern Ireland.

Eat, drink and be merry

London is becoming increasingly renowned for its bustling food scene. Hot spots such as **Dinner by Heston Blumenthal** will require advance bookings months ahead. Still, there are loads of great grub in chic eateries across the city, not just in traditional restaurants but also in gastropubs, especially around the Farringdon tube area. Some chic dining spots include Granges & Co, Story Deli, Pollen Street Social, Union Jack and The Delaunay. Chain restaurants like Carluccio's or Wagamama's also offer good food at reasonable prices.

For something different, check online or ask around to see where you can enjoy a home-cooked meal under London's increasingly popular supper club scene. Or just grab a ready-to-go meal from the marvellous food halls of Selfridges, Marks & Spencer and Fortnum & Mason. ■



Island Inspiration

World-renowned fashion designer Julien Macdonald takes some time off from his hectic lifestyle to relax in The Estates at Pangkor Laut and finds himself inspired by the magical private island.

Text by **Joseph Kelly** Photography by **Law Soo Phye**

From an early age, there was always something a little bit special about Julien Macdonald. Born in the little town of Merthyr Tydfil in Wales, he always believed that he was destined for great things. He dabbled in singing and acting before following his heart to find his life calling. Displaying a natural talent and armed with the knitwear skills he had acquired at an early age, Macdonald seemed destined to be an iconic fashion designer. Rubbing shoulders with well-known names in the fashion world like Alexander McQueen and Isabella Blow and even his education at Cyfarthfa Castle seemed to influence his career path. "Going to school in a castle is pretty



Left: World-renowned fashion designer Julien Macdonald soaking up the sun in Pangkor Laut Resort, Malaysia; Bottom: Macdonald has expressed interest in using batik in his collection.



amazing. It is surrounded by vast grounds, has got grand rooms and it's all quite magical... a little bit like Harry Potter, really. Perhaps going to school in a castle influenced me, the grandeur of it."

His old school was recently visited by HM Queen Elizabeth II on her Diamond Jubilee tour, adding to the numerous occasions when he has had the honour of meeting her and allowing him to reveal a glimpse of his personality when he shared a joke with her about their experiences with castles. "Julien, did you go to school here?" she asked him, to which he cheekily responded: "Actually, I did. I went to school in a castle; but you got to *live* in a castle."

His talents and the success that he has enjoyed throughout his career were recognized by the Royal Family and the British Government when they awarded him an OBE for outstanding achievement in fashion. Such an honour has allowed him to do one of the things he enjoys most: travelling. As an ambassador for fashion, he has travelled all over the world to explore different places that inspire his work, including Malaysia.

On his recent visit to Malaysia, to help re-launch Debenhams at Starhill Gallery by organising a fashion show for his Star and Diamond collections, he also made an inspirational journey to Pangkor Laut Resort, where Macdonald spoke to *YTL Life* about

how he broke into the world of fashion, what the future holds and where he would like to spend his next holiday.

When did you realise that fashion was the career path for you?

Well, I never really wanted to be a fashion designer. When I went to school, deep down, I always wanted to be famous. I wanted people to know me and to recognise my name. I wasn't really sure of what I wanted to do. I used to watch TV and wanted to be the person on the screen. My iconic shows were *MTV* and *Top of the Pops*, and, when I was young, I thought I wanted to be a singer but, as I got older, I realised that I couldn't sing. I was trying to figure out, 'What can I do now?' So, I guess I fell into fashion by mistake.

How did you manage to break into the fashion industry at such a young age?

I was very lucky, really. It all started when I met the legendary fashion muse and stylist, Isabella Blow, who introduced me to a very young designer, Alexander McQueen. He used to have a tiny workshop below Philip Treacy, the world's most famous hat designer, and that's where McQueen started his career. Basically, at the age of 20, I worked for McQueen and I did the knitwear for his first three collections. He was the most outrageous designer in the world at that time, and everybody wanted to know who he and those around him were. Isabella Blow would tell everybody



Clockwise, from right: The time Macdonald has spent at Pangkor Laut Resort has inspired his creativity; A Julien Macdonald design at last year's London Fashion Week; Accessories from the Star Collection.

about her discoveries and she introduced me to the fashion media and the world. So, I started at the top, really, by making things for Alexander McQueen.

What has been the defining moment in your career?

Working for Alexander McQueen was one of them but it definitely wasn't how I started. When I went to art college, I had to study different types of art and one of the art forms was life drawing, where you painted a nude figure that is draped in fabric. While other people in my course would paint the figure, I would always draw and paint the fabric. So, other people would have a picture while mine would just be one of a fabric pattern.

You mentioned that you had aspirations, ambition and a determination to be somebody. Are these some of the qualities you need to be a successful fashion designer today?

I think so. I think the world now has become much more competitive than when I started off. I think people learn things now much younger because of technology, are much more competitive from a younger age, and a lot of people now want incredible jobs, of which working in fashion is one. Millions of people aspire to be fashion designers



because they see these people with celebrities on the TV and in magazines and they want to be that kind of person. It means that you need to be much more focused and you need to start early.

You have a role as a judge on *Britain's Next Top Model*. Was being on television something that has always appealed to you and was it an experience that you enjoyed?

To be honest, I didn't want to do it – at the beginning, I said: 'I don't want to open myself up to people in that way because I want to be seen as a fashion designer and not as a TV star'. When I realised that it was going to be with Elle Macpherson and she called me to say that she really wanted to do the show with me, I said, 'I'll do it if you can promise me that the programme will be incredible and successful', and she said 'I can't promise that but we can make it successful'. Fashion opens up different doors and so I decided, reluctantly at the beginning, to do the show. For the first series, I was very tough, very hard on the girls but, as it progressed, I decided I wasn't going to be the Simon Cowell of the show and changed my direction. People got to see the funnier side of me and now know that I'm warmer, more joyous and a lot more myself on it. I've enjoyed doing it.

You have had such a successful career and achieved so much. What do you see for yourself five years from now and what are your future goals?

Even though I've succeeded and have done a lot, there is so much more to do. The thing is, there is so much growth in pursuing a brand. I would like to have my own TV fashion show, which I am currently in talks with. I would also like to launch my own signature fragrance; I've never opened up a Julien Macdonald store and I was planning to do it two years ago but, because all the markets collapsed, I put everything on hold and I think that was a very good move. I would like to eventually open my own store but not a big one. I think a small signature boutique would be fine, which I could then roll out around the world with luxury items. It's about quality and niche with my own brand.

You're a very creative individual and, every season, you face the task of having to come up with new designs. Where do you draw your creative inspiration from?

Well, it can be very difficult for designers to get inspiration but I think what you must do is travel. Travel is the one of the great sources of inspiration for me. The time I've spent here at Pangkor Laut Resort has inspired me as a designer. It gives you time to stop and clearly reflect. When I previously came to Malaysia with *Britain's Next Top Model* with Elle Macpherson and Dato' Jimmy Choo, I actually got stranded here because of the ash cloud from Iceland's Mount Eyjafjallajökull! So, for three weeks, I couldn't do anything and Dato' Jimmy Choo said, 'OK, I'll show you Malaysia', because he's the ambassador for Tourism Malaysia, and, basically, we set off on a road trip. We went to Penang, Tanjung Jara Resort and Langkawi, so I got to see a lot of Malaysia.

What are the differences between your Star and Diamond collections in Debenhams?

My Star collection has been with me for seven years and, basically, the Star woman, as I've gotten older, has gotten older with me. A Star woman is sophisticated, loves fashion and is not really a follower of any crazy fashion trends. The Diamond collection is more for the daughter of the Star woman. I dress a lot of young people, from Jessie J to Selena Gomez, and, when you dress young popstars like that, a younger generation gets attracted to your clothes. It means a lot of younger girls would like to wear Julien Macdonald. That is why we decided to launch the Diamond collection, which is for a much more younger and petite figure. It's a lot shorter, younger and more colourful, and the price point is much more affordable for a younger girl.

What's the latest fashion trend we should all be aware of?

Fashion is like technology, it changes all the time. Over the last two years, there has been an increase in computer-generated digital design prints and I think they are back in fashion. They come and go, and I have a lot of them in my own collection in Debenhams.

Also, what has been around and is always coming back is colour blocking. It's the way colours are put together. I've done it on my own and Debenhams' collections. It's something the fashion industry loves at the moment. It just looks modern, makes you feel younger and it's very flattering.

What do you think of the colourful patterns and fabrics of Malaysian *batik*? Is it something that you might consider incorporating into a Julien Macdonald collection?

I think Malaysia has inspired me and I would like to use it as part of my collection. I would like to design a range of kaftans or swimwear, inspired by Malaysia, its traditional crafts and *batik*.

What do you love most about working in fashion?

I think it's the variety of what fashion has to offer. It's a lot more than just clothes. You get to meet incredible people. You have an access to worlds that normally wouldn't be possible for anybody else. When you make clothes for people, you get to see what they're like, get invited into their houses and, when you make friends in fashion, they can last a lifetime. I've met the Yeoh family of YTL Corporation twice now; the first time was two years ago and

they opened up their hearts and their incredible properties to me and it was an amazing experience, and I never thought that, two years later, I would be back to say hello to them again. Also, the more established and successful that you are, the more you get to offer your advice and help to the younger generation and that can be very rewarding.

What type of holiday best suits your personality?

I am one of those people who can't sit still. I need to do things. I love the sun, but only for a limited amount of time. I'm always looking for inspiration; even if I'm tired, I don't mind getting up early if I'm going to wake up to a fantastic view, which is what I have here. It's nice to listen to the sea, to sit and be quiet, and reflect on your life, on the future. I've been doing some designs while I've been here. I never switch off. I think that's the worst thing about being a fashion designer. My mind is always working.

Your career has enabled you to travel all across the world; where has been your favourite destination to visit?

The one place that I keep returning to is Greece. I really like the island of Mykonos; I like the hot weather as well and I like the





Greeks, because they're glamorous and fun; they love fashion and like to dress up. I also like Miami – the incredible hotels, restaurants and nightlife. I like places where people get dressed up to go out, which is why I like Hollywood as well. I like Malaysia too. Kuala Lumpur, for instance, is one of the fastest growing cities I've been to. This is my second visit and it's changed from my first. There are new shops and new things, and the reason there are so many shops is because Malaysians like fashion and they love to shop. So, I have a lot of favourite places, not just one.

For the past week, you've been staying at The Estates at Pangkor Laut. Have you enjoyed your stay so far?

I think you must be mad not to enjoy Pangkor Laut. Before I came, I called up Elle Macpherson and asked her what it was like, and she said it was incredible. That it is one of her favourite places and that I would absolutely love it. I'm so happy to be able to come to a magical tropical island, which is private, beautiful and full of character, and where there are actually lots of things to do. Ever since I've been here, I haven't stopped. People say you can come and relax, but there are so many things to explore on the island. It's a place you can keep returning to as there's so much to explore. I like it here.

What have you enjoyed most about your stay?

The tropical forest is just amazing. I have actually been running through the forest to see the different types of plants, the variety of orchids and wildlife actually living on the island itself, is just amazing. Then, there's Emerald Bay and all the different kinds of food available. And I can't forget the Spa Village, which I've been to every day. I've tried all the different types of treatments, from the Malay massage to the different facial treatments and the baths. I didn't know you could spend so much time in the spa! I think time stands still here; you can turn off the clock and just relax. That's the beauty of Pangkor Laut Resort. It is a magical place.

Would you ever like to come back?

I would definitely like to come back. There are so many places to see in Malaysia and I know that YTL Hotels are opening up a new property soon. On my next trip here, I would like to visit Gaya Island Resort. I've been talking to people about it and that's the next place I would like to visit.

Would you ever consider hosting your next fashion show here at Pangkor Laut Resort?

I would definitely like to hold a fashion show at Pangkor Laut or one of the other YTL resorts. I actually would like to do a range exclusively for the boutiques and the hotels using traditional techniques and manufacture it in Malaysia, giving people a chance to buy a Julien Macdonald outfit at the resorts at an affordable price. ■



Clockwise, from top: Selena Gomez in a Julien Macdonald dress; Macdonald and Elle Macpherson worked together on the TV series Britain's Next Top Model; Macdonald fitting a model before a fashion show.



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CREPERIE

This page: Although undeniably glossy, Saint-Tropez still oozes authenticity and tonnes of Tropezian character.

Opposite page: The yellow tower of the Church of Saint-Tropez is the icon of the town.

And God Created... Saint-Tropez

We all know Saint-Tropez as impossibly chic and glamorous, studded with world-class beach clubs, luxury villas and exuding an air of insouciant elegance all at once. One of the great pleasures of your trip here, though, would inevitably be indulging, from a spot of shopping in its wonderfully-lively market to the maze of bijou little stores that offer a dazzling array of authentic Tropezienne treasures, as well as taking in the sights, sounds and scenes that are authentically Saint-T to a tee.

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



High season for Saint-Tropez is now in full-swing and it remains one of the eternally-fashionable places in the world – to see and be seen, to soak up the sun or, simply, to bask in this glamorous old fishing town's reflected glamour. Ever since a young **Brigitte Bardot** burst on the film scene in Roger Vadim's legendary cinematic masterpiece *And God Created Woman* in 1956, it would seem the international jet-set spirit descended upon Saint-Tropez and never left. Today, it remains as chic as ever and is one of the best places in the world to people-watch. Whether or not you've bagged a hot table at one of the 'in' beach clubs like Nikki Beach or Le Club 55, or if you prefer to recline on one of those scarlet director's chairs that are a **Sénéquier** trademark (the famous portside café located along the Quai Jean Jaurès and, it must be said, the preferred spot of Jacques Chirac), here's a list of top things to see, do and eat in this golden, sun-kissed town.

To Market, To Market

Mention Saint-Tropez and the inevitable images of gleaming mega-yachts, glamorous beach clubs and elegant villas spring to mind. However, don't overlook the rustic charms of its twice-weekly market, which makes the entire square of **Place des Lices** just spring into riotous life. Market day happens every Tuesday and Saturday. And, from about 7am till 3pm, the entire square is a riotous cacophony of stalls selling everything you could ever imagine wanting, from *confitures artisanales* to knobby-looking *saucissons*, linen, flowers and antiques. If you have a bit of a wander, you would most likely arrive upon a little van that sells the best pizzas this side of the Cote d'Azur. Look out for **La Pizza du Marche**, where each slice costs just €2 (although you may choose to buy a few whole ones back to your villa for brunch) and the wood-fired taste is simply incredible. The flavour to try? The Jambon Emmental – the simplest but most divine coupling ever of ham and cheese. Further along, there is also a popular stall which sells *paella*. If you wish to try it, do go early as it often sells out in just a few hours. And, even if it's not market day, make it a point to visit in the late part of the afternoon, as that's when the locals come up to play pétanque on the square under the shade of the plane trees.

A Room With A View

Once you're laden down with all sorts of treasure from the marketplace, like handcrafted soaps, ivory linen and an antique or two, you'd need to drop them off at your hotel. Thankfully, the **Muse Hôtel de Luxe** offers complimentary transfers from the hotel to the Places des Lices. You'd just about have enough



“The rustic charms of its twice-weekly market makes the entire square of Place des Lices just spring into riotous life.”

time to settle into the luxury vehicle before arriving back to a warm welcome at the hotel, perched on a little bluff just below the quaint hilltop village of **Ramatuelle**. Perk yourself up with a strawberry mojito from the bar before deciding how to spend the rest of your day, be it with an Asian-inspired massage at the hotel, a good book at the iconic aquamarine-hued pool or with the glossy set at one of Saint-Tropez's chic beach clubs or cool cafes along the **Quai Jean Jaurès**.

Sea Stories

Saint-Tropez's tiny fish market, the **Porte de la Poissonerie**, is definitely worth a walkabout. It is advisable to go early as the fish often sells out fast. Open daily, pop by for a stroll after your morning



Opposite page: Cafes and bistros abound in Saint-Tropez's alleys and lanes. This page, clockwise, from above: Market day at the Place des Lices; summer in Saint-Tropez is all about being by or on the water; vividly-hued calla lilies for sale at the marketplace; L'Auberge des Maures offers wonderful Provençal cuisine.



MUSE HÔTEL DE LUXE

For a truly luxurious Saint-Tropez experience, stay at the Muse Hôtel de Luxe in Ramatuelle. For reservations, tel: +334 94 4 30 440 or visit www.muse-hotels.com



Clockwise, from top: The beautiful windmill-like structure which houses the Muse Hôtel de Luxe's reception; sweet cantaloupe melons are a must for summery lunches.

café crème and have a look at the catch of the day, from lobster and langoustines, to clams, crabs and shiny-eyed fish. There is a lovely mosaic high up on the main wall as you enter and the fish market marks the entrance to the Old Town.

Le Retail Therapy

A quick once-over of Saint-Tropez will tell you this is no ordinary seaside town. Luxury is aplenty in this fishing village and you'll definitely be able to indulge in retail therapy par excellence here. Shopping would seem to be the secondary pastime, ranking just below people-watching and sun-worshipping. The famous **Place de la Garonne** as well as the **Rue Gambetta**, formerly the preferred residential area for all of Saint-Tropez's wealthy ship owners and merchants, are good places to start. All the international labels are well-represented, from Italian brands like Fendi, Bottega Venetta and Tod's, to the local luxe labels, *naturellement*. The Dior, Chanel and Louis Vuitton stores, in particular, have to be seen to be believed. The Vuitton store has a marvellous garden, while Dior and Chanel are housed in turn-of-the-century villas, with Dior even having its own garden café and Chanel, a sparkling swimming pool. What is immensely charming about Saint-Trop is that it's not all one-sided. You're just as likely to find a small *tabac* store alongside a big brand. The locals are fiercely proud of their heritage and culture, and this only adds greatly to the character of the town. Oh, and just a note of interest for those with a penchant for old French films, the **Gendarmerie de Saint-Tropez** is just around the corner. If you've ever watched the 1964 movie *Le Gendarme de Saint-Tropez*, starring the great movie star **Louis des Funès**, largely acknowledged as one of the giants of French comedy, you'd definitely recognise the structure standing staidly nearby.

Plush Plages

There are few more glamorous places to get your bathing suit wet than at one of Saint-Tropez's famous beach clubs. With the world-renowned **Bay of Pampelonne** and its 5km of white sand beach stretching right ahead of you, it's not hard to see why. For title of 'le ultimate beach club', however, the critics are divided. It's a billionaire's toss-up between **Le Club 55**, which earned itself cult status after having catered for the cast and crew (la Bardot included) of *And God Created Woman*, and the glamorous international franchise that is **Nikki Beach**, where the rich, beautiful and famous (think the likes of Bono, the Donald and HSH Prince Albert of Monaco) nibble on lobster tail spring rolls and sautéed sea scallops with caviar washed down with vintage champagne. The best way to arrive at Club 55 is, of course, is by private mega-yacht, where you skip all the summer traffic (which can be horrendous) to make a splashy entrance via the jetty, of which the observing Tropezians would definitely approve, *bien sûr!* ■



YTL LIFE'S GUIDE TO SHOPPING IN SAINT-TROPEZ

RONDINI Every leggy lovely in Saint-Tropez seems to be sporting Rondini's famous *sandals Tropeziennes*. Established in 1927, it remains as relevant in modern-day seaside ensembles. A must-buy! 16 *Rue Georges Clemenceau*, tel: 04 94 97 19 55.

SWAN'S Cute things galore at this multi-brand fashion and accessories store, including Anya Hindmarch carry-wear and stunning cocktail rings with colourful stones. 8 *Rue de Clemenceau*, tel: 04 94 56 43 12.

PINK GIN If you want to stand out among the beautiful crowd swanning about Nikki Beach and Le Club 55, come here for accessories and clothing that'll add a fluorescent punch to your look. 5 *Rue des Commerçants*, tel: 033 122 33 44 55.

GAS BIJOUX You might have come across this chi-chi store, which has outlets in Paris, New York and Milan. Pop by to stock up on arm candy as well as stunning adornment for other body parts. *Place de la Garonne*, tel: 04 94 97 26 52.

TRUFFAUX Few things shade you more stylishly than a Panama hat and, certainly, there are plenty to choose from in Saint-T's shops. Truffaux is relatively new to the scene but it does beautifully-befitted headgear – every hat is personally steamed to fit the wearer's head – with specialist work and height modification also done by appointment. *Rue Gambetta*, tel: 04 94 56 51 38.

K JACQUES Although the jet-set and the chic-set have been wearing K Jacques' *Spartiates Tropeziennes* since 1933, it got a super celebrity boost when Madonna wore a pair during Super Bowl 2012. Get a pair. You'll definitely L.U.V. it. 16 *Rue Henri Seillon*, tel: 04 94 97 38 67.

NICOLAS HANNIET For comfortable Tropezienne-style espadrilles (a nice change from the ubiquitous gladiator sandals synonymous with the town), pop by this little store that offers traditional as well as cheeky designs, including patterns featuring the faces of Salvador Dali and Karl Lagerfeld. 15, *Rue des Commerçants*, tel: 04 94 45 9043.

ISABELLA M is the store you want if vintage Chanel or retro Bakelite jewellery is what you're after. This charming store also offers authentic Art Deco and Art Nouveau furniture and decorative items. *Passage du Port*, tel: 06 30 03 91 76. *clean-up takes place from 1 - 3 October.*

Climb Every Mountain

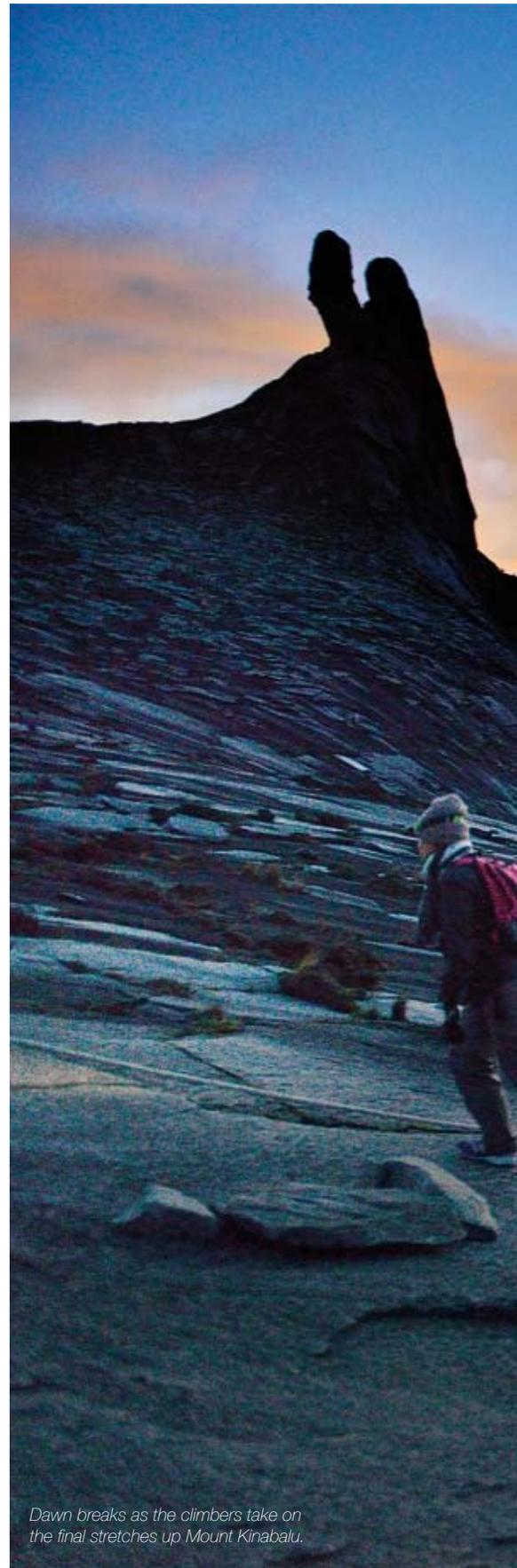
To celebrate its debut in Borneo with the opening of Gaya Island Resort, YTL Hotels organised a climb for friends, partners and its resort team up Mount Kinabalu – South-East Asia’s highest peak and an icon of Sabah. *Elaine Daly*, Miss Malaysia/Universe 2003 and a renowned face in Malaysia’s acting and modelling industries, shares her experience.

Photography by **Cede Prudente**

Never did I imagine that 2012 would be a year of many firsts. I had secretly desired the year to be filled with adventure and experiences but hadn't done much planning to make it so. And yet, somehow, things fell beautifully into place. I'm only half way through the year and it has been pretty glorious right from the start. In January, I experienced what has been the best meal to date in my life at Dinner by Heston – molecular genius Heston Blumenthal's much talked about London outpost. I also finally mustered up enough courage to have my tonsils removed that month, the day after my birthday. I'd been delaying it no thanks to a lack of courage and the procrastinator within, but the procedure changed my life and it paved the way for 2012 to be my year of, not just magical thinking, but doing too!

For a start, I need not travel with a big bag of meds any more. I am, overall, a happier, healthier camper (literally!). Recently, I travelled with World Vision (for which I am an ambassador) to Tua Chua, Vietnam – a village south of Hanoi – to visit a child whom I sponsor. I stayed in a local inn, right next to a market where they still sell dogs for meat and went on by foot to villages where you come face to face with extreme poverty, have no running water and young girls are married off at 15.

I also visited Melbourne and enjoyed a veritable food fest, even coming home with my first pair of Uggs – an Australian brand of unique-looking shoes. It's the mid-year mark now and I still am not sure what the rest of the year has in store but my recent experience, on home ground,



Dawn breaks as the climbers take on the final stretches up Mount Kinabalu.





blessed me with an awe-filled moment that will live forever in my soul.

I recently climbed Mount Kinabalu, South-East Asia's highest peak and an icon of Sabah, to help celebrate the opening of Gaya Island Resort, YTL Hotels' first property in Borneo. My own love affair with this luxurious Malaysian hotel chain actually began 10 long years ago, when I discovered a magical island called Pangkor Laut. If I ever need to be transported to tranquillity, only this island can do it for me. I have, since then, made the point of visiting it at least twice a year and when stress levels are especially high. I had struck up a friendship with the island resort's then General Manager, Jeff Mong, and he became my go-to person for any questions I had regarding the group's extensive hotel portfolio. I also love The Majestic Malacca, which is a must-visit for me every Chinese New Year, and I have learnt to appreciate the different nuances each resort embodies and how it immediately captures the essence and unique qualities of its locations.

It was in January this year that I got a call from Jeff, telling me about the opening of another YTL hotel – this time on an

Clockwise, from top: The YTL Hotels team and friends at Timpohon Gate, where every Kinabalu climb begins; Carmen Soo and the writer ready for the challenge to scale South-East Asia's highest peak.





Mist shrouds the summit of Mount Kinabalu, which is also an icon of Sabah.

island called Gaya, just off the coast of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah's capital. He had planned this expedition to mark the brand's first presence in Sabah and invited me to come along. Being gung ho by nature, I immediately agreed. I also roped in my dear friend Carmen Soo, a well-known face in Malaysia and the Philippines, who, like me, is always game for new adventures! What I soon learnt was that it takes serious preparation to climb any mountain.

I had already embarked on a strict fitness regime and a semi-raw food diet earlier in the year but threw in special daily training in the month leading up to the climb. My power plate instructor, Subash from Bodytone, whipped me into shape and drew up a mad regime for me, not including my gym, Pilates and wakeboarding sessions. On 26 May, at

0530hrs on a Saturday, Carmen and I, both decked out in our Adidas best, began our Kinabalu journey. We were met by Jeff, members of the YTL office and Reef Check Malaysia. We travelled from Kota Kinabalu to Kinabalu Park, a two-hour journey which fuelled our little group's sense of nervousness and anticipation.

Every Kinabalu climb begins, symbolically, at the Timpohon Gate. We arrived at about 0830hrs. Anselm, our guide from Let's Go Borneo, explained the route and what to expect along the way. We finally started at 0930hrs and I immediately became thankful for my over-zealous preparation. Climbing Kinabalu requires endurance and I remember having to take several deep breaths just to remain focused. We stopped every kilometre or so for gulps of water and rest. Kinabalu Park is also

extremely well-managed, with lavatories at every rest hut along the way. I'd read that altitude sickness could be a potential problem but, due to our slow and steady pace, as well as my deep-breathing exercises, I felt perfectly fine. The climb also helped inculcate a great sense of respect for the porters (women porters, especially) who work the Kinabalu route, often carrying no less than 40kg of baggage, including heavy gas tanks, in flimsy slippers, sometimes twice a day!

We finally arrive at Laban Rata, our abode for the night, where we hungrily tucked into dinner and attempted a few hours' sleep before the final ascent. We were woken up at 0230hrs and piled on extra layers of clothing as temperatures at Kinabalu's summit can often dip to 5°C. This moment,



THE PERFECT BASE

Gaya Island Resort is the latest addition to YTL Hotel's portfolio of luxury properties. Located on Gaya Island, off the coast of Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, the resort offers 120 hill villas and a two-bedroom suite, and will boast its very own Feast Village as well as a Spa Village, offering treatments that embody the essence of Borneo's unique wellness culture and healing traditions. To reserve, contact the YTL Travel Centre at +60 3 2783 1000.



up until 1040hrs, turned out to be one of my life's great defining moments, as well as one of the most physically-challenging things I have ever done so far. Climbing the final 2km to Low's Peak took me four hours and 10 minutes! Thinking about how Sir Hugh Low did it in 1851 helped spur me on. The climb wasn't easy and my walking stick became my new best friend for the next two days. My guide, Ginsos Magiau, was also an angel and I will always be grateful for his kindness and motivation that helped me make it to the top.

Never had the phrase 'so near yet so far' rung truer for me as well. The air began to thin as we ascended higher and I could slowly see the peak taking shape from a distance. The sun had, by now, begun to rise and the beauty surrounding it was



Above: For the writer, 2012 has been a year of doing. Left: The YTL Hotels climbers celebrate reaching the top of Mount Kinabalu.

indescribable. I must admit to tearing up in the last 150m as I was both exhausted and overwhelmed by the beauty around me, and grateful for Ginsos' encouragement and moral support, knowing that he, who was but a stranger to me the day before, held on to me, helping me conquer my fear and achieving a great feat.

That moment finally arrived at 0643hours and what an amazing feeling it was. The sight from Kinabalu's summit was nothing short of glorious and, to be standing tall on South-East Asia's highest peak, after more than 12 hours of mental and physical exhaustion, was sweet.

The next challenge came in the form of the descent. And, as Ginsos and I trudged down the slippery slopes, it dawned

upon me that going down was trickier than climbing up. Again, Ginsos came to the rescue, slowly cajoling me and my trembling knees down. It's funny how climbing mountains reflects life's journey in so many ways. There is the fear of not knowing what lies ahead and how the right support and encouragement goes a long, long way. After reaching Laban Rata and resting for an hour, we made our final descent down to the base. By now, it started pouring and the slopes became more slippery than ever. Thankfully, Scott Mayback, Gaya Island Resort's resident marine biologist, stepped in to help and, together, we made it down safely, just after the sun had begun to set.

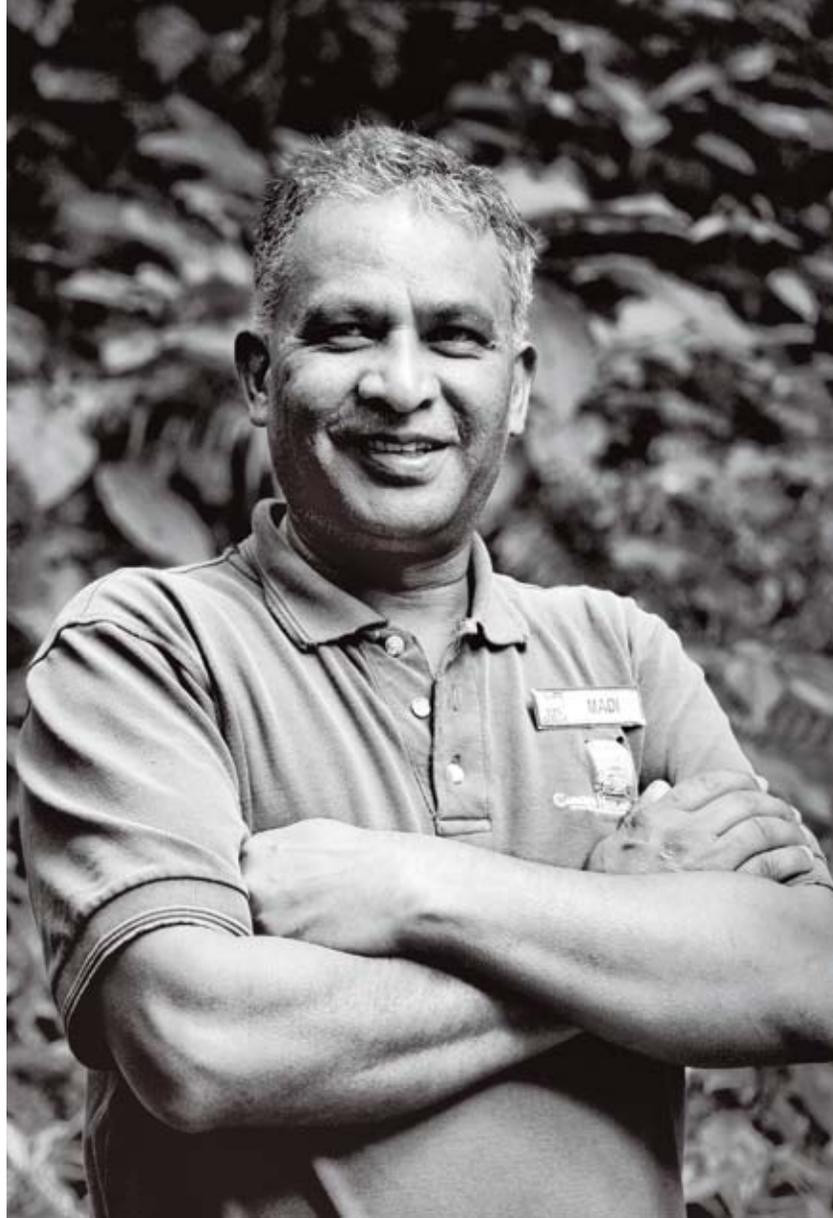
Once the adrenaline rush had died down, extreme fatigue and the consciousness

of our exceedingly-sore legs finally set in. I even joked that climbing Kinabalu was harder than competing in a beauty pageant, which, by the way, is no mean feat either. In Carmen's own words, she felt "like a winner". The sense of camaraderie, being on top of the world and knowing that 'if it's to be, it's up to me' best sum up my entire experience. As Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, the first people to summit Mount Everest, put it: "It's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves". Now that my legs have just about recovered, I wouldn't mind climbing Kinabalu for a second time, perhaps to commemorate Gaya Island Resort's first anniversary. Like I said, it's been a year of many firsts. Maybe next year should be one of returning for seconds. ■

The Jungle Boy

The Cameron Highlands Resort's resident naturalist, S Madi, is never happier than when out in the outdoors, exploring the unique flora and fauna of the verdant highlands he calls home.

Text by **Diana Khoo**



Top: S Madi, Cameron Highlands Resort's resident naturalist. Bottom: A beautiful winged resident of the highlands.



When the temperatures rise in tropical Malaysia, one of the preferred places to retreat to has always been the Cameron Highlands, a former colonial hill station that was first discovered in 1885 by British surveyor William Cameron. Often compared to places like Simla or Darjeeling, it is cool and misty, with the surrounding jungle boasting a unique micro-system that is all its own. For those keen on learning more about plant life and such, it would be wise to befriend S Madi, the resident naturalist at Cameron Highlands Resort and a veritable bank of information. An avid naturalist for over 20 years, Madi, as he is simply known, has even discovered two species of flora – a flower known as the *Amorphophallus* and a jungle orchid unique to the highlands, known as *Mono Maria Babata*. “In fact, I used to be known as the Orchid Hunter but, now, I am also known as the Thompson

Hunter as my Jim Thompson Mystery Trail tours are becoming increasingly popular,” says Madi, in reference to the daily jungle walks he conducts, taking guests on a trail that retraces the last steps of the famous Thai Silk King before he mysteriously disappeared from the nearby Moonlight Cottage in the highlands on Easter Sunday, 1967.

“It’s easy to see how one can be swallowed up by the jungle,” he continues. “The ground is deep in mulch and, if one isn’t careful, one can simply sink or fall into a deep hole. The jungle is also thick and dense, filled with plants like giant lianas, bamboo and strangler figs.” During my walk with Madi, I was lucky that his keen sight helped pick out so many interesting things to see, which I would never have been able to spot, let alone identify, by myself. With ease, he pointed out patches

of wild aubergine and a bean-like plant with hanging catkins, which he said was an amazing cure for joint pains if ground up to a powder and drunk. A short while later, he spotted a shiny black millipede endemic to Cameron Highlands as well as a fallen tree trunk bearing the claw marks of a civet cat! On a slope, his sharp eyes spotted tiny bamboo orchids as well as yellow balsam blossoms that resemble golden shower orchids.

Madi also combines his botanic knowledge with a touch of the practical, handing out citronella leaves to the group and asking all of us to stuff them into our shoes and socks. "It's to keep leeches away," he grins. Madi also points at a liana, calling it 'Tarzan's friend', and shows us the Devil's Foot plant, which is sometimes referred to as Dr Plant, as it helps absorb certain fungus and rot, thereby keeping other plants safe. We were also shown a hollowed-out space near the roots of a

tree, where Madi said tarantula-like, bird-eating spiders liked to hide. "They like living in burrows, although some also live arboreally in trees," explains Madi. "They are usually shy but can strike if provoked."

Calling himself the original Jungle Boy, Madi, when not taking guests on nature rambles, likes to spend his time tagging and planting orchids. To date, he has planted over 100 species of orchids at the resort's conservatory. ■

S Madi leads guided walks around the Cameronian jungle on two types of trails: the hugely-popular Jim Thompson Mystery Trail and the Two Mountain Trails, which offers stunning views of the peaks of Gunung Jasar and Gunung Perdah. To book a place, contact the Front Desk at the Cameron Highlands Resort.

"It's easy to see how one can be swallowed up by the jungle."

This page, from left: Once the trekking is done, retreat to luxuriate in the comfort and warmth of the Cameron Highlands Resort; A verdant specimen.



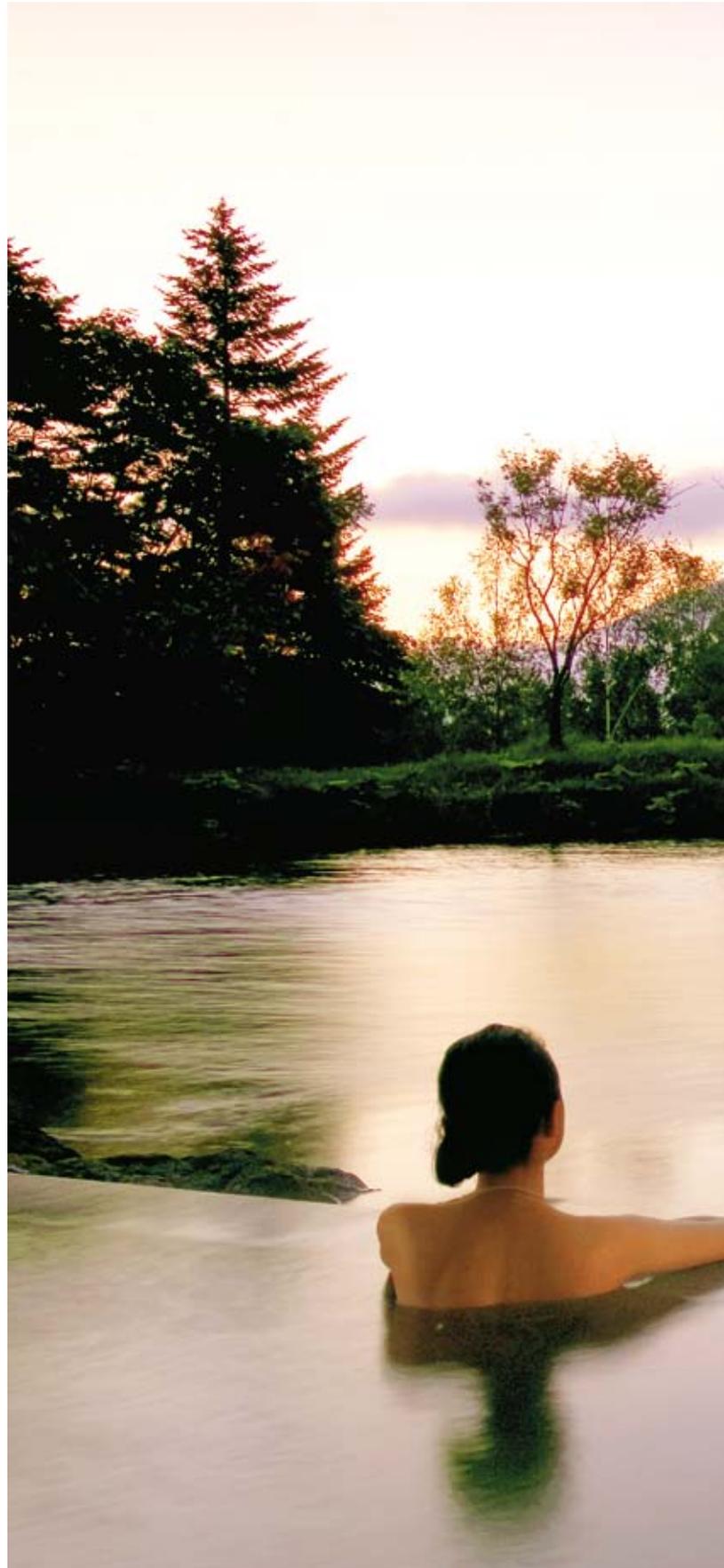
A Good Soak

Onsen might be one of Japan's most simple pleasures but it is just as much a restorative activity, with reported therapeutic and beauty benefits. **Catherine Shaw** takes a dip in some pretty hot waters.

A soak in a traditional Japanese hot spring, called *onsen*, is one of the most magical ways to experience the real Japan. In a country known for its stunning architecture, exquisite cuisine and rarefied rituals, it is this most simple and serene of pleasures that best encompasses the nation's culture.

Happily, thanks to its volcanic geology, Japan has over 2,500 hot springs. These waters must pass strict regulations before they can be called *onsen*. Hot water alone is not enough: the Japanese Hot Spring Law requires water to flow to the surface at over 75°F and contain certain minerals such as iron or sulphur.

Hokkaido, Japan's most northerly island, is particularly blessed with hot springs, ranging from simple stone baths to vast luxurious pools. Niseko, one of Japan's most popular year-round resorts and located in south-west Hokkaido, has over 13 types of *onsen*, varying dramatically in their mineral qualities. Two *onsen*, located relatively near each other, can often have completely different profiles – and reported benefits beyond the obvious deep relaxation and sense of well being brought by soaking in hot waters. Herein lies the secret to Japan's special love affair with hot springs: even though *onsen* are known to be therapeutic, they are also viewed as a recreational activity.





The onsen at Hilton Niseko Village offers a stunning view of Mount Yotei.

THE REPORTED BENEFITS OF ONSEN

Simple *Onsen* – contain small amounts of radical carbon, salt and other minerals and are good for relaxation and offer general health benefits and relaxation.

Salt Spring *Onsen* – have a greater concentration of minerals and salt than the simple *onsen*.

Carbonated *Onsen* – are similar to salt *onsen*, although with carbonated water believed to aid those with heart disease, blood circulation disorders and neurological disorders.

Sodium Chloride *Onsen* – are reported to offer relief for painful joints, arthritis or rheumatism.

Iron Springs *Onsen* – are said to offer relief for painful joints, menopausal discomforts and chronic skin diseases.

Sulphur *Onsen* – are reported to prevent hardening of the arteries.

Radium *Onsen* – are believed to lower high blood pressure and prevent hardening of the arteries, as well as being therapeutic for digestive disorders or rheumatism.

Hilton Niseko Village is renowned for its traditional indoor and outdoor *onsen*, both of which offer exceptional views of Mount Yōtei. The outdoor bath, called a *rotenburo*, overflows into a large 'eternity' pond. Hilton's sodium-rich waters are said to be excellent for joint pain and weary muscles, the perfect respite after a day's golfing or, in winter, skiing on Niseko's legendary snowy slopes.

The nearby Green Leaf *onsen* has one of the most beautiful natural rock pools in Niseko, with waters that originate from a natural mineral spring (around 1,000m deep) located on Mount Niseko Annupuri. Minerals found in the *onsen* waters include sodium, potassium, magnesium, calcium, chlorine, sulphur oxide and hydrogen carbonate, all said to be excellent for helping alleviate nerve, muscle and joint pain, and aid recovery from chills and colds. The *onsen* waters are also reported to have emulsifying properties, making skin smooth. *Onsen* from this source are often referred to as "Bijin no Yu", or *onsen* of beauty.

The sodium and calcium-rich water of Kanro no Mori is also said to be excellent for joint pain and there is a private *onsen* room for those who prefer privacy. Locals also highly recommend Yuki Chichibu, located at the foot of Mount Chisenupuri, for waters renowned for silky skin. Another suggestion, located just across from Niseko train station, is Kira no Yu.

Understanding *onsen* expectations and customs is the key to feeling at ease with the hot spring bathing experience, says *The Japanese Spa* author, Elizabeth Heilman Brooke. "The frequency with which you take to the baths is up to you. It is not uncommon



Clockwise, from right: Niseko, in south-west Hokkaido, has 13 types of onsen, all with different kinds of therapeutic properties; Onsen is as much about recreation as it is about healing; Use the wooden oke to wash yourself before entering the onsen.





to visit the baths before dinner, after dinner, late in the evening, after drinks in the bar, and before or after breakfast.”

Following bathing etiquette is important: men and women's baths are usually separated with entrances decorated with different coloured *noren* (split curtains). If in doubt, look for 女 for women and 男 for men. In the changing room, place the *yukata* (an informal cotton kimono) or your clothes in one of the baskets or locker. Take the small towel provided into the showering area (swimsuits or towels are not permitted in Japanese *onsen*) but note it should never be dipped in the water. The next step is very important: wash in the shower provided – sit on the small wooden stool and use the small wooden *oke* (bucket) to pre-wash your body – making sure any soapy residue is completely rinsed away. Slowly enter the steaming, mineral-rich waters – it can take a few minutes to adjust to the heat. *Onsen* can be very hot – if there are several baths, they will usually be of different temperatures, so take your time to acclimatise. Stay in for as long as is comfortable. In very hot baths, it is best to take several short dips rather than soak. You may also soak just the feet,

or to your knees or waist to adjust to the temperature. “Since the mineral content of certain waters is particularly good for the skin, it is not considered necessary to bathe or rinse after a final *onsen* soak,” says Brooke.

Bathing times are set by each *onsen* but are usually open until late to allow access after dinner or before retiring to bed. Most *onsen* are closed during the mid-morning when the tubs are usually cleaned. For maximum privacy, head to the bath at dinner time – most Japanese allow some time after a meal. ■



WHEN TO GO

Thanks to its northerly location, Niseko avoids the soaring summer temperatures, stifling humidity and prolonged rainy season that affects the rest of Japan. Instead, summer reveals blissful sunny skies, low humidity and cool evenings. Day-time temperatures rarely rise above 27°C.

GETTING THERE

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

HOKKAIDO

Hokkaido is blessed with stunning natural beauty, four distinct seasons, exceptionally clean air, pristine waters, beaches, mountains, forests, lakes and rivers. Niseko, about 100km west of Sapporo, lies in a gently sloping basin with Mount Yōtei in a national park to the east and Mount Niseko-Annupuri to the north. Mount Yōtei, the most prominent mountain, is a dormant 1,898m volcano, often referred to as Hokkaido's Mount Fuji, thanks to its distinctive triangular shape. The Sea of Japan lies to the north-west.

USEFUL LINKS

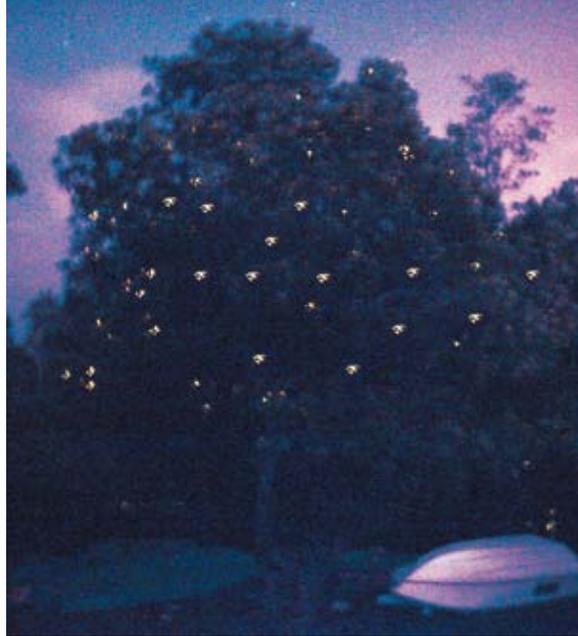
Hilton Niseko Village: www.niseko-village.com/en
Green Leaf Hotel: thegreenleafhotel.com/en/
www.nisekotourism.com/en



Night Delights

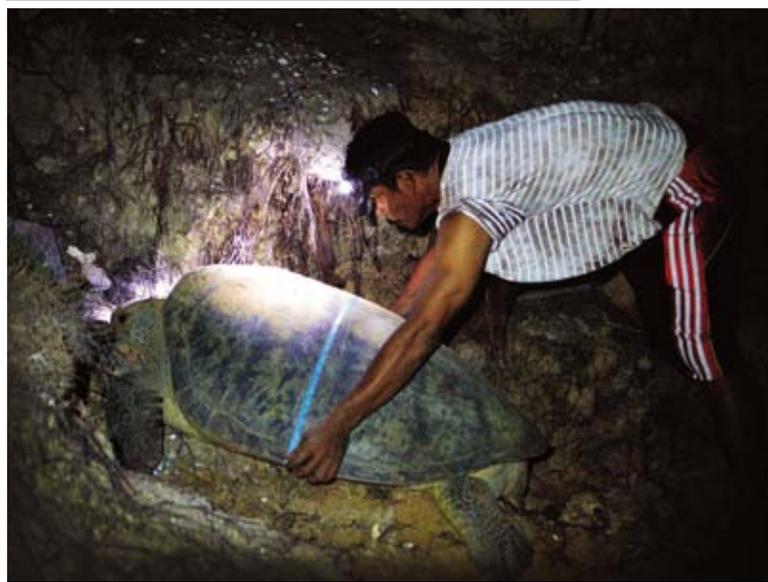
Forget about snuggling down for the night once the sun sets at Tanjong Jara Resort. This season offers the ultimate nocturnal nature activities that the East Coast of Malaysia has to offer, from a riverine cruise and watching fireflies perform a luminous ballet, to the unforgettable experience of seeing turtles come ashore to lay their eggs.

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



life feature //

Clockwise, from left: Fireflies doing their magical dance at Yek Yah River; Dwindling numbers of sea turtles worldwide have sparked efforts to help save the creature; Hawksbills are one of the turtle species that still use Terengganu as nesting sites.



I'm no stranger to the charms of Tanjong Jara Resort, a resort which exudes all the grace and uniqueness of the Malay race and culture. Located in Dungun, in the state of Terengganu, and facing the wide, watery expanse of the South China Sea, it has always lived up to its 'Unmistakably Malay' tagline and holistic philosophy of *Sucimurni*, evident every morning as guests are beckoned to participate in a series of unique stretching exercises that incorporate thoroughly Malaysian elements, as well as a rousing *Mandi Bunga* procession, which features men and women bearing brass trays of flowers and *buyongs* (traditional water jars), leading from the hotel lobby to the Spa Village. These items will then be used in the spa's rituals, which indulge guests with a pre-treatment flower bath, inspired by the royal court ceremonies of the Malay palaces.

My recent visit, however, coincided with the start of the turtle-watching season, when these gentle creatures emerge from the sea to make their way to selected beaches in Terengganu in order to lay their eggs. One of the most famous turtle beaches in the state is, undoubtedly, Rantau Abang, just a short distance away from Tanjong Jara Resort. Once the preferred nesting site of the famous giant leatherback turtles, this species has, regrettably, dwindled close to extinction and is almost never seen, although there are several other species who still make their way to Terengganu around the months of June to September each year, where they lumber up, slowly but surely, to deposit their eggs within the beaches' golden sand before quietly disappearing back into the sea.

"Turtles generally like to lay their eggs whenever there is a full moon," says Aziz Awang, a bellhop with the Tanjong Jara Resort and its de facto 'Turtle Man'. A keen nature-lover, Aziz is the go-to person for guests wishing to experience local Terengganu wildlife at its best. Born in Marang, a fishing village located about 45 minutes from Dungun, Aziz is blessed with a keen interest and knowledge of the local wildlife and, aside from his work at the resort, takes the time and effort to help out in a naturalist's capacity. So, whenever turtle season looms on the calendar, he is assuredly kept very busy, taking guests out nightly on exciting activities, particularly firefly- and sea turtle-watching.

"It is a shame about Rantau Abang," says Aziz, "as the giant leatherbacks no longer come. But we are still fortunate that certain species of sea turtles, particularly the hawksbill and green turtles, still come to Terengganu to lay their eggs." The evening I was at the resort, I was fortunate to have secured a spot for a joint-tour that included both fireflies and sea turtles. "It's quite a good schedule as firefly-watching is best at around 8.30pm, while the turtles come to shore quite late, oftentimes after midnight," shares Aziz. An excited group of guests, myself included, congregate at the resort's lobby at around 8pm and we are driven to Kg Ibock, about an hour's drive away. When we arrive at the banks of the Yek Yah River, we troop quietly into a waiting riverboat and the experience begins. Using battery-power, so as to keep noise levels to a minimum as well as to glide as quietly as possible without disturbing the environment and the exposed roots of the *berembang* trees (the preferred food of the fireflies), we sail into the pitch-black darkness where, all too soon, we witness the amazing site of hundreds upon thousands of little twinkling lights. "It's Christmas every day here," quips Aziz.

It is these *berembang* trees (*Sonneratia caseolaris* or crabapple mangroves) upon which fireflies are completely dependent as is their main habitat and source of food. Firefly colonies can only be found where

there are *berembang* trees and Malaysia remains one of the few places left in the world where these unique firefly colonies still exist. Looking all around me, with the dark silhouette of the trees illuminated by the light emitted by these very special beetles, I felt slightly sad knowing that this awe-inspiring experience with nature was being assailed by threats from all quarters, namely pollution and land development.

"We Malays call them *kunang-kunang* or *kelip-kelip* and the fireflies flash their light to attract mates," shares Aziz. "The best time to see them is just after sunset to around 10pm." The boat ride lasts for around an hour, although you'd scarcely notice the time, being completely captivated by the twinkling lights. At one point, I wasn't quite sure whether I was looking at the amazing night sky, brilliant with stars, or the fireflies, actually.

All too soon, we disembarked in order to begin the second part of our nocturnal adventure. Another bumpy journey along unmarked dirt roads began, before finally arriving at a quiet beach, also totally pitch-black as any light would scare away nesting turtles. Several figures emerge out of the darkness to greet Aziz. These people, he explained, were sentry-men of sorts, standing watch the whole night through. Should a turtle come ashore, these dedicated men would later scoop out their eggs and keep them safe under an egg protection programme, implemented and overseen by the Fisheries Department of Malaysia, and, upon hatching, be safely released back into the sea. According to the Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia, this seems to be a viable long-term effort to help increase turtle populations. According to Chan Eng Heng, a retired university professor and active conservationist with the Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia, and who had himself initiated an egg protection programme in 1993 with Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, it is a laborious process that has paid off. "When I retired in 2009, after 16 years of dedicated egg protection measures,



we'd found that annual nesting numbers had increased from 200-400 to about 400-750."

Turtle-watching is also an activity that is totally unsuitable for the impatient or noisy, as it entails hours of waiting quietly in the darkness while the watchmen patiently look out onto the dark expanse of the South China Sea. After about an hour and a half, Aziz informed us that a turtle had indeed come ashore a few kilometres down from where we were. As we made our way to the spot, the turtle had, alas, for reasons unknown, decided not to lay her eggs that night and, instead, returned to the sea. Although greatly disappointed, it was an unforgettable experience being able to see the fresh tracks left by the turtle's fins as it slowly pulled itself up the sands. It seemed as if a little car had risen up from the water, as we observed the deep grooves of its tracks. I can only

Top: Tanjung Jara Resort is also the perfect location to discover the natural wonders of fireflies and turtles.

Right: The survival of the firefly is under threat by pollution and development.





“I can only imagine now how magical it must seem, seeing a great, gentle creature emerge out of the black waters of the South China Sea in order to deposit its eggs in a place it deemed safe and secure.”



TURTLE-WATCHING TIPS

Important things you must know before embarking on any turtle-watching activities.

- Understand and educate yourself on the needs of the turtle. They are very sensitive to light and disturbance and flash photography is strictly forbidden!
- There should be no crowds around the turtle while she is laying her eggs. Always keep a safe distance from her so that she can carry on the ritual of the egg-laying process undisturbed.
- Always stand to the back of the turtle so as to be less visible to her and do not impede her passage back to the ocean.
- Understand that every individual has a role in turtle conservation if he or she chooses to. Never buy or eat turtle eggs and, whenever possible, support turtle conservation programmes by volunteering or participating in turtle fund-raising activities.
- Never buy turtle products or anything made from or using turtle shells.
- Practise the 3 Rs and do not carelessly throw trash around, especially on beaches. Turtles may eat them and die.
- To learn more about what you can do to save these magnificent creatures, visit <http://www.turtleconservationsociety.org.my>, where members of the public can learn more about turtles as well as actively participate in their conservation.

Source: *The Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia*



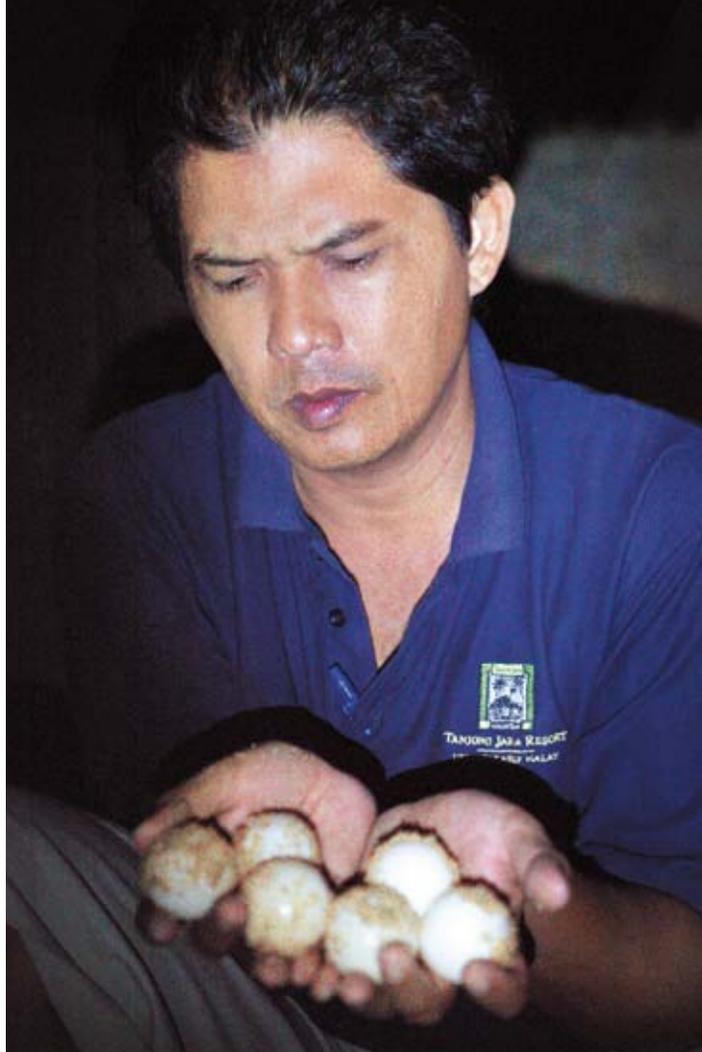


SAVE THE TURTLES

Chan Eng Heng, a retired university professor and active conservationist with the Turtle Conservation Society of Malaysia, speaks to *YTL Life* about what more can be done for turtle conservation in the country.

“The state of Terengganu has been experiencing both positive and negative results in terms of turtle conservation, depending on which species one is referring to. Apart from the Fisheries Department, there are also other agencies doing turtle conservation in the state. One huge disappointment in turtle conservation efforts in Terengganu is in the failure to ban the sale and consumption of turtle eggs in the state. Although NGOs and other conservation groups have lobbied the State Government to do so, their efforts have not paid off. As a result, turtle eggs are quite widely sold in markets and what’s really bad is that people are smuggling the eggs from other states, like Sabah, where sale of turtle eggs have been banned, into Terengganu. Another area where conservation efforts need to be stepped up is in reducing the mortality rate of turtles caught in fishing nets or from eating plastic and other trash, so evident from the stranding of turtle carcasses along some of Terengganu’s beaches.”

“Visitors participating in turtle-watching programmes must also understand and be educated on the needs of the turtle. If turtle-watching activities are well-managed and do not disrupt the egg-laying process, then this serves as a good way of creating a bond between humans and turtles. Proper briefings also need to be given before any turtle-watching activity, so that the public can learn more about them and what can be done to save them. There have been cases where unscrupulous tour operators or unethical resorts commercialise the activity to the extent of selling turtle hatchlings to tourists! There is still so much that can and should be done. I guess, as with all things, the first step always lies in education.”





imagine now how magical it must seem, seeing a great, gentle creature emerge out of the black waters of the South China Sea in order to deposit its eggs in a place it deemed safe and secure.

Sadly, the odds seem stacked against the sea turtle. For the hundreds of eggs laid by each female turtle, very few will make it to the hatching stage, as predators, in the shape of monitor lizards, sea birds and even dogs, may come across the nest and eat the eggs. Thankfully, the egg protection measures implemented by the Fisheries Department ensure a very high hatching rate for the turtle's eggs. However, the next stage is the most crucial yet perilous and it is a common fact that very few hatchlings survive the short trek from nest to sea, given the number of sea birds, particularly gulls, who lie in wait for this easy feast. Thankfully, the Fisheries Department releases hatchlings only late at night so as to improve their chances of survival.



Clockwise, from top: Turtle hatchlings about to be released to the sea at night, giving them a better chance at survival; The endangered leatherback turtle is rarely seen anymore on Rantau Abang; Aziz Awang, Tanjung Jara Resort's 'Turtle Man', with a clutch of newly-laid eggs that will be incubated in a safe place.

Although we didn't manage to see a turtle come ashore, we were told a few hatchlings had just emerged from their nest and were fortunate enough to see them being released by one of the watchmen. As we peered into the bucket at the seemingly-helpless little creatures, it seems almost unbelievable that, should they survive to adulthood, they would return to these very same sands, decade after decade, in order to continue their unique circle of life. I then pinched myself to remember that turtles have been around since the time of the great dinosaurs, quietly observing the tumultuous evolution of the earth and all its creatures. I can only say that it would be mankind's greatest shame if we, in a terrible reversal of roles, become the cause and, worse yet, live to witness the permanent extinction of these wonderful creatures within our lifetime. Now, that would indeed be a tragedy. ■

For more information on turtle-watching activities, kindly contact the Front Desk at the Tanjung Jara Resort.



Living The Artistic Dream

Contemporary art and design finds a new home in Shanghai's Swatch Art Peace Hotel. **Catherine Shaw** speaks to photographic artist Jenny Krasner, one of the hotel's visiting artists.



The Peace Suite of the Swatch Art Peace Hotel incorporates contemporary elements that suggest an ultra-modern future for the city of Shanghai.

Sometimes art imitates life: when New York-born photographic artist Jenny Krasner first travelled to Shanghai in 2008 and stood on the iconic Bund, gazing transfixed at a dusty, dilapidated building that had caught her eye, she never would have believed that she would one day return to stay – for a unique six-month artist’s residency programme – in the very same, but now beautifully-renovated, building. “It’s just like living in Harry Winston’s (the renowned luxury jewellers) on New York’s 5th Avenue,” she says. “It really is a dream. I still can’t believe it is real!”

Happily for Krasner and a host of other talented artists, this is one dream that has come true: the Swatch Art Peace Hotel opened its art décor doors on 1 November last year and immediately caused a stir in cultural circles by welcoming artists to a one-of-a-kind inspirational art programme – before a single hotel guest had checked in. Eighteen rooms on the second and third floors have been transformed into modern, well-equipped workshop-studio apartments for visiting artists to use as a ‘home-from-home’ for three to six months. There are also state-of-the-art meeting and exhibition spaces. The rest of the stunning art deco building has been renovated to provide for some of Shanghai’s most elegant watch and jewellery boutiques and seven stunning individually-designed suites for guests.

The three-year renovation was led by the Swatch Group, with project leadership by Hayek Engineering, who painstakingly restored the original red brick structure to its 1909 heyday, protecting the building’s most valuable features like the striking wood- and marble-panelled lobby. Swatch has long been associated with the art world and this

new venture proved a perfect blend of its design ethos and one of Shanghai’s most important cultural landmarks.

The bold hotel-boutique-art hub concept was the brainchild of visionary Swatch Group Chief Executive Officer Nick Hayek, who noticed the hotel had a special “soul” while he was looking for the perfect locations for the Group’s luxury boutiques in Shanghai. The Swatch Art Peace Hotel has been open less than a year but has already set a new benchmark in contemporary art and culture, not to mention the concept of modern hospitality.

The launch of the experiment seems well-timed: Shanghai may have once been one of the leading finance and business centres of China but, today, it is increasingly taking on the mantle of the country’s artistic hub. The Chinese art market is growing rapidly, generating interest in distinctive talented local and international artists alike.

At the heart of the Swatch Art Peace Hotel is the idea of providing a unique cultural environment to help an ever-changing group of talented artists from around the world create contemporary art works. The ‘community’ of up to 18 people is deliberately drawn from a range of artistic fields, styles, media and nationalities to help establish a creative exchange.

“For more than 25 years, Swatch, the brand that revolutionised the Swiss watch industry, has been working closely with some of the world’s most talented artists. Today, one of the most ambitious goals of the Swatch Art Peace Hotel is to ensure that there is an exchange of artistic and cultural ideas among artists from around the world,” explains Hayek.



THE SWATCH ART PEACE HOTEL: A SHORT HISTORY

Originally known as the Palace Hotel and later on, as the South Building of the Peace Hotel, the building is one the city's oldest and most venerated hotels fronting Shanghai's Bund, a mile-long embanked riverfront lined with grand stone-fronted neo-classical and Beaux-Arts buildings. The renamed Swatch Art Peace Hotel reinforces the link between Swatch and contemporary art. The artist's studios have been open since November of 2011, while the hotel rooms – seven modern art-inspired guest suites influenced by traditional and modern Chinese culture - will open mid-2012.



"Swatch itself blends state-of-the-art watchmaking with art that exists for the sole purpose of making the world a more beautiful place. By treating Swatch as 'a canvas on the wrist', the artists help art escape from museums and jump to the streets and on the wrists of ordinary people. Art, and the emotion, joy of life, innovation and positive provocation of Swatch, are at the very heart of the Swatch Art Peace Hotel."

Artists are encouraged to engage in collaborative work and discussion, and to interact as a dynamic artistic community so as to enrich the creativity of the group as well as each other's work. Communication, confrontation, observation and discovery challenge the artists and enable them, in this vibrant artistic and cultural environment, to build upon their existing skills and extend the boundaries of their art. Krasner believes the collaborative environment is the key to the programme's success: "It is inspirational. I love that we are all doing something different. During the day, we do our work and then we get together at breakfast or for dinner for a chat. No one

Clockwise, from above: A contrast of black and white, the Happiness Suite presents an exploration of Chinese arts and handicrafts; Jenny Krasner's photography is but one element of her mixed media art; Numbers mark the entrances to the artists' workshops.



is competing on the work front; everyone is helpful and there is a lot of camaraderie.”

“To be in a hotel like this for an extended period is like winning the lottery – although one of my friends says it is even better than that!” says Krasner. “The Swatch support team is just incredible: anything we need, they somehow manage to fix.” The artist recalls the slight trepidation she experienced as she first arrived to find an immaculately tidy room that was to be her studio. “It was disconcerting at first, because the place is so new, designed in a high-end contemporary style, and clean. I thought it was beautiful but felt I couldn’t work there unless it was messy. Another artist recommended I explain what I really need and, the next thing, seven people were in the studio and it was done. Walls moved, shelves went up and things just happened.”

Krasner’s creative style is typical of the sort of interesting innovative work being done at the hotel. Her passion is to work with an intriguing blend of photography and mixed media. “I’ve travelled to countries like India,

Cambodia and Laos to take thousands of photographs of the areas,” she explains. “Then, I make collages out of them, using found and bought materials that I glue on. I consider myself an artist, not a photographer.”

Other artists who have already completed a residency at the hotel include award-winning Japanese acrylic artist Ayako Rokkaku, who paints using her fingers as a brush, Swiss-born photographer Tom De Peyret, French sound artist Alexandre Joly and American-born mixed-media abstract artist Kathryn Gohmert. The artistic field is wide and will include artists such as dancers, musicians, film-makers and writers.

Artists are free to work on individual or joint projects according to their own schedules. The only condition, says the Swatch Group, is that the artists leave “a trace of their passage.” Again, the artists are free to choose whatever form that takes. All traces will become part of the Swatch Art Peace Hotel’s collection and

will be exhibited for the public to enjoy. A virtual online museum will also help artists to display their work to a wider audience.

Krasner decided to come with a clear mind and see what inspiration she would find in Shanghai to create her particular trace. “I have amassed a couple of thousand photos and am loaded with lists of where to buy art supplies and where to have photos printed. I’ve also bought some amazing magazines from the Cultural Revolution and little objects, so, when I get going, I know I will find whatever ‘it’ is.”

“I’ll never forget the first time I saw the hotel on my first visit,” she says. “It was virtually empty, and it and the Fairmont Peace Hotel were both being renovated. They were astounding – they were like looking into the past. It took my breath away and I just wanted to stand there and take photographs. Of all the places in China, this was the one place I wanted to come back to.” Thanks to art and the inspired support of Swatch, she has. ■

Read & Listen

Celebrated author and illustrator Rachel Bright is well-known for her incredibly-popular children's books for Puffin and Harper Collins and her cards and gift range, The Bright Side. Taking up residency as a guest artist at the Spa Village Resort Tembok, Bali this September, she shares some of her favourite literary and musical diversions.



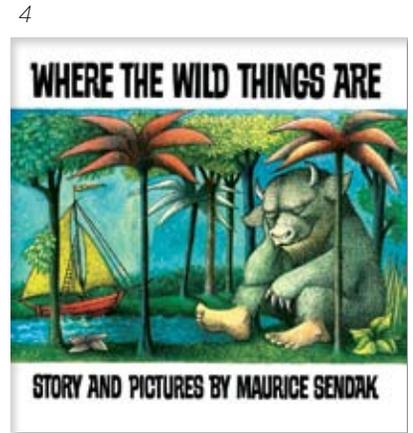
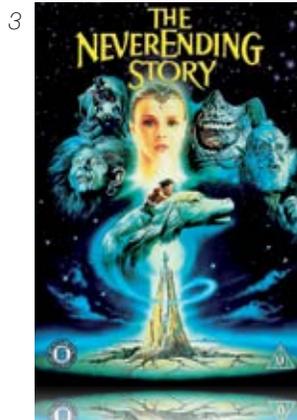
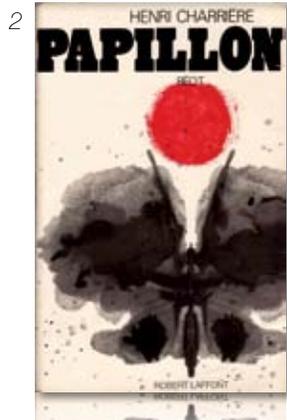
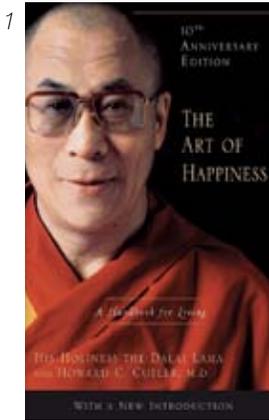
My Playlist

1. Hoppipolla – Sigur Ros I absolutely love this epic track, which is also largely instrumental. I always imagine the sun rising or setting to it in my mind. One of the most uplifting pieces of music I've ever heard.

2. A Dream – Julian Velard Beautiful and melancholic, the lyrics make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end. It's a song about lost love but is also strangely optimistic.

3. Total Eclipse of the Heart – Bonnie Tyler It's not fashionable but I do love a good power ballad! This is one of my favourites and it's my theory that everyone secretly loves power ballads, music that makes you want to close your eyes and punch the air! Most people won't admit to it but I'm open about my love for them.

4. Pretty much any song by Barry White Without fail, his music just puts sunshine in my heart. If I'm ever feeling blue, a Barry White song can change my mood in a moment. All his songs just make you want to sing and dance...and they certainly will make you smile.



My Readlist

1. *The Art of Happiness* – The Dalai Lama & Howard C Cutter
2. *Papillon* – Henri Charriere
3. *The Neverending Story* – Michael Ende
4. *Where the Wild Things Are* – Maurice Sendak
5. *Yes Man* – Danny Wallace
6. *Leonardo the Terrible Monster* – Mo Willems

I'm currently halfway through *The Art of Happiness* by the Dalai Lama and am completely hooked by the beautiful simplicity of the message and how the secret to happiness is all in the shifting of perspective. This book confirms all that I have read in the past and what I feel in my heart. There is real poetry in the book and I can't wait to finish it. As a children's author and illustrator, I am an avid collector of beautiful children's books and these two are among the best. *Leonardo the Terrible Monster* is funny and brilliant, whose ambition in life is to "scare the tuna salad out of someone", while Maurice Sendak's classic work and amazing illustrations just transport you to a weird and wonderful world.

I also love a funny book and Danny Wallace's is definitely one of those. It's all about the power of saying 'yes' – which I have experienced myself all through my life. The author transforms his life by the simple

action of being positive and taking up any offer that comes his way – hilarious reading from start to finish. *Papillon*, meanwhile, is the most epic of all my choices. It's a true page-turner and an adventure story of epic proportions. Personally, it's a story about the uncrushable power of the human spirit and the quest for freedom and how the power of never giving up simply shines through from within the pages. *The Neverending Story* is my favourite book. I first read it when I was 11 or 12 and must have re-read it about five more times since. It's pitched as a children's book but I think it works on so many levels that it's just as entertaining and poignant for an adult to read. It tells the story of Bastian Balthazar Bux, who becomes so engrossed in reading that he becomes part of the book. I love this premise and is the whole reason why I write and make art. I love the idea that creativity can change your reality in the most profound ways. It certainly has for me. 📖



Rachel Bright is the author of successful children's books like *What Does Daddy Do?* and *My Sister is an Alien*. She has her own stationery range, *The Bright Side*, which includes cards, gift wraps and tags, and notebooks.

The Big Easy

From luxurious timepieces to fierce accessories and a Fall/Winter silhouette that spells effortless elegance, go on and indulge yourself this season.

Keeping Time In Style

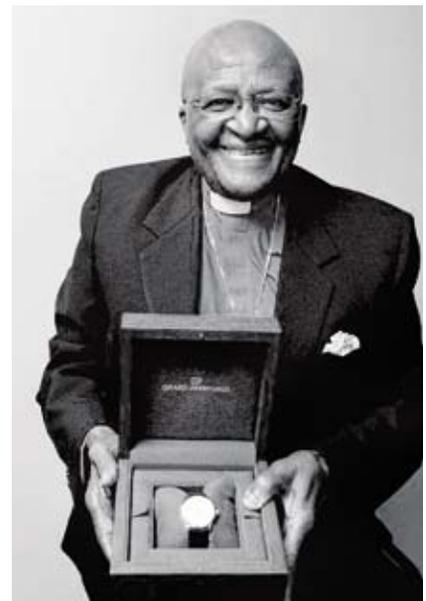
Eminent Swiss timekeeping brand, **Jaeger-LeCoultre**, recently unveiled its newly-refurbished boutique at Kuala Lumpur's Starhill Gallery, which is also South-East Asia's largest. Spanning 1,500 sq ft, it is a fitting showcase of the full range of its collections, including the *Reverso*, *Duomètre*, *AMVOX* and *Atmos* clocks.





Moving On

Making the transition from summer to fall is easy for the **Louis Vuitton** woman. Inspired by the effortless elegance of Charlotte Perriand, the avant-garde French architect and designer, the season's new collection fuses military details and mannish checks with rounded volumes, opulent fabrics and luxe embellishments. The result? An array of desirable, wearable pieces with instant, knockout appeal.



Honouring An Icon

Celebrated Swiss watchmaker **Girard-Perregaux** honours Nobel Peace Laureate, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, with a specially-engraved 1966 collection watch in recognition of his philanthropic accomplishments, particularly via The Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation. "The world we have is a gift to cherish," said the Laureate. "We should not only protect its elements but also the people who inhabit it. We should all strive to live in a place where people not only respect, but love the differences in one another. I am very thankful for Girard-Perregaux's support in achieving these goals."



Parisian Accents

Colour and texture were clearly in the brief for **Christian Dior's** Fall/Winter accessories offerings. Expect everything, from towering scarlet platform stilettos to fur-accented chapeaux, Art Deco-inspired earrings and sexy pumps in Klein Blue.



White & Black

On him: White cotton shirt,
black silk and wool blend
vest & pants from Shiatzy
Chen, brown leather shoes
from Louis Vuitton.
On her: Black organza with
lace embroidered gown
Shiatzy Chen.

close encounters

A sense of adventure and discovery awaits when one steps into the JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur. And with the right eye-catching garb – you soon realise that you're the protagonist starring in a story of love, mystery and, most definitely, style.

Photography **Marcus Wong** Photography assistants **Tim Woon** Styling **Colin Sim** Assistant **Ervin Tan**
Hair **Gary Sim** Makeup **KF Bong** Models **Albina Fazylova & Rafael Petenuci**
Location **JW Marriott, Kuala Lumpur**

Ink print

Nude netting dress
with printed jersey
tube and skirt from
Jean Paul Gaultier.





Life aquatic

Printed crochet
knit dress from
M Missoni.



A night out

On him: White shirt from Louis Vuitton, Maroon silk and wool blazer & pants from McQ by Alexander McQueen.

On her: Multicolour knitted dress & stripes wool jacket from M Missoni.

Room service

Black jersey draped top, printed silk skirt & patent leather belt from Jean Paul Gaultier; velvet booties from Christian Dior.





*Reservation
for one*

Grey wool peplum
jacket, knit pencil
skirt, black leather
belt & velvet booties
from Christian Dior.



*Window
dressing*

On him: T-shirt and
outer shirt from
Louis Vuitton.

On her: Houndstooth
top from McQ by
Alexander McQueen.



Little Touches of Luxe

From luxurious *bougies* to fragrances conceived in dreams, explore with aplomb the adventurous world of beauty this month.

Scent of a Woman

Celebrated couturier **Elie Saab**'s latest eau de toilette is an orange blossom-inspired delight, with notes of rose honey. Conceived by olfactory maestro Francis Kurkdjian, the fragrance is elegantly contained in sculpted crystal. A treasure for the senses.





Starry, Starry Night

Inspired by enchanted forests, black velvet nights illuminated only by stars, strung out like scattered pearls, the house of **Annick Goutal** launches its latest scent – *Nuit Etoilée*. Created by Camille Goutal and Isabelle Doyen and clad in a midnight blue bottle, this is a scent to wear once night falls.



French Chic

Few brands have inflamed the senses or captured the imagination the way **Diptyque** has. Founded in 1961 by three friends, Christiane Gautrot, Desmond Knox-Leet and Yves Coueslant, its graphic ovoid logo is now instantly-recognisable by arbiters of luxurious living and the brand has since expanded from its bestselling fragrances and candles to include perfumed soaps, a bodycare line and home sprays. From the Bulgarian rose fragrance of its bestselling *L'Ombre dans l'eau* EDT to the *Mimosa* candle, which instantly transports one to the French Riviera when it literally explodes with these delicate yellow blossoms in late spring, explore the world of Diptyque for yourself today.



The Sweet Life

Unmistakably Italian, **Acqua di Parma** has been manufacturing elegant fragrances and candles for close to 100 years now. Combining authentic Italian craftsmanship with the highest attention to detail, the house's classic scents, for example, continue to be hand-packed up till today. To instantly evoke the magic of Italy, simply light up one of its elegant glass candles, which release the unmistakable fragrance of its iconic *Colonia* fragrance. The spirit of *dolce vita* lives on.



Bella Donna

If you can't find the time for an island getaway, a visit to a day spa is all you need to escape the madding city crowds.

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

The art of Balinese massage dates back thousands of years.

It is natural, I suppose, for the Balinese spa genre to be one of the most widely-embraced healing and wellness cultures in the world, given its focus on touch and natural ingredients to put mind, body and soul immediately at ease. And, given its popularity, it's not uncommon to find a little slice of Balinese spa life wherever you may be. Malaysia's bustling capital, Kuala Lumpur, is home to numerous Balinese-

styled spas and among them is Donna Spa, an award-winning day spa located on the Pamper Floor of the city's most luxurious retail space, Starhill Gallery.

Right along the main lifestyle strip that is Bukit Bintang, Donna Spa is tucked away, a little oasis within Starhill itself. To find it, simply look for an entrance flanked by the tasselled ceremonial umbrellas



known to the Balinese as *tedung*. The décor scheme of Donna Spa uses a lot of dark wood, with the Balinese theme continuing throughout. There are two couples' suites (Peppermint and Ylang-Ylang) and six single treatment rooms. Once you've settled into a chair, accompanied by a cup of hot ginger tea sweetened with candy yams, browse through Donna Spa's extensive selection of a la carte or packaged spa journeys. This may range from a simple 45-minutes session of Javanese *lulur* to, perhaps, the more comprehensive Tropical Paradise experience, which includes a seven-flower traditional spa ritual, wrap or scrub, facial and massage. It must be said, though, that one of Donna Spa's fortes lies in its signature massages.

Based on a 4,000-year-old healing tradition, it incorporates the use of acupressure, with the skilful therapist employing long, sweeping strokes as well as firm finger work on specific pressure points in order to bring about healing and a sense of calm and well-being to one's body. My therapist for the day was especially gifted with a healing touch, having learnt the art of massage from her grandmother while growing up in Central Java. Upon placing her hands on my back, she immediately sensed a longstanding kink in the right shoulder area and proceeded to knead my entire, jet-lagged body with a superiority I'd not

experienced in a while. As I am a great fan of powerful finger work, she indulged me with amazingly strong sessions of deep thumb therapy, all of which work to increase and improve blood circulation and to reignite the flow of *qi*, the Chinese belief in one's internal energy or life force and in which balance must be maintained in order to enjoy robust good health.

With every muscle kneaded, stroked and smoothed, she proceeded to gently scrub me all over with a special avocado blend, designed to soften skin while working to detox and even out skin tone. Donna Spa might be Balinese in concept but I very quickly found myself slipping into a Zen-like state of tranquillity and had to literally tear myself away from the blissful heated treatment bed to wash off the luxurious body polish and slip back into the stream of city life. It might have only been a two-hour treatment but the sense of well-being lingered on long after that. Not all of us might be privileged enough to be able to jet off to Bali for extended weekends of rest and relaxation every so often. Thankfully, though, for those among us who live in Kuala Lumpur, a little Balinese haven of rejuvenation awaits – a serene heart amidst the madding city crowds. ▀

Donna Spa is located at S20 & S27, Pamper Floor, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jalan Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur. To make a reservation, call (6)03 2141 8999.

Rite of Passard

Talented young French chef Florent Passard makes his Malaysian debut at the award-winning Tanjong Jara Resort on its idyllic East Coast.

Text by Diana Khoo Photography by Yong Keen Keong

It may seem hard to believe but Dungun, set within the Malay heartland that is Terengganu, is where a young fresh-faced chef is serving up rather fine expressions of French cuisine with a decidedly contemporary twist. Having arrived in Malaysia earlier this year, the 30-year-old Florent Passard, a native of Nevers, France, has been busy redefining the menu at Nelayan, Tanjong Jara Resort's beachfront dining room whose name aptly means 'fisherman' in Malay. For those more accustomed to local flavours, new tantalising options now await, including French classics like traditional *soupe de poissons* and lobster bisque.

Chef Passard has also been busy experimenting with his discovery of exotic Asian herbs and ingredients, and is slowly working them into his sophisticated

repertoire, resulting in new menu additions like flash-cooked tuna roulade crusted with sesame seeds and served on a thin dark sliver of soy sauce jelly, and his local interpretation of bouillabaisse, prepared using tiger prawns, sea bass and red snapper cooked with vegetables and infused with saffron. Although only 30, Chef Passard has been working in the kitchen since he was a teenager and has, for the past 14 years, chalked up invaluable experience working with renowned names in French gastronomy, like Bruno Clement, France's self-styled 'King of Truffles', and at glamorous properties all over France, including the Villa Belrose and, most recently, the Muse Hôtel de Luxe in Saint-Tropez. "I had worked once, for a very short while, in Kuala Lumpur as part of a special food promotion and, after that, I decided I wanted to come to Malaysia to work for YTL Hotels," he says.

Fresh-faced French chef Florent Passard takes up residence at Tanjong Jara Resort's Nelayan Restaurant.



“My style has always been to focus on simplicity and freshness. I also like beautifully-presented dishes!”



Timbale of Crab

Ingredients

50g tomato jelly
 100g crab meat mixed with
 2 tbsp mayonnaise
 50g fresh pineapple, brunoised
 1 stalk fresh coriander, finely-chopped
 Balsamico
 2 soft shell crabs, deep fried in
 tempura batter

Method:

1. Mix crabmeat with coriander. Arrange a two-inch ring mould in the centre of a serving plate. Spoon half of the crabmeat mixture into the mould, gently press it down. Next, top it with half the tomato jelly, followed by the pineapple. Remove the mould and repeat step on another plate with the rest of the ingredients.
2. Top the timbale with the soft shell crab and drizzle a little balsamico to serve.

Crusted Red Snapper Served with Carrot Sauce and Oven-baked Tomato

Ingredients

2 150g red snapper fillets
 2 stalks lemongrass blended
 with 100g pineapple
 Salt and pepper to season

Baked tomato:

2 tomatoes, with top cut off
 120g butter
 80g breadcrumbs

2 cloves garlic, finely minced
 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Carrot sauce:

1 carrot, peeled and roughly cut
 200ml chicken or vegetable stock
 50g butter
 Salt to taste

Tapenade:

50g black olives
 2 tsp capers
 2 anchovy filets
 3 cloves garlic
 3 tbsp olive oil
 Lemon juice to taste

Method:

1. Make up the sauce first by simmering the carrots in the stock until soft, and blend with the butter into a smooth puree. For the tapenade, put all ingredients except the oil and lemon juice in a food processor, blitz for a few seconds and pour in the olive oil in a steady stream and blend into a paste. Add in lemon juice to taste.
2. Next, rub the butter into the breadcrumbs and mix in the garlic and parsley. Top the tomato with the mixture. Cover with foil and bake for 20 minutes in an oven at 180°C. Remove the foil to brown the top at the last five minutes of baking time.
3. For the fish, season with salt and pepper, spread pineapple mixture on the skin side of the fish and grill in an oven till cooked.
4. Serve fish with baked tomato, carrot sauce and a dollop of tapenade at the side.

Sesame-crusted Tuna with Shoyu Jelly and Ginger Pickles

Ingredients:

300g fresh tuna block
 50g sesame seeds
 1 tbsp *shoyu* (Japanese soy sauce)
 2g agar-agar
 1 tbsp fresh ginger, julienned

Ginger pickle:

30g fresh ginger, sliced
 100ml sake
 2 tbsp sugar

Method:

1. Boil the agar-agar till soft and add the *shoyu*, stirring gently until it has dissolved. Let it simmer for another 10 seconds before removing from the heat. Pour into a small rectangle mould and let it set.
2. Once set, chill for about 20 minutes before slicing it thinly.
3. Roll and coat the tuna completely in sesame and sear gently with a few drops of oil to prevent it from sticking to the pan. Once it has a nice pink centre, remove from heat and slice into desired thickness.
4. For the ginger pickles, simmer the sliced ginger with the sake and sugar over a low flame for 10 minutes.
5. Deep-fry the julienned ginger till crispy and use it to garnish the tuna.
6. Serve tuna slices with a few drops of balsamico, fried julienned ginger and ginger pickles.





life cuisine //

The cool, dark wood interiors of the Nelayan Restaurant.

So far, it has been an incredible learning curve for the young chef, picking up, not just a broader knowledge of Asian ingredients, but also a fluent command of English along the way. "You wouldn't believe it but I could barely speak three words of English when I arrived. Now, it's not too bad," he laughs. Guests dining at Tanjong Jara Resort's Nelayan will be treated to special and new dishes created by Chef Passard over the coming months, while he works on devising completely new and exciting menus for both lunch and dinner. "My style has always been to focus on simplicity and freshness. I also like beautifully-presented dishes!" Which makes perfect sense as, after all, we don't eat with just our mouths but also our eyes. ■



CHEF FLORENT AT A GLANCE

Favourite Ingredients: "I enjoy working with fresh fish and French marjoram, which has such an intense perfume. I also love Malaysian herbs, especially kaffir lime leaf and lemongrass."

Necessary Tool: "My Porsche chef's knife! Yes, just like the car... it's by Porsche Design studio."

Comfort Food: "I love sushi and, whenever I have a few days off, I make it a point to travel to Kuala Lumpur, where I head straight for the nearest Japanese restaurant and indulge in as much sushi as I can eat. I also love the local dish of fried rice – simple but very delicious."

Best Meal Experience: "I've been lucky to have dined at many two and three Michelin-starred restaurants all across France, but the one that stands out most in my memory has to be at Pascal Barbot's in Paris. It was my first three Michelin-starred meal and I can't forget this simple but amazingly-flavoured dish of a button mushroom cake layered with foie gras and lemon paste. The taste was astounding."

Favourite Food and Wine Pairings: "My hometown of Nevers in central France is fairly near Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, so I do like those wines very much. I especially like pairing Pouilly-Fumé with chicken and maybe oysters as well."

Down Malacca Way

Ben Quah, Hotel Manager of The Majestic Malacca, an elegant boutique hotel that exudes turn-of-the-century old world charm, shares his favourite things to eat, see and do in history-soaked Malacca.



Clockwise, from above: Tasty snacks to dip into at The Majestic Malacca; Jonker Street is great for food and shopping; J Manik's popular beaded slippers; Malacca's St Paul's Church, on the summit of St Paul's Hill, is among the city's icons.



Manik Street Preacher

Traditional Peranakan-style ladies beaded slippers (*kasut manik*) are one of the most popular things to buy here in Malacca and I highly recommend the ones sold at J Manik. There are many such stores but Joyce Ngiew's is the most popular option as they are crafted using genuine leather and are really well-made and comfortable. They also sell traditional *kebaya* to pair with your new *kasut manik*, should you wish.

Jonker Street

Malacca's bustling **Jonker Street** is still very much a must-see. It's not just about the food and the shopping, although the weekend night markets, held from Friday to Sunday nights, are excellent. You really have to explore the buildings and see how incredibly long the shop-houses are. This was because houses used to be taxed on its width, not length.

Chicken Rice's Always Nice

One of Malacca's popular meals is chicken rice but here, we serve it with a twist. The rice is actually shaped into little balls, about the size of a ping pong ball, to be enjoyed with juicy chicken and pungent chili sauce. One of the most famous shops which serve this savoury treat is **Hoe Kee**, in Jonker Street. Come early, though, as weekends often see long queues forming.



Street Food Treats

There's plenty of good street food to be enjoyed in Malacca. Even around the hotel, in the **Jalan Bunga Raya** area, you're spoilt for choice. There a *popiah* stall just outside **Madam King's**, a departmental store. Its fillings are just oozing and delicious. There's also **Capitol Seafood**, a well-known stall established over 40 years ago, that's famous for its seafood. Tuck into fresh cockles, river snails or grilled squid while almost squatting on the low stools and tables placed around. And, just outside the hotel entrance, to the right, don't miss the delicious *laksa* at **Kedai Kopi & Makanan Yung Lai Siang** – guaranteed to sell out by lunchtime. There are also fish ball noodles, prawn noodles and some of the best curry puffs to be found in Malaysia. There's the traditional version, filled with spiced, curried potatoes, but do also make room for the chicken, red bean and, my favourite of all, yam puffs.





Clockwise, from above: The laksa at Kedai Kopi & Makanan Yung Lai Siang is guaranteed to sell out by lunchtime; Fresh cockles from Capitol Seafood; Hoe Kee's chicken rice balls; Bustling night life in Jonker Street.



River Cruise

A sunset cruise down the Malacca River is also a lovely thing to do while here. When night falls and all the lights come on, it's really beautiful. Also, at just RM10 for a two-way, 45-minute journey, it's really a bargain way to see Malacca.

Trishaw Explorer

A ride on a traditional trishaw is also a great way to experience and explore the city. Most of the trishaws, as you would see, are decked out in all sorts of decorations and lights. You must choose the loudest, gaudiest one... absolutely! You can explore the entire Malacca in about two hours and, if you choose your driver wisely, they'll be able to point out all the sights along the way and explain them in pretty good detail.





History Walk With Ho Peck Choo

Our resident historian Ho Peck Choo, or just 'Choo', as she is popularly known, is a fifth-generation Peranakan lady, who's extremely passionate about what she does and of Malacca's history and culture. Her two to two-and-a-half hour walks in the historical and cultural heart of Malacca, particularly around Chinatown and Harmony Street, are not to be missed. Small groups of up to eight people are recommended and her walks start at the hotel daily, except Wednesdays, at 10am and 5pm.



Clockwise, from right: Ho Peck Choo conducts daily walks into the historical and cultural heart of Malacca; A trishaw ride is a great way to explore the city; Take a sunset cruise down the Malacca River; Among the options available at the Spa Village at The Majestic Malacca is the palm sugar and honey body scrub.

Kampung Morten

Right across the river from The Majestic Malacca is **Kampung Morten**, Malacca's oldest living Malay village, which was named after JF Morten, the British district officer who had gazetted the land for the Malay community here in the 1920s. Parts of the film *Entrapment* was filmed here, although you'd be hard-pressed to recognise it as they superimposed the Petronas Twin Towers on the background. It's lovely to have a walkabout, especially early in the morning. You can also visit Villa Sentosa, a living museum, to see how life was like for a traditional Malay family.

Spa-Radise

For a true experience of pampering, Peranakan-style, a treatment (or two, or three) is highly recommended at our in-house **Spa Village at The Majestic Malacca**. Its treatments are one-of-a-kind and uniquely reflect Malacca's Straits Chinese heritage. For utter bliss, nothing beats the three-hour *Suam-Suam Panas* or *Shiok-Shiok Sejuk* treatments. You'd first need to answer a few questions to determine if your body is more *yin* (cool) or *yang* (warm), before the therapist can determine which of the two treatments are best suited to you. As far as I know, no other spa in the world offers Baba and Nyonya spa treatments, and such a comprehensive one at that.





Clockwise, from top: One of the colourful home that line Jonker Street; Treat yourself to traditional snacks like assam boi and coconut candy the next time you're in The Majestic Malacca; Enjoy traditional Peranakan dishes at The Majestic Malacca's The Mansion restaurant; The Majestic Malacca's popular watermelon and asam boi drink; Spa Village offers treatments that reflect Malacca's Straits Chinese heritage; kampung Morten is Malacca's oldest living Malay Village.



The Mansion

It'd be remiss of me not to mention our Chef CK Poh's prowess at preparing traditional Peranakan dishes, which are served daily for lunch at **The Mansion** restaurant, on the hotel's first level. You can also join in a cooking class, which are held on a by-demand basis. Adam Liaw, the Masterchef Australia Season 2 winner, had also come here to learn cooking not too long ago. Signature dishes to learn or enjoy include our *pong tofu* soup, *assam pedas* fish and *ayam cincalok*!

Jars Of Fun

At The Majestic Malacca's lobby lounge, library and bar, you'll notice several jars of treats lying about. From *assam boi* (salted plums) to green peas, traditional coconut candy and peanut cookies, guests are more than welcome to help themselves to as much as they can eat. This is to give you a 'welcome home' feeling, that this is your home away from home, however long (or short) your stay. We love to see guests dipping their hands in, and then munch and nibble the hours away, as well as their looks of delight when they see retro snacks like the little sugared gem biscuits, which immediately take them right back to their childhood days! ☺



Ben Quah is the Hotel Manager of The Majestic Malacca, a YTL hotel.

Explore The World of YTL Hotels...



GAYA ISLAND RESORT MALAYSIA

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

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

+60 3 2783 1000
www.ytlhotels.com





THE GREEN LEAF NISEKO VILLAGE

HOKKAIDO, JAPAN

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



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



HILTON NISEKO VILLAGE JAPAN

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

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

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





CAMERON HIGHLANDS RESORT MALAYSIA

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

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

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

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





PANGKOR LAUT RESORT MALAYSIA

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

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

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

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





THE ESTATES AT PANGKOR LAUT RESORT MALAYSIA

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

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

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



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



THE MAJESTIC MALACCA MALAYSIA

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

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

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

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

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





TANJONG JARA RESORT MALAYSIA

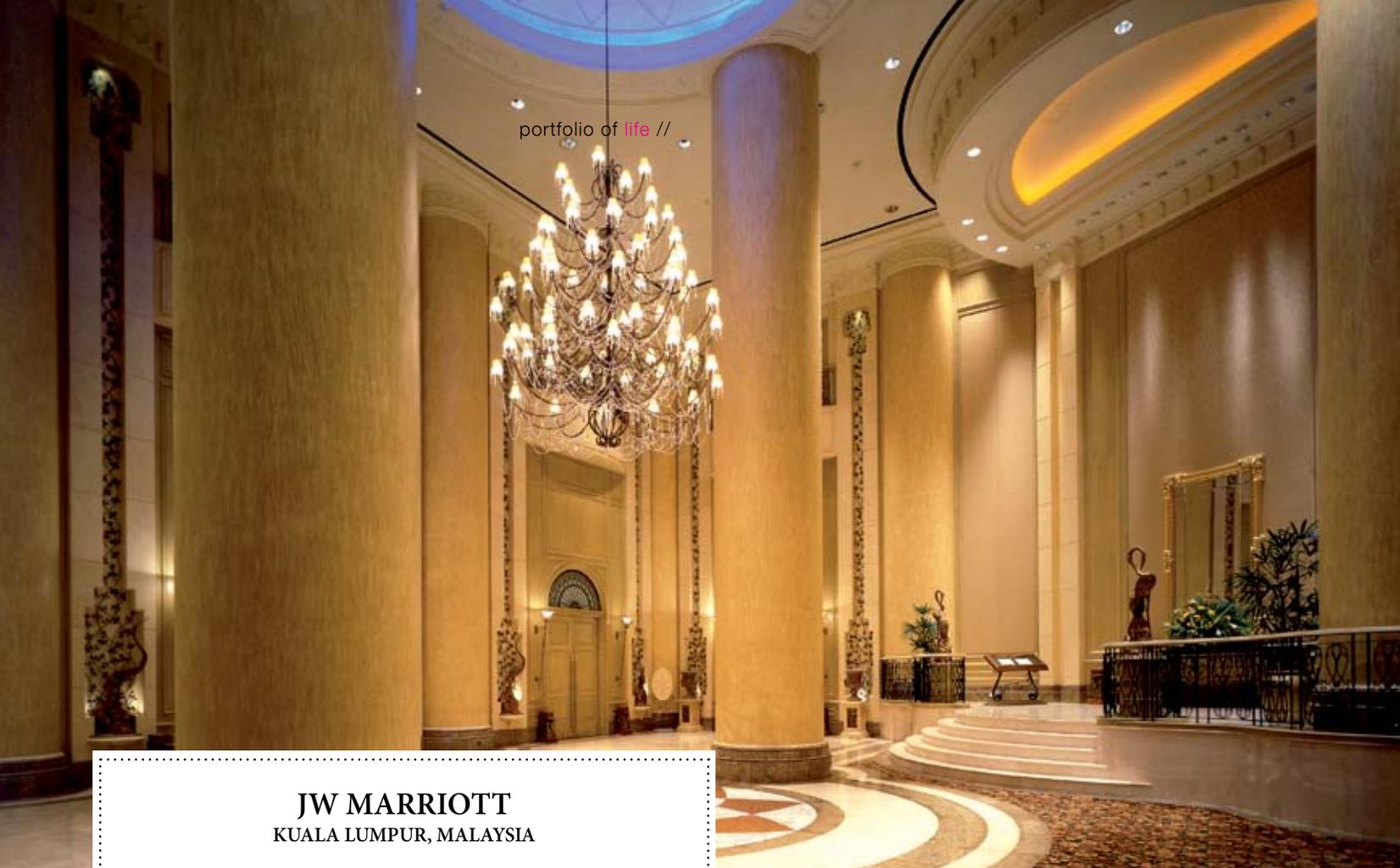
Located on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia, Tanjong Jara Resort is a sanctuary of luxury and well-being steeped in age-old Malay traditions. Designed to reflect the elegance and grandeur of 17th century Malay palaces, Tanjong Jara is a 99-room resort embodiment of the gentle Malay art of service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

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

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

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





JW MARRIOTT
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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

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

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

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





THE RITZ-CARLTON KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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

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

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





VILLA TASSANA PHUKET, THAILAND

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

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

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

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





THE SURIN PHUKET, THAILAND

The Surin Phuket offers guests a choice of 108 thatched cottages that sit cosily under a canopy of coconut groves, where landscaped slopes gently descend to meet a private stretch of sandy shore.

The appeal of the spacious 89 one-bedroom and 19 two-bedroom cottages is further enhanced with private verandahs, secluded sun decks and handcrafted teak floors.

A veritable gateway to a tropical island paradise, and renowned for its warm island hospitality and rustic serenity, The Surin Phuket also provides spa services, dining venues, meeting facilities and recreational activities.



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



SPA VILLAGE RESORT
TEMBOK, BALI, INDONESIA

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

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

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

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





EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS

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

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

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

www.easternandorientalexpress.com





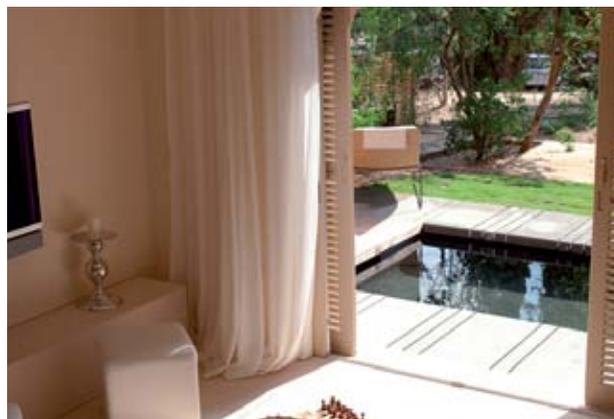
MUSE HÔTEL DE LUXE FRANCE

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

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

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

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





BRAY HOUSE ENGLAND

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

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

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

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



1. Spa Village Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

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

2. Spa Village Pangkor Laut Malaysia

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

3. Spa Village Malacca Malaysia

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

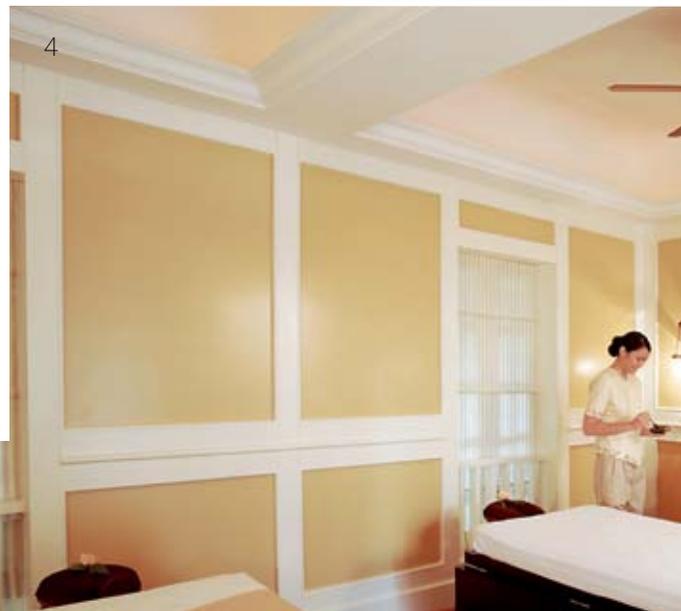
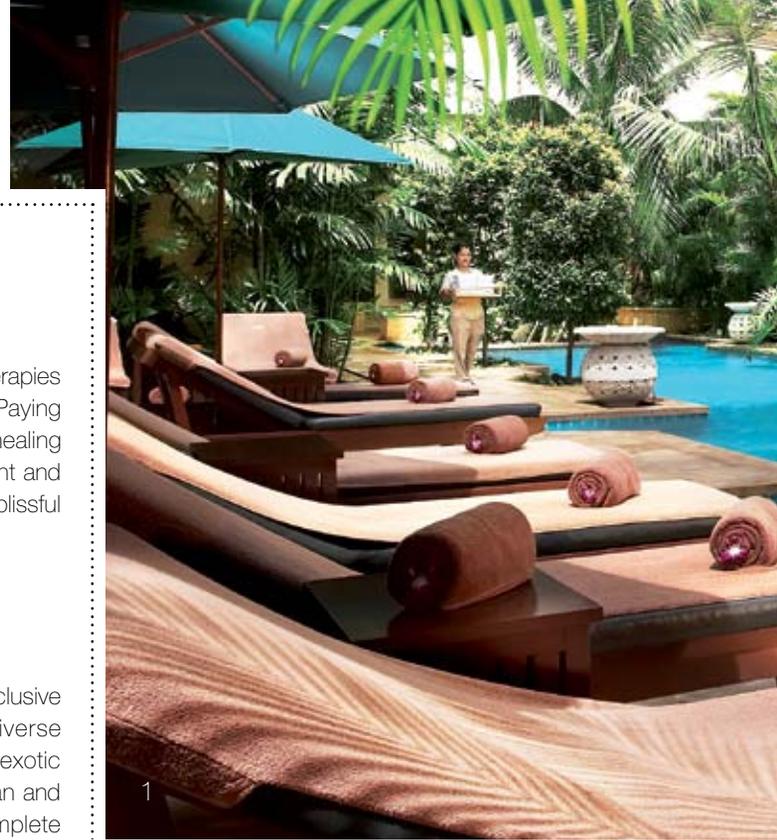
4. Spa Village Cameron Highlands Malaysia

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

5. Spa Village Tanjong Jara Malaysia

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

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







FEAST VILLAGE KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

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

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

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

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

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





SHOOK! SHANGHAI AT THE SWATCH ART PEACE HOTEL CHINA



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



+86 (21) 6321 0021

www.shookrestaurantshanghai.com



Kwon for the Road

Chef Edward Kwon, star of several television cooking programmes, including *Edward's Live Kitchen*, *Challenge Star Chefs* and *Yes Chef*, talks to YTL *Life* about the joys of cooking, being a de facto ambassador for Korean cuisine and how he very nearly avoided taking holy orders.

The most interesting people I meet in the course of my work are the young boys who come to my kitchen asking for apprenticeships. The irony is that, after they work in the kitchen for less than half a day, they'd often disappear. Being a chef is a tough job and anyone who wants to do this work should know it takes a tremendous amount of strength, discipline and tenacity to become a chef.

Travelling around Asia for my new *Edventures in Asia* series was also a great experience as I learnt so much about different food cultures, lifestyle, languages, ingredients, spices, flavours and approaches to preparing a country's national delicacies.

I'm Korean and I really love Korean street food such as *dukbokki*, which are spicy rice cakes, as well as fish cakes. When I'm not working, I enjoy making pasta and Korean comfort food to eat.

If you're in Seoul looking for authentic flavours, I'd advise you to be curious... wander around and walk into any stall or restaurant that looks interesting. Eating on the street is probably your best bet to experience authentic Korean food culture and flavour.

Many great chefs have inspired my career but, if I had to name one, it would be Xavier Salomon. He is the Executive Chef of one of the leading hotel companies and is only second person in that company to earn the title of French Master Chef. It was my great pleasure to have worked with him and, since then, he has been a role model for my career. And, most importantly, he simply loves cooking!

The funny thing about me is I unwind by cooking! I have the most interesting job in the world and cooking is my passion. After a hard day's work in the kitchen, I still enjoy spending time understanding how all the different ingredients and flavours come together. I guess this is why people keep saying that when you are passionate about something, you will never be tired of it.

I've already cooked for celebrities like Pierce Brosnan, Sharon Stone and several others but I'd really love to cook for Jackie Chan. Maybe when he's in Korea next, I'd get my chance.

My childhood ambition was originally to be a priest! But, due to my mother's opposition and being the only son, meaning that the family line would come to an end if I took holy orders, I gave up the idea of enrolling in a Christian seminary. ■



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