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# THE FESTIVE ISSUE

One thing you learn when you travel, is that people are different – they have different dreams and different ways to achieve them, different values and different fears. But in all this glorious diversity, there are some things that we share; one of them – the way we celebrate.

No matter the latitude, the language, the climate; when festive times arrive, families gather, friends come together, food covers the tables and colourful costumes and music make their entrance. It’s no wonder that people love to celebrate and are quick to find reasons to do it.

In this issue of NAA, we celebrate this festive spirit. We begin on page 30 where we feature some of the most exquisite, exciting and exclusive festive destinations in South-East Asia. From river cruising in Vietnam through shopping sprees in Hong Kong to treetop dining on a secluded island in Thailand, we have a perfect place to celebrate any occasion.

No celebration can happen without an abundance of food, and the dishes we serve on page 72 are a celebration in itself – of values we hold very dear at NAA, such as passion, creativity and perfectionism. Our ultimate selection of tapas, starters, hors d’oeuvre – whatever you like to call them, served at the best hotel and resort restaurants in the region, is guaranteed to awake your appetite.

Flip to page 112 to find a proof that celebrations don’t necessary equal crowds and noise. The pages that follow are filled with images from the other side of the fence, where grass is greener, air cleaner and you can be closer to nature, even at the heart of a bustling Asian metropolis.

With this issue we also celebrate the introduction of a brand new section in NAA. Our final pages are from now on reserved to charismatic opinion-leaders, personalities and celebrities. We give them this space to present their opinions, tell stories and share experiences, and we begin on a high note, with a trip down memory lane with no other than the king of exotic design, Bill Bensley.

But of course, there is more, as each page of this issue and any issue of NAA, is a celebration of things that make life a wonder. Of art, represented here by the hypnotising portraits of Harding Meyer and dreamlike images of Jati Putra; of travel to distant lands, whether across Vietnam on a motorbike or to Bangkok’s European heritage past, of fine architecture and design such as the projects of Christian Liaigre; of places, people and moments that even if short lived, can be made unforgettable. If only you chose to celebrate them.

We wish you a joyful festive season.

**NAA Team**



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## 16 Window to your soul

Stare into the eyes of Harding Meyer's faces to take a deep look inside yourself

## 60 Dreams of Jati Putra

Jati Putra creates a universe where everything is possible, where the laws of nature don't apply there, nor does logic. It's a place of our dreams.



## A Grand Opening

72

They might be small, but can have a big impact. Appetisers, hors d'oeuvre, antipasti – whatever you call them, those little works of art can make an impression that will last way past the dessert.



# CONTENTS ISSUE 2

## 30 Celebration destinations



When you work - work hard, when you play - play harder, and when you celebrate - celebrate like there's no tomorrow, no matter the occasion.

## Nepal's Greatest Sharpshooter

124

Bill Bensley, the King of tropical design, is targeted by Nepal's greatest sharpshooter on a festive day he will never forget.

## 40 Bangkok European Heritage



It is as unexpected as it is true - Bangkok, an Asian megapolis, is a haven of European architecture! The city has a wealth of buildings and structures designed by architects coming from all corners of Europe. So grab your phone, go out and catch'em all!





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1 Escape with Bill Bensley



It would take ages to visit all hotels crafted by the king of tropical design, Bill Bensley... and it would be worth your time. But if you can't take such trip, don't despair. You can still enjoy the beauty of Bensley's designs spread across 12 tropical countries, from the Seychelles to St. Kitts, from the Maldives to Puerto Rico, all of which have been featured in Bensley's new "Escapism" book. It counts 650 pages; features more than

400 large size photographs and is available on Amazon and at premium book sellers.

[bensley.com](http://bensley.com)

2 Rocking the superyachts scene



If owning a superyacht is on your bucket list, you should get one by December 10, when Kata Rocks, a design driven, luxury boutique resort in Phuket, will host the inaugural 'Kata Rocks Superyacht Rendezvous'. The event will welcome sailing and motor yachts of over 24 meters for a three-day programme of events, which includes a welcome reception on a superyacht, a cruise to a secluded beach for a gourmet BBQ, keynote presentation, 'Gins of the World' sunset cocktails, an exclusive dinner in Kata Rock's iconic Sky Villa Penthouse, and the grand finale that concludes it with the Kata Rocks Charter Season Opening Party. Don't miss out.

[katarocks.com](http://katarocks.com)

3 Vietnamese chocolate homecoming

The first artisan chocolate makers in Vietnam – Marou, have opened their first cacao lab in downtown Ho Chi Minh City. "Maison Marou" patisserie and café is tucked amid the flow of a small, working chocolate factory where chocoholics can watch humble cacao beans turn into dark chocolate gold or embark on a bucolic day trip to some of the small farms where the company picks its premium cacao. Back in the comfort of Maison Marou, the selected beans are roasted and ground to a superfine paste redolent of rich delta soil and jungle orchards—the stuff of gourmet dreams.



Photo by Phu Hai

[marouchocolate.com](http://marouchocolate.com)

4 Sustainable seafood at Flavors

For a guilt-free meal, it's worth not just eating healthy – and what's healthier than seafood – but also sustainable. To do that, head to Renaissance Bangkok Ratchaprasong Hotel's Flavors international restaurant for a feast of fresh French oysters, delicate cod with soy and ginger sauce, mouth-watering sea bass with chilli and lime sauce or saffron stew of butterfly clams – all sourced from sustainable suppliers.

[marriott.com](http://marriott.com)



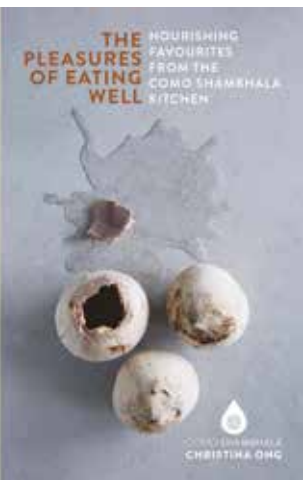
5 Thai at heart



Authentic Thai traditions and culture resonate across The Sukhothai hotel in Bangkok and are also reflected in the hotel's Celadon restaurant's menu, which now features six rare, authentic dishes that are difficult to find in Thai restaurants these days. The food is prepared and cooked in original Thai style, complete with its own unique range of tastes and of course, artistically stylish presentation. Celadon Authentic Dishes selection includes such rare recipes as poo sorn klin, yamyai, tomsom plakapong, gaeng look klauy moo kurobuta and more.

[sukhothai.com](http://sukhothai.com)

6 Pleasures of reading and eating at COMO



Shambhala Cuisine created for COMO award-winning properties around the globe has been developed over a 10-year period and is based on the theory that a proper healthy diet avoids calorie counting but instead requires enjoyable food, intelligent portions, variety and balance. And now COMO launches its first cookbook called "The Pleasures of Eating Well" taking the readers on an epicurean journey with 147 classics from the COMO Shambhala kitchens. Each

recipe has been meticulously re-configured to introduce COMO Shambhala Cuisine to home cooks.

[comohotels.com](http://comohotels.com)

7 Sweet fruit of wonder

Wonderfruit music and arts festival returns once more to the Fields at Siam Country Club in Pattaya under a motto of Live. Love. Wonder. Taking place between 15 and 18 December, this year's festival's international lineup includes Young Fathers from Scotland, Kate Simko & The London Electronic Orchestra, Rudimental, Mad Professor, Wolf + Lamb and others. Local scene will be represented by Zero Hero, Isan Soul, Yena, DJ Dragon and The Superglasses Ska Ensemble. The stages, as always, will resemble gigantic art installations.

[wonderfruitfestival.com](http://wonderfruitfestival.com)



8 Saving with a smile

It takes two minutes to install and can cut energy costs by up to 25% - CONTINEWM® Nets, a Green energy saving product improves our quality of life by purifying the air in which we work and live. Far infrared rays emitted by the device help efficiently eliminate odors and its permanent electrode deodorises, removes moisture and eliminates mold from any indoor space. Don't take our word for it, Banyan Tree Samui is one of the first five stars resort to have tested the CONTINEWM® Nets with an energy saving result of 21.8%, acknowledged by General Manager Remko Kroesen, while Century 21 Samui Director Patrick Balmer has confirmed that the product allowed his office to achieve a saving of 24.6% on their previous electricity bills.



[www.continewm.asia](http://www.continewm.asia)



9 A jewel of golf

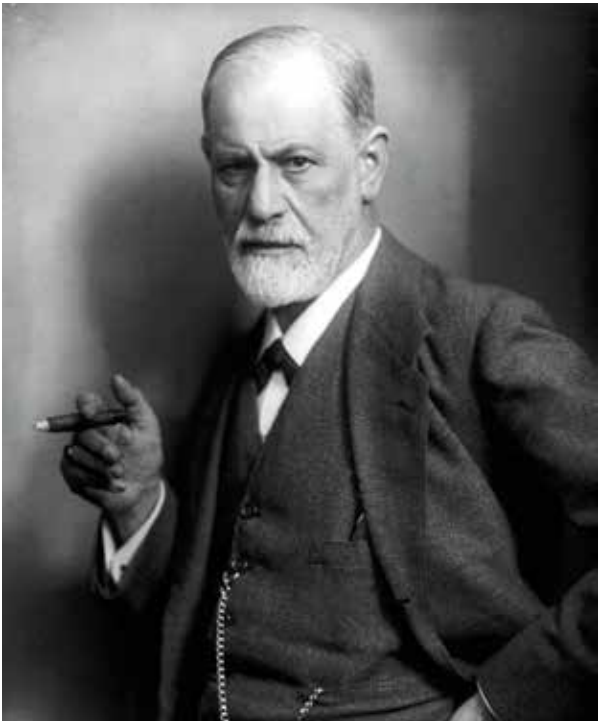
Hong Kong Open, first held in 1959, is Hong Kong’s oldest professional sporting event and is considered one of the jewels in the crown of Asian golf. It’s also one of the must-attend events in Hong Kong and has a rich history of prominent past winners, including major champions. Hong Kong Open 2016 will take place between 8 and 11 December

[ubshkopen.com](http://ubshkopen.com)



by Scott Akerman

10 Freudian stage



Sigmund Freud is the father of psychoanalysis and his volume “The Interpretation of Dreams” is one of his most influential works having a major impact on 20th century history. And now Freud’s concepts help create an experimental music theatre exploring love and passion in the form of Kunqu Opera based on East-West psychoanalysis. “In Search of Chinese Matter and Mind” plays on 9 and 10 December starting at 8:15 pm at the Grand Theatre in Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

[zuniseason.org.hk](http://zuniseason.org.hk)

11 Winter in bloom

This year, to feel the winter breeze in Thailand, go beyond Chiang Mai and head for Mae Hong Son province. There, each November and December, the beautiful Bua Tong Blossom Festival takes place. Bua Tong is the Thai name of a Mexican sunflower whose yellow and orange tint came to symbolise winter time in Thailand’s north. This year’s celebration of the gold covered hillsides begins on November 1st and last until the 10th of December. And while you’re there, visit some local waterfalls such as Mae U-Kor, Mae Yuam Luang and Mae Surin.

[tourismthailand.org](http://tourismthailand.org)



BACK TO  
AUTHENTICITY  
WITH A TWIST  
OF TODAY

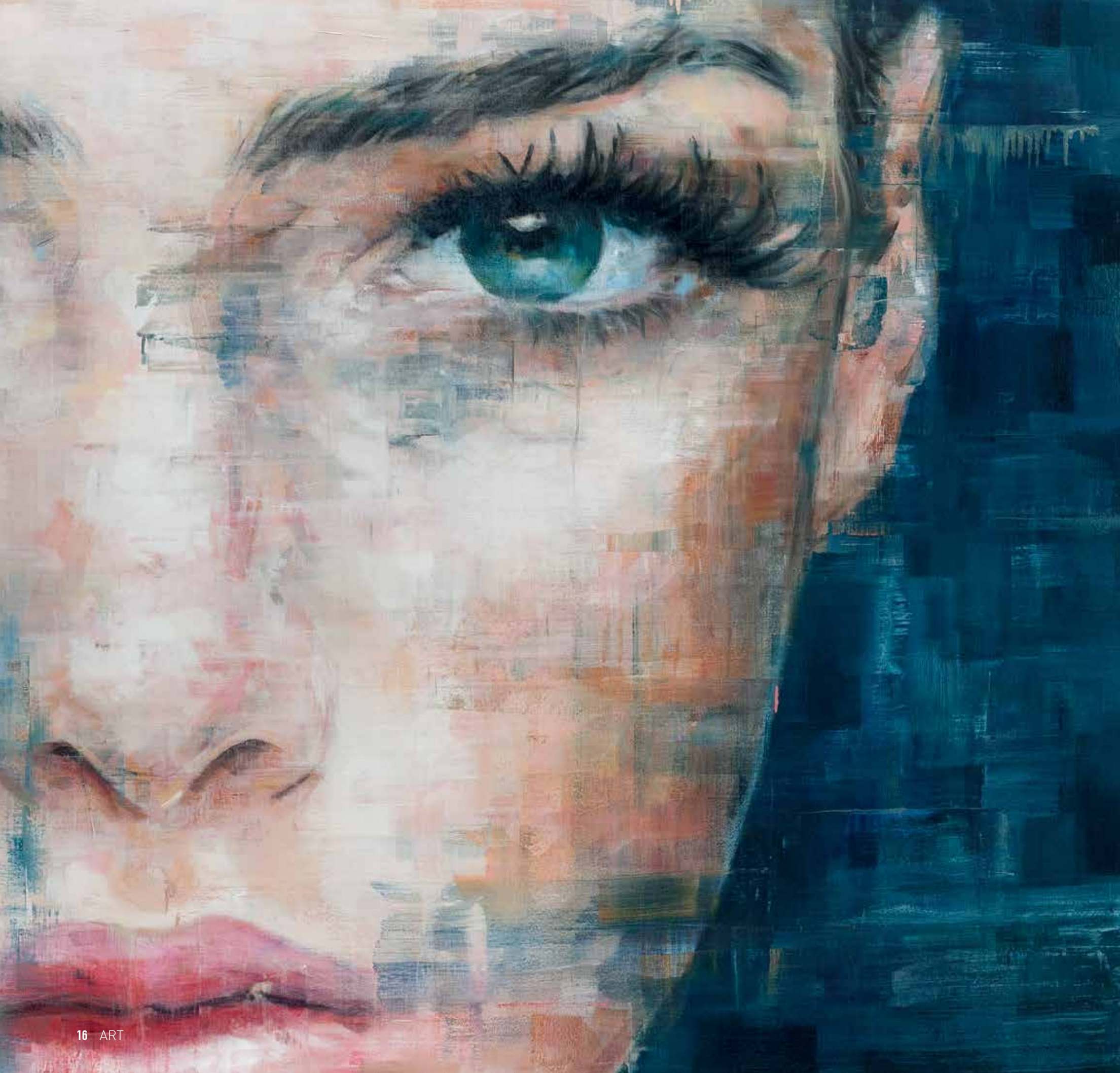
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# A Window to Your Soul

Words by Maciek Klimowicz

**Stare into the eyes of Harding Meyer's faces to take a look inside yourself.**



Trying to describe Harding Meyer's portraits with a few adjectives doesn't give them justice. The first that comes to mind is "expressionless" – Meyer's faces stare blankly at the viewer. It's not that they refuse to give away some deep buried secrets. No, there isn't even a hint of emotion there. You can look all you want at those large-size, close-up faces, but you'll be left with nothing. No smile touches those lips, no frown upon those eyebrows, and after a while, all you see is a pair of large eyes that suck you in like a vortex, into a bottomless pit. This is as close as art can come to hypnosis.

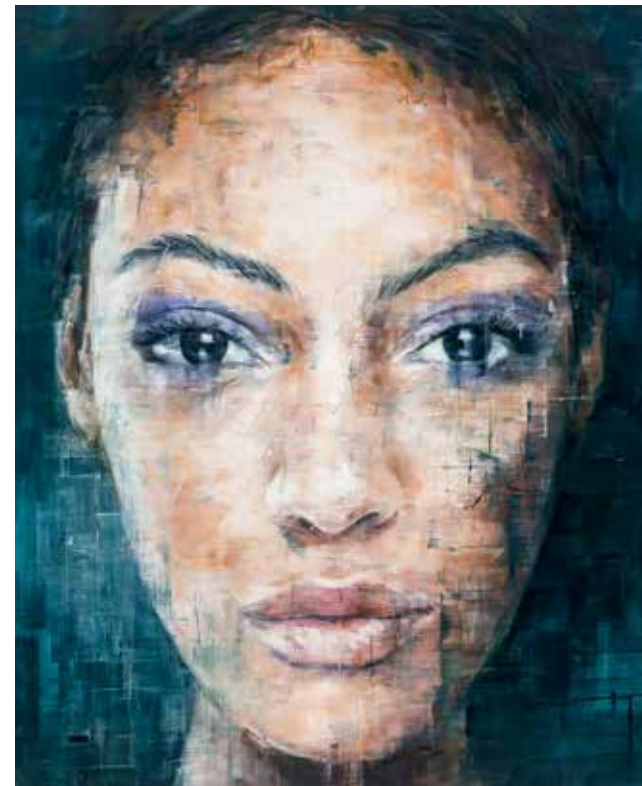




How about “anonymous” which they clearly are, even though, paradoxically, Meyer’s inspiration comes from magazines and television, from the fame-worshipping pop culture. But the only way to learn that, is by reading an interview with the Brazilian born artist, who lives and works in Germany. The faces themselves giveaway almost nothing. “I give my paintings no titles nor biographical hints. I am not interested in who I paint nor in which period of life he or she was when I took the photograph. It is the devotion to the image without any contents,” he once said in an interview. Yes, those strong bone structures, those sparkling eyes might have once belonged to stars of the screen, but even if Meyer’s models were once recognisable, maybe even world-known celebrities, none of their fame remains, leaving you clueless as to who you are staring at.

And stare you will, because another adjective that comes to mind in the presence of this art, is “captivating”. Take a look at the pictures surrounding this text, and then try to look away. It’s not an easy thing to do, and even if you manage to, the expressionless yet piercing gazes of Meyer’s faces will remain imprinted in your memory, tempting you to give them one more look.







Where does the enchanting power of those faces hide? It's not in their size – we are daily exposed to even bigger visages, on our large-size TV sets, omnipresent billboards, IMAX cinema screens. We effortlessly ignore them, walk past them without as much as sparing them a thought. But if you thought yourself immune to a stranger's gaze, Meyer's faces are here to question this conviction.

Maybe it's the colours then – dense, multi-layered, slowly distributed on the canvas over the course of several months? No, it's not just that. There is more. There has to be.

Or maybe it's the opposite? Maybe the key is not in what's there, but in what's missing? Those empty backgrounds, this lack of context, this anonymity, the blankness of Meyer's stares, leave the viewer with plenty of empty space, creating a vacuum that demands to be filled? And filled it becomes – with your own and utmost private thoughts, ideas and emotions. Perhaps when you stare at those faces, look into those eyes, we end up looking deep into your own soul. No wonder you cannot look away.

See more on [hardingmeyer.tumblr.com](http://hardingmeyer.tumblr.com)



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# KEEP ON ROCKING IN VIETNAM

Words by Maciek Klimowicz

**Why would you climb a rock wall in Vietnam? “Because it’s there” the famed English mountaineer, George Mallory would have said. But if climbing is not only about scaling a wall, but also about being the first one to do it (and Mallory – had he survived his ascent of Everest – would have surely confirmed!), then Vietnam has a lot to offer.**

There are a number of things Vietnam is famous and infamous for – the cuisine, the war, the coffee, the traffic... This list goes on and is by no means complete. Especially that in this dynamically developing place, new things keep popping up and making it to the “top ten best things about Vietnam” all the time. In the previous issue of NAA, we told you the story of Marou – artisan makes of inherently Vietnamese chocolate, who are making waves in the sweet universe of desserts (you can find it on our website if you missed it – [naamagazine.com](http://naamagazine.com)). This time however, let’s talk about something much harder (rock hard in fact) than silky smooth chocolate. It’s time to climb rocks.

Now, don’t beat yourself up if you’ve never heard about rock climbing in Vietnam. Up until recently few have, and neither have we. That is until we met Jean Verly of VietClimb, one of the companies behind the current growth spurt of Vietnamese climbing culture. Verly is a Frenchman, he comes from Paris, but having spent the last 10 years in Vietnam, he had a chance to observe (and add to) the current explosion of rock climbing popularity in the country.

“We can divide the recent history of rock climbing in Vietnam into two distinctive stages,” he tells NAA when asked for a bit of a background story – a story, that apparently doesn’t reach very far back. “The first stage took place between 1996 to 2005 and is centred around some short-term expeditions by foreign climbers, who were supported by specialised media to explore and bolt new routes and document their journeys,” Verly tells us.

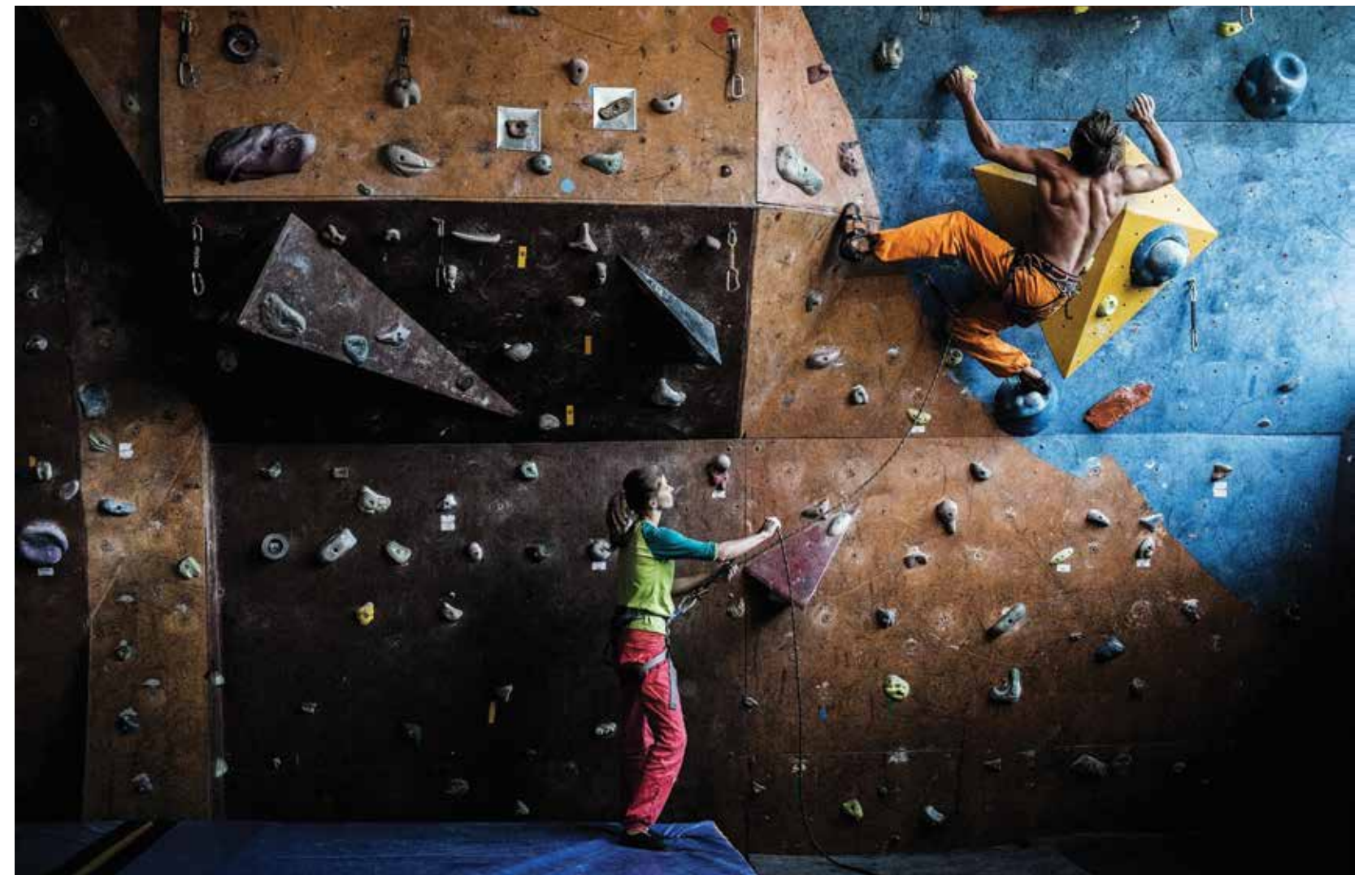






The three operators mentioned before are mostly involved, and we organise combined actions on a regular basis” explains Verly, while reminding us that Vietnam is still at the beginning of its development, with about 200 sport routes in the great outdoors and only two indoor climbing gyms and the same number of outdoor climbing walls. “But it’s what makes it exciting: going in remote areas where the rock is not yet polished and avoiding the queue in popular crags!” he exclaims.

And as it’s expected of a newly discovered land, Vietnam provides many such thrills, with a number of recently created routes that are still very much under development. One such new sector is Huu Lung, created as recently as in 2012.



It’s at that time that Vietnam has been placed on the climbing map of the world by some true climbing legends. Among them were Todd Skinner - a famed American free climber - and Lynn Hill - one of the best female climbers in the world – both of whom visited the picturesque Halong Bay. 1996 saw the legendary Canadian rock climber Scott Milton establishing the first sport routes in the country, together with another legend, Paul Piana – an event that didn’t escape media’s attention, and got covered by the National Geographic Magazine and brought further exposure to Vietnam climbing. “About the same time, Greg Child (Australia) and Andy Parkin (UK) did a climbing movie for the BBC in the same area. In 2003, Arnaud Petit (France) and his team bolted three new routes in Halong Bay and wrote an article for ‘Grimper’ and ‘Vertical’,” says Verly. Add to this the 2005, Tim Emmett and Klem Loskot’s Deep Water Soloing expedition, which was included in Josh Lowell’s famous climbing movie production “Dosage 3” and it’s no wonder anymore, that it’s at that time, that rock climbing took roots in Vietnam.

But while those first seeds may have been planted by short-term guests, the sport is now more and more a domain of people who call Vietnam their home. Verly explains: “From 2005 until now, the sport has been developed by long-term residents as the first operators such as VietClimb in Hanoi, Asia Outdoors in Cat Ba and Vertical Academy in Saigon opened.”

And while, as Verly tells us, rock climbing is not yet as popular among Vietnamese as football or jogging, there are definitively more people aware of it. “Until a few years back, there wasn’t even a proper word for rock climbing in Vietnamese,” he adds.

But now the country is waking up to a new era, where *leo núi thể thao* - rock climbing and *leo núi trong nhà* - indoor climbing, are quickly growing in popularity. “There are more people practicing it and an increasing media coverage.



“Huu Lung is located 90 km North-East of Hanoi and offers 60 routes from 5C to 8A. Most of them are 30m high with 2 multi-pitch (70 and 105 meters high, the longest route in Vietnam),” says Verly, adding that this karst peaks surrounded crag in the middle of remote villages has won the prestigious Millet Expedition Award in 2015.

Those untraded routes are strong magnets for international climbers always on a lookout for new challenges. Another one are annual competitions, organised by VietClimb and Vertical Academy. “They are a great opportunity for us to invite climbers and route setters from abroad and it’s good for the local community to meet new climbers, to exchange ideas about training, tips about climbing crags in South-East Asia or just to get psyched!” says Verly. And such inspiration is surely still needed in a country, which does not yet have a national climbing team (though it’s under discussion with the Ministry of Sport and the South-East Asia climbing federation).

A reminder that it’s just a beginning of a steep climb for climbing in Vietnam comes from VietClimb’s website, which proudly states that the organisation goal is “to raise up the foundations of a solid climbing culture in Vietnam.” When asked about those foundations, Verly explains that they rely on good and safe practices, ethics and a solid local climbing community. “It takes some years to build, but we are not in a rush,” he says.

And rightly so, after all rock climbing is a sport for the patient ones. More than a race to the top, it’s a slow struggle against your own weaknesses – both of body and mind. But if you’re thinking of climbing in Vietnam, than just a little bit of hurry may be advisable, if you don’t want miss your chance to be one of the first ones, in a country on its way to the top.

*Find out more on [vietclimb.vn](http://vietclimb.vn)*



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# Let's Celebrate!

Words by Matt Clemens



When you work – work hard, when you play – play harder, and when you celebrate – celebrate like there's no tomorrow, no matter the occasion. At the destination we present to you on the following pages, even the most casual of days will become something special – celebrate it!



## Dining on a tree top at *Soneva Kiri*

The table is a very traditional place for celebrations, but what if the table is on the top of a tree? The Treepod at Soneva Kiri gives the word "table top" a whole new meaning.

As if Soneva Kiri's location on a small island of Koh Kood, south of Koh Mak which in turns lies south of Koh Chang, on the Gulf of Thailand, wasn't exceptional enough, the resort takes dining experience to new heights by placing the guests in rattan bird's nest at ground level and leveraging them up to the tree tops! With sumptuous, cushioned seating for up to four diners, guests fasten their leather seatbelts and are gently hoisted 16 feet into the tall, native massang trees. Is this location secluded? Certainly, but fear not, the waiters are ready to literally fly down to your table expertly using Treepod's zip lines.

At the tree top altitude the vistas are spectacular and immersion in nature – complete. And you can enjoy this unforgettable experience at breakfast, lunch and dinner! The menus follow the jungle theme 'Canapés in the Canopy', 'Forager's Basket', 'Woodland Offerings', using produce predominantly from the resort's organic gardens.

You might want to come down for dessert though. You can enjoy 65 flavours of homemade ice cream at Soneva Kiri's own ice cream parlour or with many varieties of chocolates, organic bonbons and truffle temptations at the Chocolate Room.

All that remains is to find an occasion to celebrate.

For more information visit [soneva.com/soneva-kiri](http://soneva.com/soneva-kiri)



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For more information visit [hongkong.peninsula.com](http://hongkong.peninsula.com)







## Cruising into the past at *Anantara Hoi An Resort*

A great way to celebrate any occasion is to do something new and unforgettable, and one great place to do just that is Anantara Hoi An Resort. Set in French colonial-style buildings on the banks of the Thu Bon River, the resort enjoys a fantastic location within a walking distance from Hoi An – a UNESCO listed town which is home to some of Vietnam's most atmospheric streets, heritage temples, ancient merchant houses and tea warehouses. And now, Anantara takes further advantage of its setting by launching a picturesque river cruise, opening up one of Asia's legendary waterways in a whole new way. The one hour cruise departs from the resort three times a day – including one time at sunset – and takes the passengers on a five-kilometre journey down a river that fuelled Hoi An's rise in the 17th and 18th centuries as a powerful trade link between Europe, China, India and Japan. Anantara's cruising vessel – a quaint, lantern-decorated boat, was fashioned by local carpenters at Kim Bong village further adding to the exceptional ambiance of this experience.

*For more information visit [hoi-an.anantara.com](http://hoi-an.anantara.com)*



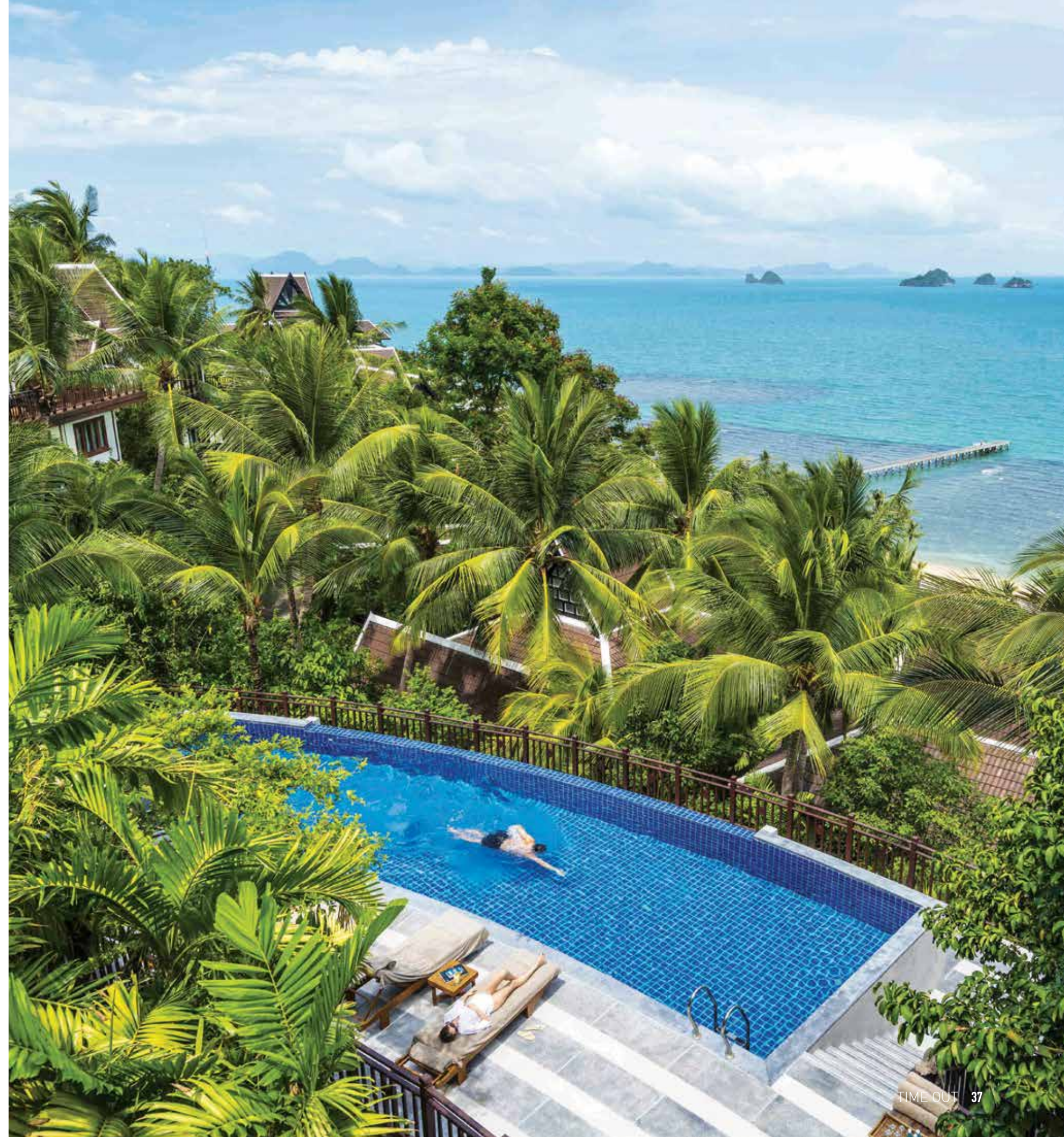




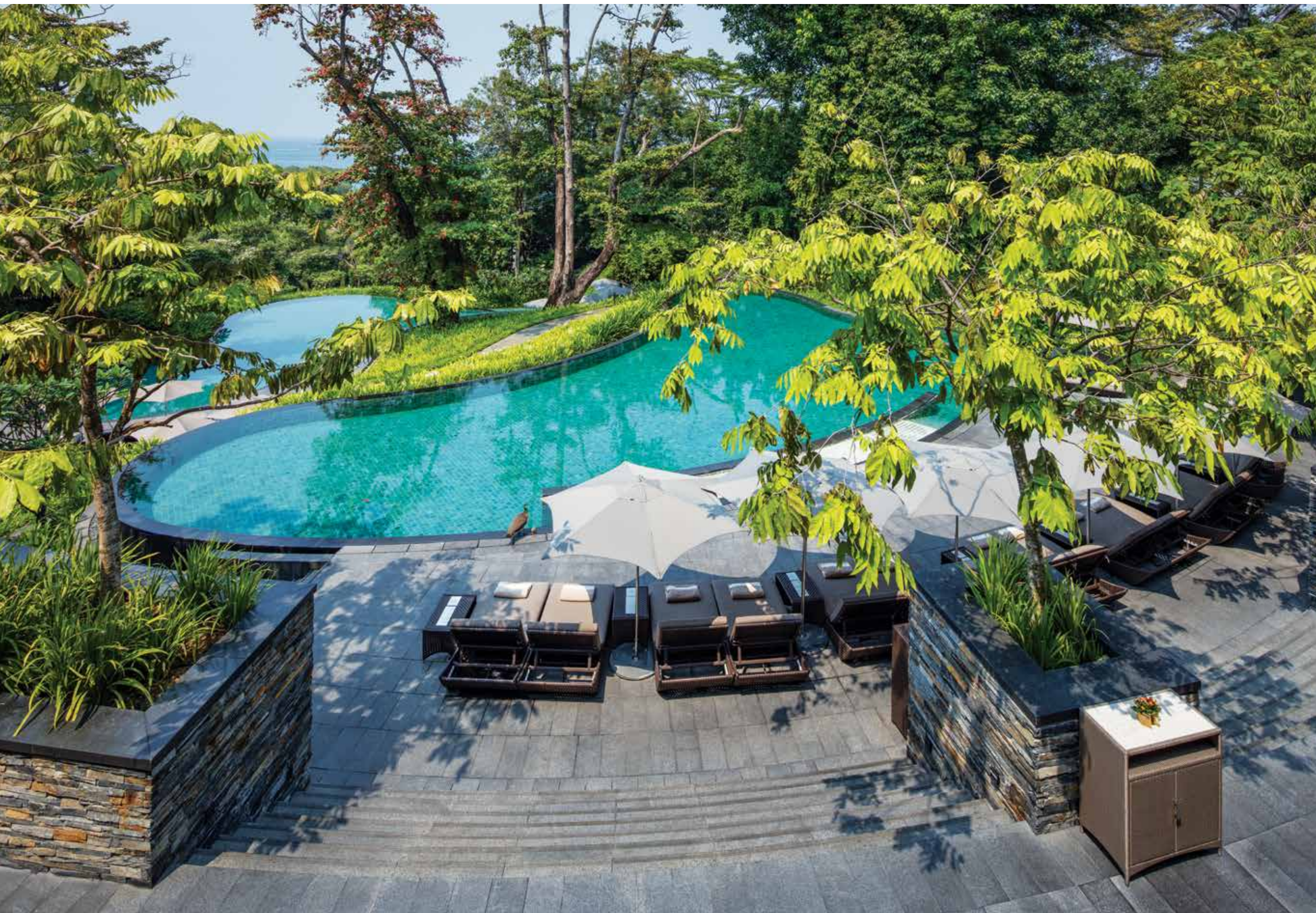
## Family time at *InterContinental Samui Baan Taling Ngam Resort*

Best way to celebrate? With your loved ones. With that in mind, InterContinental Samui Baan Taling Ngam Resort added a special room concept to its exclusive selection of rooms, suites and villas – the Family Room. And for families they are - not just by name. Coming in large sizes starting at 65 sqm and decorated in tune with the Thai colonial style of the resort, each Family Room comes with a children's corner featuring a cosy bunk bed (but who will take the top one?!) and bean bags for day-time lounging and fun. And fun it will be thanks to the fantastic toy treasure chest waiting to be explored by those little travellers. Kids also have free access to the resort's own Planet Trekkers Kids Club which offers activities in and around the resort under supervision of a qualified child minders, so parents can enjoy a break in one of the resort's seven pools or on the secluded beach. And those who opt for the Family Pleasures Offer will also benefit from two hours of complimentary babysitting services daily and one 60-minute therapeutic body massage for two adults at the beach hut per stay. Add to this complimentary children meals and one Junior Master Chef Class included in the package, and you're in for a treat that you and your family will remember for many years to come.

For more information visit [samui.intercontinental.com](http://samui.intercontinental.com)







## Well rounded up celebrations at *Capella Singapore*

Being awarded the highest accolade in the hospitality industry – the Five-Star Rating in Forbes Travel Guide Star Awards, for the fourth consecutive year, proves that Capella Singapore is a worthy contender for your attention and an ideal destination for celebration of just about any kind. Many ingredients form Capella's irresistible formula. For one there is its unique Chef's Table private dining experience allowing the guests to savour gourmet fare, specially customised and prepared À La Minute by world-class personal chefs in the comforts of a home-styled kitchen which offers a comfortable setting for up to 14 guests.

Further culinary thrills are provided during the Mediterranean Sunday Brunch with a recently added Vintage option. Served at Capella The Knolls restaurant the brunch now comes with free flow of Vintage Taittinger Champagne allowing you to raise a toast to whatever you desire. Exceptional wines and specialty handcrafted cocktails also flow free.

Away from the table a journey of renewal awaits at the Auriga spa. Based upon the cycles of the moon, the spa's approach to wellness draws from the unique strengths of the environment, taking the guests towards physical and mental rejuvenation. Does it work? The fact that this year Auriga spa has won the Forbes Travel Guide Star Award for the sixth successive time certainly proves it.

*For more information visit [capellahotels.com/singapore](http://capellahotels.com/singapore)*







# CATCH'EM ALL

## BANGKOK EUROPEAN HERITAGE QUEST

Words by Luc Citrinot  
Photos by Maciek Klimowicz

**It is as unexpected as it is true – Bangkok, an Asian mega-polis, is a haven of European architecture! Yes, the same Bangkok that's famous for its Thai Buddhist temples and royal palaces, has a wealth of buildings and structures designed by architects, coming from all corners of Europe. They even left their footprint on some of the most iconic Thai monuments. So grab your phone, go out and catch'em all!**

The Pokemon craze has reached Thailand. Thousands of people turn into Pokemon hunters, gazing into their smartphones' screens while walking the city streets. A group of students at Café Norasingha at Phaya Thai Palace is no exception. They sit in comfy sofas, sip their iced coffees and spent their time gazing at their smartphones, few of them inclined to even look around the coffee shop. If only they were a bit more aware of their surroundings, they might have noticed not just the Nidoqueen sitting under one of the tables and a Pikachu at the doors, but also the heavy wooden panels, the delicate frescoes on the walls and the painting on the ceiling. Yes, the sign of our times, Pokemons, are here, but somehow in Café Norasingha, time and location seem to vanish. And despite the ever-present poke-teens, the atmosphere is similar to the one of a traditional Vienna Coffee House... but in the heart of Bangkok. And luckily, this place is not an exception!

Thailand: for visitors to the Kingdom, it evokes beaches, temples, street food – all elements of an exotic Asian destination. However, Thailand – and particularly Bangkok – is also a heaven for those who enjoy digging in the past and searching for traces of history. And what they find is often a surprising marriage of East and West.

Thais are a proud nation. They are proud of their culture and history, they boast unique architecture and consider Thai food the best in the world (and many non-Thai agree!). But what gives them maybe the biggest sense of pride is that they have resisted colonialism and western influence. But even though the Kingdom of Siam remained an independent state when its neighbors surrendered to colonial powers, Thailand wasn't a lonely island and didn't avoid at least some western influence. Even in the Kingdom "There was an idea that modernity 120 years ago had to be European," says Ponkwan Lassus, an architect who has been for



a long time in charge of heritage at the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal patronage. "But we reinterpret it and turn it into a quintessentially Thai cultural element," he adds.

Squeezed from the midst of the 19th century between the British and the French empires in Southeast Asia, the Kingdom of Siam had no other options but to embrace the modernity of the time to gain credibility in front of their powerful neighbors. This impression was reinforced following King Rama V trips to Europe and to neighboring, colonised countries. What was then a true public relations exercise left a wonderful legacy in today's Thailand.

Contrary to surrounding empires run by foreign rulers, the Siamese monarchs could choose their architects, engineers and urban planners as they pleased. Still,

they often chose westerners. Between 1860 and 1932 – the year of the Siamese Revolution – some 200 Europeans worked for the Monarchy, mostly employed at the Department of Public Works – sadly, we have no information about their work permits status.

We do know however that they were busy covering Bangkok and Siam with rail stations, bridges, canals, roads but also palaces, schools, administration buildings and religious institutions. The whole new Dusit district of Bangkok around the Grand Palace was modeled after European urban layout. Take Ratchadamnoen Avenue, which links Sanam Luang (Royal Field) in front of the Grand Palace to Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall. The large avenue lined with trees was directly inspired by Paris' Champs-Élysées. Like in Paris, it even had a dedicated lane for bicycles, reserved however to the exclusive use of the Royal Family.

But it was Italy that provided the largest contingent of architects who worked hard to turn Bangkok into a kind of little Milan or Turin, often mixing styles echoing Italian baroque, neo-Palladian style, Venetian gothic and Art Nouveau. Italian creativity was everywhere. A good

example is the Pan Pha Lilat Bridge – an amazing structure of marble columns and iron balustrades, while the Mahadthai Uthit Bridge, just a few meters away, evokes Antique Rome with its weeping ladies, mourning the passing of King Rama V.

There is more European heritage to be admired in the two districts of Dusit and Phra Nakhon, the historical heart of Bangkok, some of them iconic. Take the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall for example – a classical masterpiece built in Carrara marble – its construction involved all the Italians working at the Siamese Court. Or the exquisite Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall with its delicate oriental style verandahs, carved like laces. But maybe most surprising for visitors is to learn that the Marble Temple (Wat Benjamabophit) was born from the collaboration of Siamese Prince Narisara Nuvativongse and Italian architects Carlo Allegri and Mario Tamagno. Take a second look at the famed Wat and the western elements will become quite apparent.

Some others structures might be less known but no less impressive. Parusakawan Palace opened to the

public as the Police Museum is a pure masterpiece from the hands of an Italian architect Mario Tamagno. The Palace offers baroque style rooms with their grand mirrors, heavy chandeliers and painted ceiling, while art nouveau details ornate the external façade with its verandahs and columns.

But it wasn't only the Italians who helped build Siam's glory. Germans contributed too when they built the Varadis Palace (unfortunately only sporadically opened to the public) or Bangkhunphrom Palace (today a museum within the compound of the Bank of Thailand). Both have been constructed in typical Jugendstil – German Art Nouveau – a style prominent around 1910 in Berlin, Budapest or Vienna. Another example of western influence comes from a British Architect Edward Healey who was very active around 1910, mixing Thai and European styles in villas and schools, the most famous being Chulalongkorn Art University.

In 1900, Europeans were present in many businesses of Bangkok. Railways were built by British and Germans, numerous education institutions and churches were in the hands of the French, modern department stores were run by Germans, Swiss or Belgians with the latter working with Danes to run Bangkok tramway, making the Thai capital one of the first cities in Southeast Asia to offer the convenience of such transport. Today there remain some 200 to 250 buildings, sites and structures with a link to European history – too many to summarise in a few lines.



Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall |



Parusakawan Palace |



## Old Customs House

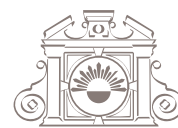
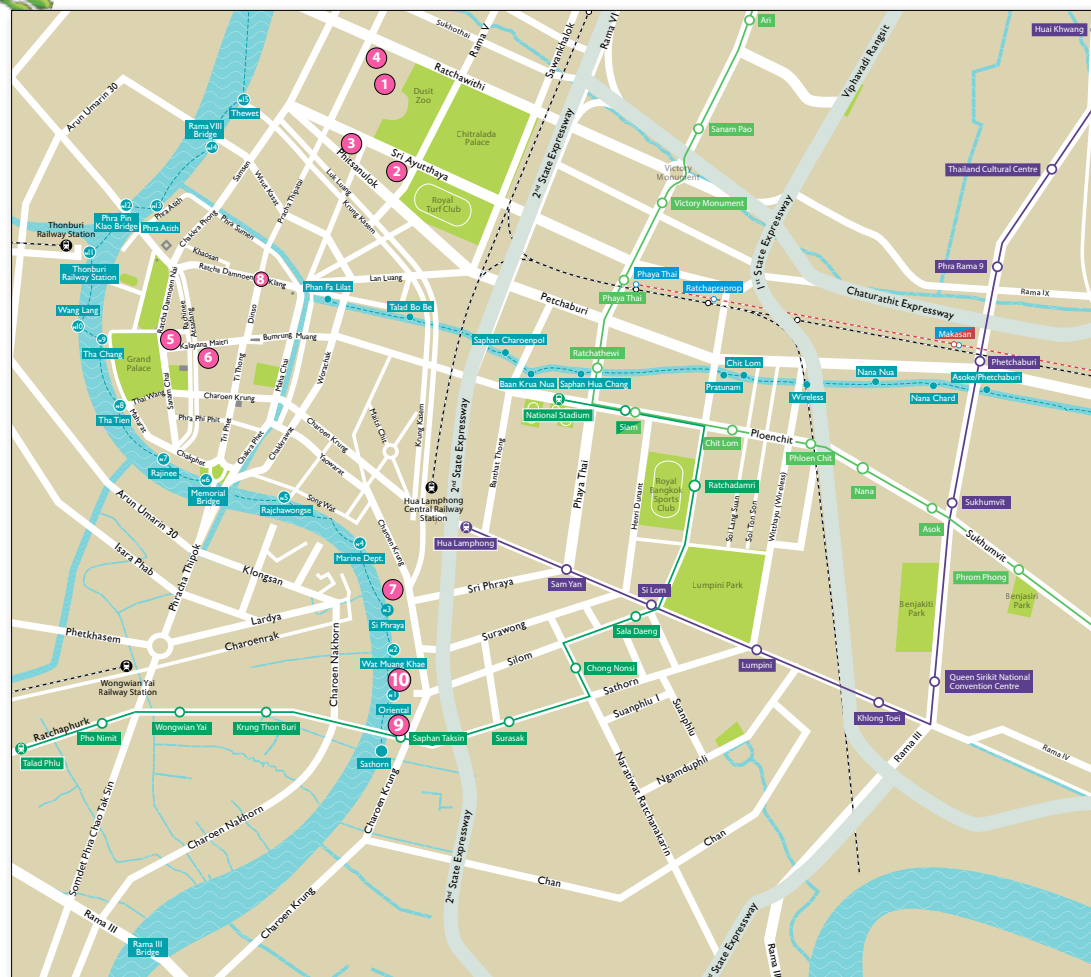
Luckily there's a way to discover them all, thanks to the European Heritage Map of Bangkok, highlighting the shared heritage between Europe and Thailand, which was created by the European Union Delegation and the European Union of National Cultural Institutes in Thailand. And with a mobile app created in 2014, featuring not just the capital but also 25 other cities across the Kingdom, you can use your smartphone to set out on a historical heritage quest. Just don't miss the architectural marvels while you're hunting for those Pokémons.



### Catch'em All!

10 European Heritage Places not to be missed in Bangkok

1. Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall
2. Marble Temple: take a look to the school in the back, built in Tuscan style.
3. Parusakawan Palace.
4. Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall.
5. Ministry of Defense across the Grand Palace, the largest European structure in Bangkok.
6. Wat Ratchabophit with its Venitian Gothic ordination hall.
7. Kalawar Church in Talad Noi, probably the most beautiful church in Bangkok.
8. Democracy Monument.
9. Assumption Cathedral, Bangkok largest church, recently renovated.
10. Customs House, a soon to be renovated iconic building.



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# Diplomatic Chic



Though it's better known as Wireless Road, the street that connects Rama 4 and Ploenchit in Bangkok has also a Thai name - Thanon Wittayu - radio street, named so by King Rama VI for it passes in front of Thailand's first radio station, across from Lumpini Park. This is ancient history though (the road was built in 1920), today Wireless Road is well known to many expats living in Bangkok as home to their countries' embassies, with those of the USA, Great Britain, the Netherlands or Switzerland being just a few of many examples.

Why am I telling you that? Try and remember one of those "grand ball at the ambassador's residence" movie scenes - those ultra-high class gatherings of the rich and powerful, with lots of bling and Champagne, with tuxedo clad butlers, ladies carrying diamond tiaras on their extravagantly pinned up hair and no shortage of James Bond / Jason Bourne spy action in the couloirs. Would you like to attend one? Now you can.

Well, kind of. Except for all those embassies, Wireless road is also home to the ultra-luxurious serviced apartments project - the Oriental Residence Bangkok. There, on the second floor sits the Oriental Bar providing a lounge ambience that is elegant yet cosy and much less formal than the before mentioned embassy parties.

Staying true to its location in the top diplomatic circles of Bangkok, the bar menu at Oriental Bar features a selection of signature drinks inspired by the favourite cocktails of honoured ambassadors. The Embassy Classic comes with a whiff of rosemary, The Oriental features lime juice and blackberry syrup as mixers, Kiwi Wireless is decorated with fresh kiwi, Wild Berry Mojito provides freshness of passion fruits, same as the Killer Jack whose sweetness is a velvet glove that cloaks the fist of power. Now that's an elegant and diverse selection worthy of those embassy balls!

Naturally all-time classics are also available, as are snacks such as Oeuf au Caviar, Tuna Niçoise, Crabmeat with Asparagus and more. All this is served in the Oriental Bar's lavish surrounding with beautiful views of nearby parks (and embassies) from the panoramic windows.

"A diplomat who says "yes" means "maybe", a diplomat who says "maybe" means "no", and a diplomat who says "no" is no diplomat," said Talleyrand, Napoleon's chief diplomatic aide. Should you visit the Oriental bar then? Just don't say no.

*Find out more on [oriental-residence.com](http://oriental-residence.com)*

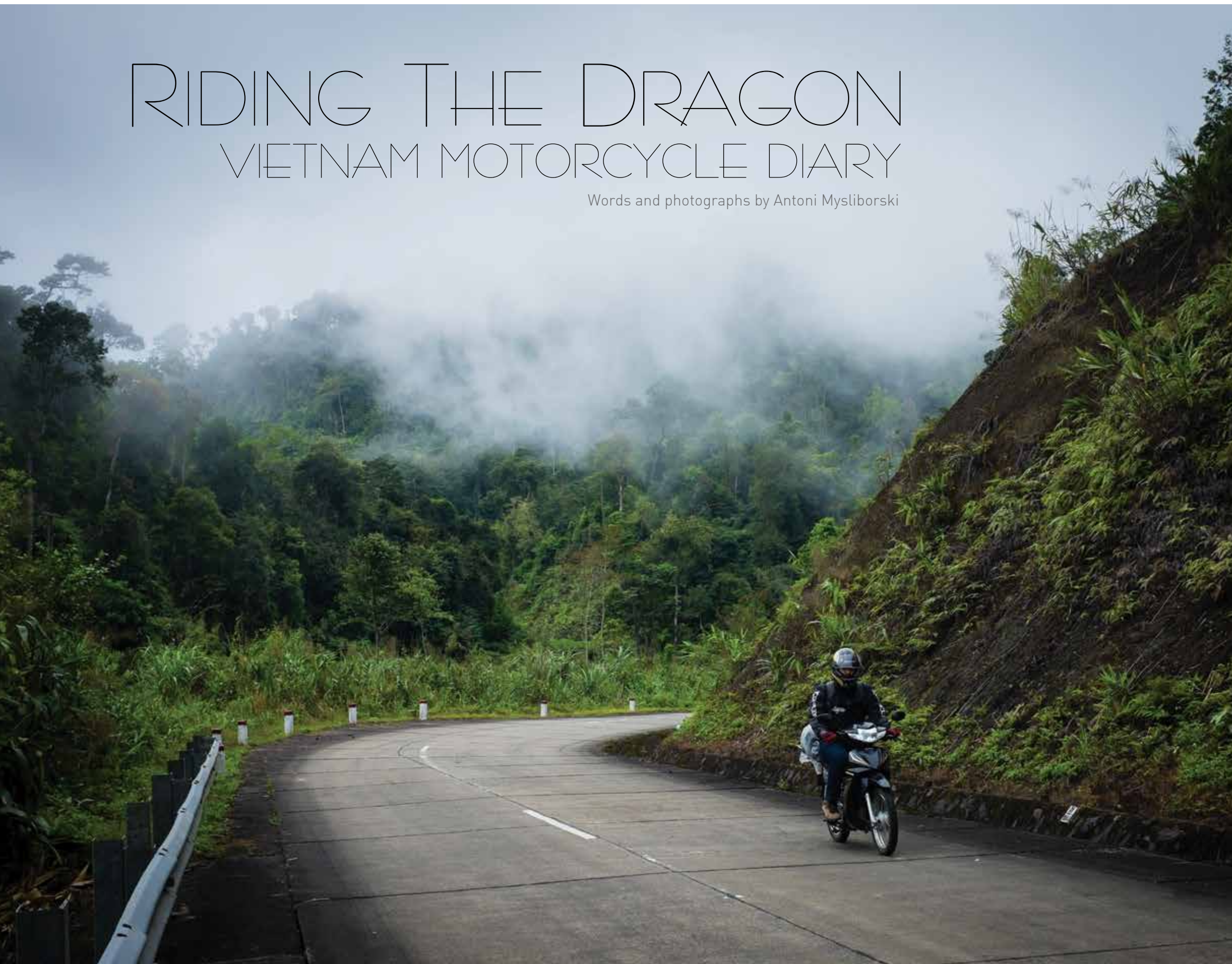




# RIDING THE DRAGON

## VIETNAM MOTORCYCLE DIARY

Words and photographs by Antoni Mysliborski



What was a pretty good idea just a few days ago, now seemed completely mad. The plan was simple – buy a motorbike in Ho Chi Minh City and head north, all the way up to Hanoi. But now that I was sitting on my newly purchased Honda Blade, facing the terrifying task of navigating Saigon’s traffic, things were getting complicated.

### Out on the road

I was drowning in a sea of motorbikes, bicycles, cars and trucks, all of which seemed to be moving at the same time, but not necessarily in the same direction. While most vehicles were using the right side of the road, there seemed to be a constant flow of motorbikes on the left side... going against the traffic. Traffic lights were treated as a mere suggestion, and it was not uncommon to spot someone ignoring the red and braving an intersection. Mysteriously, it never seemed to cause much disturbance, with other vehicles simply going around this intruder, nobody as much as slowing down in the process.

“I don’t have much of a choice” I thought, and joined the traffic, hoping my trip would not finish before it even begun. To my surprise, being on the inside turned out to be much less scary that one could expect observing from the outside. There was a method to the madness - in some organic, intuitive way, almost like in a beehive. I had to forget the traffic rules I knew and just tune in, react to what was happening around me and just try not to hit anything or anyone. A life-size computer game with a single life left.





Fast-forward a few days and I find myself cruising a brand new, and almost completely empty, superhighway along the coast of Vietnam. In the future, there will be a long line of luxury resorts here - at least that's the plan. But for now, an odd rider can enjoy empty, pristine beaches, occasionally taking a break in one of the sleepy fishing villages along the way.

The landscape in those parts is surprisingly dry, more Mediterranean than lush and tropical - at times, it felt almost Saharan. One of the very few resort towns on the way - Mui Ne - is particularly famous for its red and white sand dunes.

### Coffee break

Vietnam has a rich coffee culture. Even in the smallest and most remote towns, one can find nicely decorated, air-conditioned cafes, which make for great stop on the road. And the coffee itself... Oh my! Brewed using a metal filtering device called phin, it's very strong and aromatic, usually served with a dash of sweet milk and, if you ask for it, ice. It always comes with complimentary green tea and there's usually a bamboo water pipe and supply of free tobacco available as well.

Coffee serves as a great symbol of Vietnamese resilience. After the whole industry got nearly wiped out during the Vietnam War, it quickly bounced back and currently Vietnam is the second biggest exporter of coffee in the world, with Brazil just ahead.

### Preserved treasure

Finally I arrived in Hoi An, wonderfully preserved Chinese trade town, roughly in the middle of the country by the coast. Regarded as the finest trading destination in Asia in XVIII century, it later lost its importance to nearby Da Nang. Thanks to this (and a Polish architect Kazimierz Kwiatkowski, who managed to convince the overzealous government not to demolish the town to make space for modern architecture), it retained the original character and is now one of the biggest tourist attractions in Vietnam.

The town is intersected with a channel in the middle (with a famous "Japanese Bridge" over it) and rather small, but every single building here, is an original, few hundred years old merchant house. They look especially attractive after dark, when most are adorned with Chinese lanterns. Walking here feels a bit like traveling back in time - that is if you manage to ignore the crowds of other tourists and vendors of all things possible, easiest achieved very early in the morning.

I spent a few relaxing days in and around Hoi An - the town surrounded by some idyllic landscapes featuring a beautiful mix of rice fields, forests, small villages and coast line. It's also one of the best places to enjoy Vietnamese food in the country - from plush restaurants in the most prominent historic buildings to small, cheap street stalls serving inexpensive but delicious food, you'll be spoiled for choice.



### Switching to Top Gear

"Hai Van pass Mister? Rent motorbike, one way to Hue, very cheap!" You can't avoid hearing those words at least a few times a day in Hoi An. The Hai Van pass gained fame thanks to an episode of "Top Gear" in which Jeremy Clarkson declared it to be "one of the best coastal roads... in the world!" Since then, countless daredevils traversed it. Some of them go to really far extend in their attempt to recreate Clarkson's trip, like this one guy who was riding his bike clad in an orange and green suit and with a colander on his head. My outfit of a motorbike jacket and a proper helmet was much less stylish (and as I like to think, more professional) as I took up the challenge of the pass.



The road through Hai Van pass used to be part of a super busy AH1 highway, connecting Saigon with Hanoi, until some years ago, a long tunnel through the mountains was opened. Now only motorbikes and a few trucks with livestock use the old way, which is one of the things that greatly contribute to this steep, winding ride's unique appeal. The other things are, of course, mesmerising vistas.

After scaling what seemed like a never ending ascent followed by an exhilarating ride down, I stopped in a small restaurant for lunch. As the menu was only available in Vietnamese, the owner tried using an online translator to help me make a choice. "Do you eat beef offline?" his phone's screen asked me. Not exactly sure what to reply, I said yes. Soon, I was handed a plate of boiled ox tail, chopped into pieces. When I hit the road again (still a bit hungry because while what was edible in the tail was quite good, most of it was just bones and thick skin), I decided to take a longer side road, to avoid the superhighway, which already emerged from the tunnel.

After a few kilometres down a road surrounded by rice fields, I arrived at the beach. But what a beach! Long, wide, with perfectly clean golden sand and palm trees providing shade. And hardly any people around, just some local kids frolicking in the waves. I immediately knew my plans needed some adjustments - I had to stay here. Fortunately, I found a small guesthouse nearby, whose owner, while quite surprised to see a foreigner, showed me to a room.

Few hours later, I was walking through the forest, in darkness, trying to find my way back to the guesthouse. The fact that I was rather drunk definitely didn't help. And it all started so innocently. After a refreshing swim in the sea, I went to a local restaurant for dinner. My arrival there caused a sensation amongst the people - not before long, I was sitting surrounded by locals, with a plate of steaming seafood in front of me and a glass of vodka in my hand. "Mot, hai, ba, yo!" - one, two, three, go! - we yelled, before gulping down the contents. My Vietnamese was as limited as their English, but it didn't seem to bother anyone - especially with the level of alcohol in our blood rising quite quickly. A second one, then a third, and a fourth followed the first bottle... When I finally managed to find my place, it wasn't before a few unintended intrusions into wrong households. I still hope I didn't wake anyone but ever-vigilant dogs, always eager to inform me that I took the wrong turn.



## Hues of Hue

Next evening I arrived in Hue, Vietnam's historical capital and abode of the emperors. Although the palace was reduced to debris during the war, it's almost completely rebuilt by now. The nearby imperial graves - some very impressive - are a big local attraction. Having my own transportation allowed me to visit them in the afternoon, shortly before closing, when they were almost empty and very serene.

In Hue I left the coast for good and started climbed the mountains, to enter the famous Ho Chi Minh road - a new highway connecting Hanoi with Saigon. Although it's in great condition, in this area it receives hardly any traffic. For hundreds of kilometres it leads through sparsely populated, jungle covered mountains - in short, perfect road for a motorcyclist.

I spent the next few days meandering through breath-taking, pristine landscapes where I often didn't meet any other vehicle for kilometres at a time. As I went, the scenery was becoming more dramatic. I was entering the Phong Nha National Park, which became famous in recent years after the discovery of the biggest cave system in the world. Although I couldn't visit it - the week-long trip there costs 3000\$ and you need to book a place two years in advance - there are many other, easily accessible but still very impressive caves for a normal mortal to visit.







### Pushing my luck

After leaving Phong Nha, where I spent a few relaxing days exploring the caves, I continued on my way to Hanoi. For a while, the landscape became less striking – though still pretty. Surprisingly, as I was getting closer to Hanoi, things started to get wild again. Modern mechanised farming gave way to more traditional rice fields, ploughed, as it happened centuries ago, by ever-patient buffalos.

After a night in Cánh Nàng, I decided to continue through Pù Luông Nature Reserve. In the beginning, it was a rather ordinary ride. That is until the road took a sharp turn right and I approached a nearly vertical, 500 meters high wall. I checked the map - the road appeared to be leading right over it. And indeed, it did. The ascent, which started relatively mild, soon got really steep. My motorbike was struggling even on the lowest gear, but never gave up completely. Views were becoming more terrific with every meter gained.

On the top awaited a plateau. The road was winding gently, through beautiful landscape and friendly villages... until it disappeared. Confused, I checked the map again - it should be here. I asked the locals for the way to Mai Chau. They pointed to a narrow dirt path.

Having little choice, I followed their pointing fingers down a less than half meter wide, bumpy, in some parts rocky and in some muddy, path. After climbing it up for some time, I stopped before a very steep and slippery ascent, to ponder whether should I continue or turn back, before it was too late. That's when a girl on a motorbike appeared on the top. Some other guy passed me and made his way up. This reassured me for a moment - the road was apparently passable - until they both crashed into each other. Fortunately they came out of it unharmed and rather unfazed, as if this was the most ordinary thing that could happen.

I decided to continue - the road couldn't really get any worse. Soon I got to the top of the pass, where I stopped to admire a beautiful panorama of endless mountain ranges. I thought that if I got out of there safely, this view would make up for all the trouble. I hopped back on the bike, hoping that the ride down won't be too bad. It wasn't - less than 100 meters from the top, asphalt road has returned. Instead of crazy off-road downhill on a bike not really suited for such stunts, I enjoyed a pleasant ride. Pleasant, until I finally reached the hustle and bustle of Vietnam's capital, Hanoi. But that's a different story.





# THINK GLOBAL, EAT LOCAL



“Eat local” might be the single best piece of advice for a hungry traveller ever. Forget those Hokkaido scallops (unless you’re in Hokkaido), skip the Alaskan crab (unless you find yourself in Alaska), and eat what the locals eat. And if you happen to be in Phuket, eat seafood... at Seafood.

Phuket is an island – this well known fact is easily forgotten when you’re actually there. The sheer size of Thailand’s most popular holiday destination combined with the fact that it’s connected to the mainland with a bridge, results in a less than island feeling of the place. But island it is and the waters surrounding it abound in seafood. It might come as a surprise that many of Phuket’s high end restaurants lack of local seafood items on their menus – Tasmanian oysters and ahi tuna are all there, but fish from Phuket’s waters and cooked in Phuket style, that’s harder to find.

Up until recently, things were no different at the Seafood restaurant of one of the island’s most revered resorts – Trisara. Since 2012, Seafood has been offering seafood dishes in Mediterranean style. The menu consisted of grilled fish, salads and other international favourites, the tables were covered with white tablecloths and the whole experience, while excellent, was a tad, for lack of a better word - formal. It’s all very nice but did I mention that Phuket isn’t just any island, but one of the world’s most famous holiday destinations, with millions of guests arriving each year? Millions of people in the confined space of an island result in tough competition amongst Phuket’s resorts and hotels, or in Trisara’s F&B director Quentin Fougeroux’s own words: “Phuket is a market where you always need to be a couple of steps ahead.”

Paradoxically, in today’s globalised world, staying ahead can be achieved by taking a step back. Remember the “think global, act local” slogan? Believe it or not but it has been around for more than 100 years. In that time, it has been used in all contexts and areas of life, and food is no exception. In this day and age, when you can enjoy Australian lamb, Japanese Wagyu beef and Piedmont truffles just about anywhere in the world, it’s serving local dishes that has become a real challenge. Luckily, Trisara never shies away from one.

The change at Seafood begins but doesn’t end with the menu, which has

been completely refurbished to reflect local flavours and feature exclusively local seafood dishes. And a lot of effort has been put into its new incarnation.

“We like to call what we feature in our menu ‘Mama recipes’. What we did is that we asked the staff to go out to ask their families, their mothers, their grandmothers, about certain recipes from their youth, some personal favourites,” explains Quentin Fougeroux. The result is a fascinating menu filled with dishes, which can only be found in places serving authentic local cuisine to Thais. And having lived in Thailand for a good few years now, I confirm – those are not your usual Thai food items, found on menus of touristy restaurants in Phuket, Bangkok or Pattaya.

The menu screams authentic and local, with emphasis on southern style seafood and features unique ingredients that might seem exotic even to Thais living in other provinces of Thailand. “A lot of research has been done to find some very unique ingredients,” says Fougeroux and chef Chalermchai “Kla” Prakobkit provides an example: “There is for instance a fruit called *bilimbi* which is very sour and a lot of original recipes have been using it, but these days people mostly substitute it with lime. We wanted to go back to the original formula, so we went out and found a place where *bilimbi* trees grow and we use it in our menu.” Sounds good? It tastes great too! The fruit is very flavourful and sour and gives much better balance to the dishes.





The whole menu is infused with this local approach. Take the curries served with local deep fried doughnut-bread *Pa Thong Ko* for example. Or the *Hoi Nang Rom Song Krueng* - Thai style oysters, which are much (much!) bigger than those served by a dozen in western seafood restaurants and require different treatment. Instead of the casual lemon wedge, at Seafood they are served in a local manner, with deep fried shallots, chili, seafood sauce, lime, garlic, and a local herb called *Kra Tin*. The result? Unlike any other oysters you have ever tried before.

Except for the ingredients made in house (such as the oyster sauce), all produce is sourced at local markets and from local fishermen. Since the change of Seafood's concept, chef Kla makes time for a visit to local markets where he goes first thing in the morning, buys the best and freshest products and cooks with authentic, old recipes - same way as local mamas would. "Again, it's all about taking the time and making an effort to go out and look for it," says Fougereux.

But it's more than that - it's also about relationships. Trisara has been on the island for 12 years now and is a part of the community, working within, with and for it. This communal spirit is as important in running an authentic local restaurant as it is at a Thai table, where the food is served in big bowls for everybody to dig in, share and enjoy it together. And yes, of course that's how food is served at Trisara Seafood.

Find out more on [trisara.com](http://trisara.com)



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# Jati Keeps Dreaming



There's a universe where everything is possible. The laws of nature don't apply there, nor does logic. In this place, the unexpected lurks behind every corner and paradox is the norm. Usually hidden in the land of our dreams, this surreal place is now brought to daylight, through Jati Putra's graphics.

Many - in fact all elements of Jati Putra's visual jigsaws are quite familiar - there are mountains and oceans there, cities and forests; the elements used by this Jakarta based artist are as casual as they get, and his favorite technique of photo manipulation seems to have been perfected beyond improvement. But then Jati rolls out his biggest gun - imagination.

With it, he begins to alter reality. Angles bent in unexpected ways, worlds intermingle, physics starts playing tricks and what results are images of the same mind boggling quality as Oscar Reutersvärd's Penrose triangle or M.C. Escher's Impossible cube. Yes, Jati's landscapes are abnormal and absurd, yet feel strangely natural and make one wish they existed in reality.

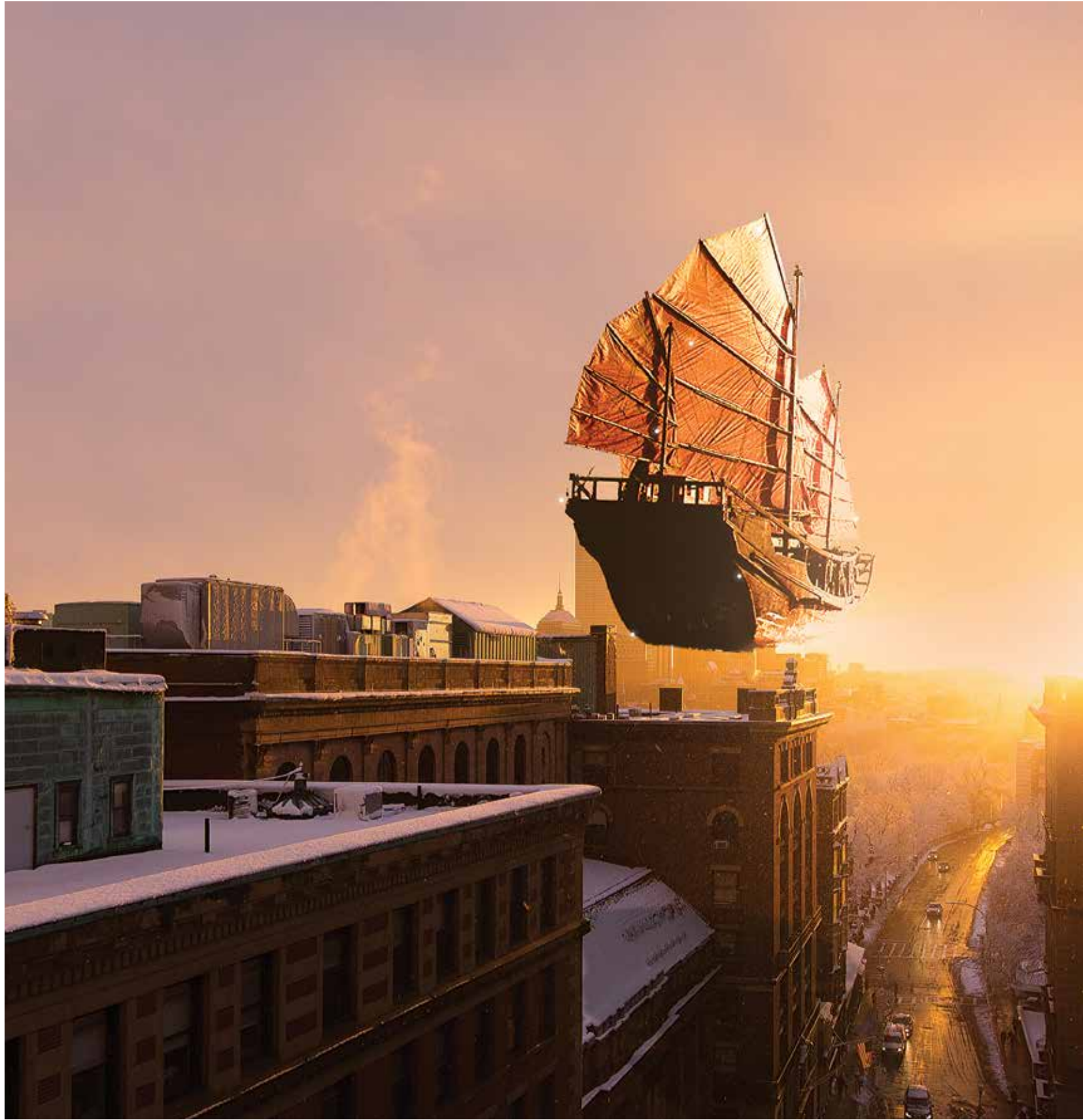
*See more of Jati's dreams on [instagram.com/jatiputra](https://www.instagram.com/jatiputra)*



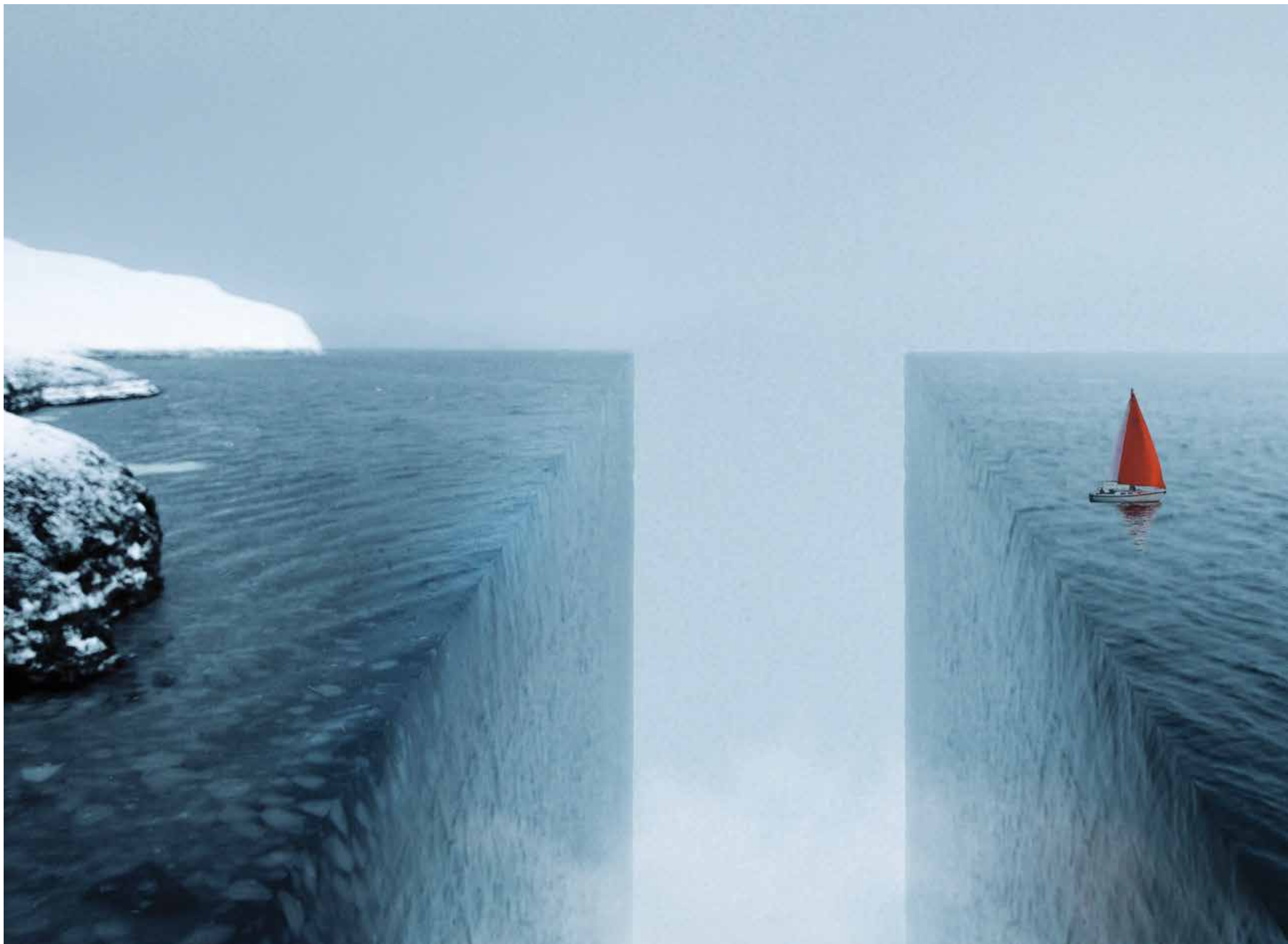




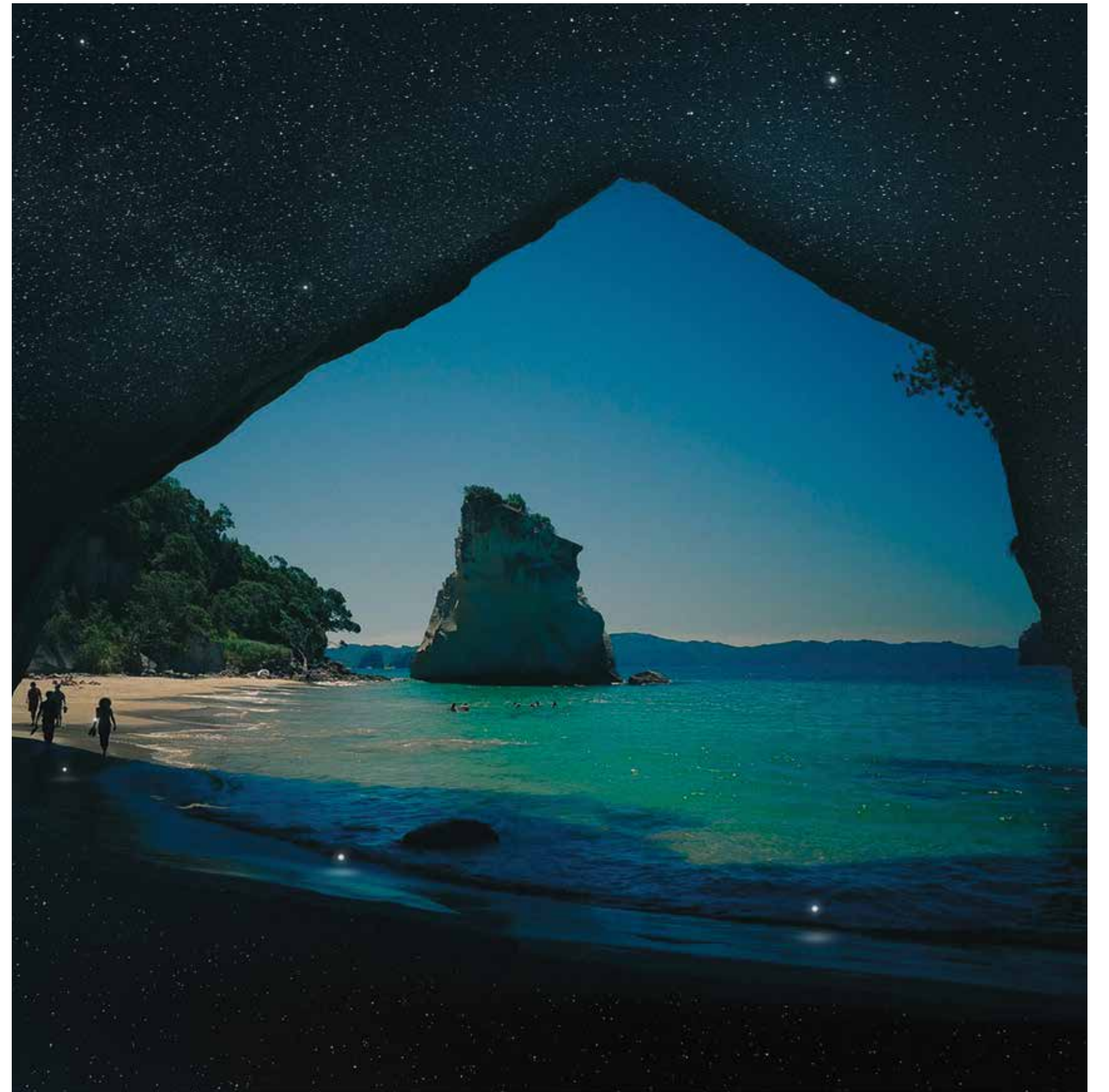
















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# A GRAND OPENING

Words by Frank Ross

They might be small, but can have a big impact. They are only but an introduction, yet can match the mains with flavor and appearance, and beat them with diversity. When executed right, they make the meal, before it even begins. Appetisers, hors d'oeuvre, antipasti – whatever you call them, those little works of art can make an impression, that will last way past the dessert.

## Paresa Resort Phuket

### Seafood ceviche

Assembling the freshest local Phuket and imported seafood, chef Jordi has spiked Paresa's ceviche with passion fruit, creating a crackling and sour combination of freshness and a perfect match for the stunning ocean vista from Paresa's terrace. Served on freshly cut halves of passion fruits and topped with baby corn, pomegranate and fresh young coriander, the ceviche quickly became one of the "must try" on Paresa's menu.



Chef Jordi Valles Claverol





## Conrad Bangkok

### Kama-Meshi

The Japanese give a lot of importance not only to how the food tastes, but also how good it looks. "Kama-Meshi" translated to "Kettle Rice" proves it, and it's also as close as Japanese cuisine comes to comfort food. At KiSara restaurant, located on the 3rd floor of Conrad Bangkok hotel, it comes served in an old-style rice pot and is available with a wide range of toppings, including queen crab, salmon, snow fish, eel, and more.



**Chef Kenji Shindo**



## Fairmont Singapore

### Cod Croquette

You'll be amazed how something so small can be so complex. Chef Tryson thoughtfully made cod the choice of fish here, as it will not dry out when fried due to its high oil content. The center of the Cod Croquette is filled with smoked bottarga cream cheese, which reduces the heat of this deep fried dish. For the coating, Chef Tryson blends Kataifi into a bread-crumb like texture to bring out the buttery taste. The Cod Croquette is served with a side of fermented garlic aioli and confit lemon gel to elevate the taste.



**Chef Tryson Quek**





## Four Seasons Singapore

### Dim sum

Traditionally served at breakfast, dim sums make for splendid appetisers any time of day. And the variety of dim sums at Four Seasons Singapore showcases the chef's laborious work and great attention to the finest of detail. The crispy flaky pastry with black pepper meat for example, takes many hours to make. It has seventeen symmetrical layers alternated between water-based and oil-based skin to form a crispy textured pastry that wraps the wood-fired meat within. What a start!



**Chef Alan Chan**



## InterContinental Bangkok

### Butter poached lobster

Fireplace Grill and Bar at InterContinental stays true to its venerable history and esteemed reputation, beginning with excellent starters. Take the butter poached lobster for example, which is served with green peas, grilled asparagus, and imported seaweed. The mild sweetness of the fresh lobster plays beautifully with nutty flavors of the butter. Sweet pea puree becomes elevated by a hint of saltiness from the seaweed, which allows diners to truly feel the taste of the ocean.



**Chef Sebastian Reischer**





# InterContinental Hong Kong

## Italian tappatisers

Chef Nicola Canuti at InterContinental Hong Kong takes the guests on a journey around Italy with a selection of some of the greatest flavors Italian cuisine has to offer. Regional specialties and authentic flavors are the foundation of his antipasti setup, which includes such delicacies as fritto misto, angel pasta salad with caviar and lobster, octopus salad with potatoes and sun-dried tomato, tigelle with gorgonzola, grissini with parma ham, arancini with black truffles and others.



Chef Nicola Canuti



# The Mira Hong Kong

## All-star mini burgers

At Mira Hong Kong, Chef Oliver Li serves a classic western dish while taking into account the local cultural background of the everlasting love for sharing the food in Hong Kong. The mini burgers come in pairs and each is made with top quality ingredients. Homemade soft beetroot rolls are filled with US black Angus beef patties and a layer of melted artisan raclette cheese from the Swiss alps, which adds a pleasant tang to the flavor. The burgers are matched by the crispy texture and earthy flavor of the oven-baked sweet purple potato chips – a healthier alternative to the classic fries.



Chef Oliver Li





## Park Hyatt Saigon

### Five color vegetable salad

Traditional Vietnamese cuisine, with its focus on fresh ingredients, minimal use of dairy and oil, complementary textures, and reliance on herbs and vegetables, is a match made in heaven for starters, which while flavorful, shouldn't overwhelm the main course. With that in mind, Chef Tran Son at Park Hyatt's Saigon Square One restaurant serves this five color vegetable salad, flavored with fish sauce and lime, as a perfect appetiser before the main dish.



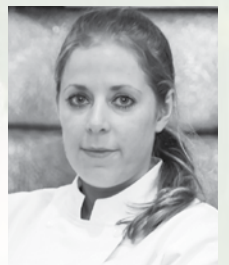
**Chef Tran Son**



## Plaza Athenee Bangkok

### Maine lobster, Alaskan king crab, basil and tomato consommé jelly

The appetiser at Plaza Athenee Bangkok was designed to grab the taste buds' attention. To do just that Chef Roxanne Lange combined prime pink lobster and equally fresh Alaskan king crab, matching their subtle flavors with jellified tomato water and consommé, droplets of house sauce and herb salad. It looks stunning and tastes just as great, especially that it's served at the hotel's The Reflexions restaurant, with its casually charismatic design.



**Chef Roxanne Lange**





## Andara Phuket

### Parsley root mousse with fresh Australian trout caviar

Bavarian cuisine doesn't exactly invoke light and refreshing connotation but this delightful appetiser is here to challenge its heavyweight image adding a modern twist to some classic ingredients. You will be surprised how well the flavors of the parsley root combine with the slightly salty trout caviar – served cold, this mousse is delightfully light and wakes up your palate before the main course.



Chef Tino Rominger



## Metropolitan by Como Bangkok

### Green goddess soup

From the wellness-focused menus of Glow restaurant, which serves the freshest of healthful Bangkok dining options, comes this green explosion of flavor and goodness. Broccoli, zucchini, spinach, kale, bok choy and asparagus all made it to the mix as well as fresh and dried seaweed. Garnished with just salt and pepper and presented in a minimalistic, clean form it bets on the pureness and intensity of flavors – and it wins.



Chef Chris Miller





## The Upper House Hong Kong

### House cured gravlax

Chef Gray Kunz at the Upper House's Hong Kong Café Gray Deluxe brought a bit of a Scandinavian twist to the menu with the house cured gravlax. The salmon is prepared in house with the use of salt, sugar and dill, giving it a delightfully delicate texture and a sweet and sour flavor profile. In the past, gravlax was prepared by covering the fish in sand and fermenting it for a day or two, but this method is no longer in use... and maybe for the best. At the Upper House it is served with a brioche and garnishes and makes a great beginning of a delightful meal.



**Chef Gray Kunz**



## The Siam Bangkok

### Yum takrai hoishell

The highlight of this spicy salad, served at The Siam during their sumptuous Sunday Brunch, is young Thai lemongrass, which graces the fresh Hokkaido scallop with its freshness, enhancing its flavor and bringing forward its delicate texture. What result is a true explosion of flavors with spicy, salty and sour in quell and equally pleasing parts. An ideal beginning to a brunch experience.



**Chef Damri**



# Looking to the future, mining in the past

Words by Matt Clemens



**Dig in Phuket's past and you'll find hidden treasures, pirate ships, fortunes made overnight, great battles and mighty warriors. And you don't even need to dig deep, as some true gems are hidden in the islands more recent history. One such gem – the famed Indigo Pearl resort, one of the first to grace the island, begins a new chapter of its tale – under a new name.**

Indigo Pearl has always had genuine Phuket at heart. Founded by the visionary Na-Ranong family and designed by no other than the internationally acclaimed architect Bill Bensley (turn to page 124 to read his piece written exclusively for NAA), the hotel has not only expressed the island's fascinating past but helped shape its future. Merging the aesthetics of the island's tin mining times with the glamour of modern day hospitality, the heart-warming Thai manner with world class level of service, Indigo Pearl rose to be a symbol of a luxury experience in Phuket.



Naturally, obtaining such position didn't come without a bit of daring and today, this bravery continues. After all, what could be a more courageous move for such a renowned hotel than changing its name? So without further ado, Indigo Pearl becomes a thing of the past, the future belongs to The Slate.









Why the change? What does it mean to the guests and why do it now? To find answer to this and other questions, we spoke to Krystal Prakaikaew, daughter of The Slate's owner Wichit Na-Ranong and the driving force behind the brand's evolution.

"It is a process which we started quite some time ago, not something that is happening overnight," explains Prakaikaew, "we felt that the travel industry has changed a lot from when we created Indigo Pearl about a decade ago. The behaviour of our clientele has evolved to a new dimension. Given all these facts, we decided that it was time for us to evolve the brand to the next level."

Evolution is the key word here. Working with such a well-established brand, the team behind the new concept had to tread carefully, making sure to preserve the qualities that made Indigo Pearl the famed resort that it has become over the years. That's why any visitor who enjoyed a stay at the Indigo Pearl, will feel at home at the Slate. The resort's DNA has not been altered and its Industrial-chic design and a link with tin mining heritage of Phuket are still very much part of the concept.

**"The Slate, a Phuket Pearl Resort is a journey into the island's true soul"**

But that doesn't mean that all that was altered is the name. Quite the opposite, the changes were made to what's a fundamental part of any resort's success – the guest experience.

"The Slate, a Phuket Pearl Resort is a journey into the island's true soul," says Prakaikaew. "The guest journey has been designed for travellers who want to stay away from the traditional Phuket holiday formula and want to experience Phuket from a different angle," she adds. This angle incorporates both the island's past and its future, resulting, in Prakaikaew's own words "in an avant-garde expression of Phuket heritage, its rich culture and traditions brought to life with bold design and fearless imagination." To that goal the transformation had to be both deep and wide, touching on all the aspects of guest's experience - from the refreshed looks of the suites, villas and public areas to new restaurant concepts and dining experiences with a wider range of healthy options as well as flavourful local dishes that stay true to Phuket's culinary traditions, from the introduction of art salon, to enhanced wellness programmes, the Slate promises to deliver on all fronts of luxury hospitality and to do it in Phuket style.

"Phuket has long been my home, and I'm continually grateful for what this island has given to us," says Mr. Wichit Na-Ranong, The Slate's owner and Managing Director. "To stay ahead, we must always evolve and we are excited with the next phase of The Slate which will provide our guests with a distinct yet heartfelt experience. We aspire to offer an experience that intuitively understands guest's needs, satisfies their desire to indulge while engaging their curiosity".

And knowing their track record – they will.

*For more information visit [theslatephuket.com](http://theslatephuket.com)*







To say that Vincent Sung (vincentsung.com) is a photographer is not to say enough. Born in South Korea, brought up in Belgium, he has lived and worked in places such as Seoul, Bangkok, New York, Paris . . . the list goes on. All of them vibrant and dynamic, they shaped Sung's visual style and kept the flame of his creativity burning hot and bright. Except for contributing his photographs to a number of prestigious publications, he worked with international broadcasting tycoons, co-funded art spaces, managed art events, launched galleries and more.

Sung brings European creative to fashion photography in Asia, which is one of the reasons why he is sought-after by Korean celebrities, actors, designers and others. He currently splits his time between Seoul and Bangkok, or anywhere else in the world where assignments take him.

What follows on the next pages is a fable of an intergalactic encounter. And as in every tale, there is a princess here – one that fell down to earth from outer space. There's also a dragon – in this case embodied by the rampant consumerism of the fashion world. Will there be a prince on a white horse to save her and help her return to her home planet, or will she be left behind and forced to blend with the human race? Turn the page and find out.









# A World of Festivities

The festive time is... always! No matter what day of the year it is, somewhere, someone is celebrating something. And no matter where, it usually involves music, dance, colourful costumes and people coming together to share the joy of those special moments.



Photographer Ethan Fox Miles has travelled to more than 40 countries (and counting) and personally witnessed dozens of such festive days. Those encounters resulted in thousands of photographs. Some we present here, for more make sure to visit [nomadicfoxphoto.com](http://nomadicfoxphoto.com)

A festive day is an excuse to let it go, loosen up and just have fun.  
St Patrick's day - maybe more than other.







Many festivities require both pure body and mind.  
Shores of the Ganges river in Varanasi, India, are a popular place to purify both.



Calendars of all cultures are marked with religious festivities.  
Pictured here is a baptism ceremony at Jordan river's Yardenit Baptisma site.





White-clad Orthodox Christians celebrating Semana Santa - the holy Easter week, in Salamanca, Spain.



Costumes, uniforms, special outfits are one of many ways to mark a special day such as the Dia de Portugal in Belem, Portugal.



# THREE SHADES OF BLUE

Words by Maciek Klimowicz

Before you begin reading this story, grab your smartphone and open your favorite music streaming service, search for “Orinoco Flow (Sail Away)” by Enya and tap play. Now we are ready to sail away, sail away, sail away... Yes, three times, as we take you to three splendid yachting destinations in South-East Asia. All out! Full ahead!

## DUBAI

Welcome to an oasis. Dubai might be a desert city from a geographical point of view but it isn't one in any other sense. And except for the one thing that it is most famous for – shopping, it offers plenty of excitement, both on land and, what's more interesting for us – on water.

“Dubai is a relatively new yachting destination, especially if we compare it to other, well established location” says Bernard Bilardello, the president of Bristol Charter, a company which has been present in Dubai since 2004. But new also means exciting, and this is where Dubai delivers. Local hourly cruises might be some of the most fun in the world, allowing guests to take a break from the scorching heat on land and enjoy a spectacular cityscape from the azure waters of the Arabian Sea. And while simply cruising along the Jumeirah Palm with a backdrop of the iconic Burj al Arab is an experience unlike any other, there's also plenty of other things you can do on water when in Dubai – relaxing cruises, team building events, fishing and on-board parties are just a few that Bernard Bilardello lists.

Understandably, you might be worried about high temperatures, but don't forget that it's Dubai we're talking about, a desert city where you can even go skiing and anything is possible. To avoid the heat on deck, you can opt for a night cruise. “Dubai is an all year destination, but between June to September, a nighttime-only one, as its too hot during the day. But not to worry, Bristol Dubai office is open from 10 am till 2 am,” adds Bernard Bilardello.



## PHUKET

Thailand's biggest island needs no introduction. With millions of people visiting Phuket every year, it's without a doubt one of the most popular holiday destinations in the world. But if you'd rather avoid crowds, there is a place where you can escape them in Phuket – on water.

Phuket's biggest strength is its location, with the Indian Ocean's Andaman Sea to the west and the spectacular Phang Nga bay to the east. "Phuket offers an amazing diversity of beautiful landscapes and is famously surrounded by limestone islets and turquoise waters," says Thibault Salaun, General Manager at Bristol Charter Phuket. So whether you opt for a daily cruise or go for a longer island-hopping adventure, prepare yourself for vistas that you'll never forget. "The islands of Phang Nga bay or the famed Koh Phi Phi are a favorite among movie makers, because of their unique beauty," adds Thibault Salaun.

Too further add to Phuket's sea-cruising experience, a spectrum of activities is available both on and under the water. "Some of the world's top diving destinations are a stone's throw away from Phuket," says Bristol's GM before he goes on to list other watersports popular among visitor's to Phuket – snorkeling, jet skis, kitesurfing as well as some more cutting edge toys such as Seabobs, which take underwater exploration to a whole new level.

While sailing is possible all year round in Phuket, the best conditions are present between December and April with calm seas and plenty of sunshine. It's also then that the mesmerising Similan Islands National Park is open to visitors. But even if you find yourself in Phuket at another time, Phuket has plenty to offer back on land, both when it comes to sightseeing and luxury lifestyle and what's important, those attractions are never far away from the marinas – in stark contrast to for example the Mediterranean. The way Phuket connects sea and land luxury lifestyles into one, convenient and unique package is one of many reasons why Yacht lovers enjoy it so much.

*For more information visit [bristolcharter.net](http://bristolcharter.net)*



## HONG KONG

Asia's World City, a former British colony and a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong is a city with many facets, and one of them certainly is a city of sailors. Blessed with good winds, particularly through the winter months from September to February, and some truly diverse landscapes, Hong Kong is one of Asia's sailing hotspots. "Here in Hong Kong, we have one of the biggest yacht clubs in the world - the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club," says Rob Partridge, the club's Head Racing Coach. "It has approximately 12,000 members with around 5,000 of those members active in Hong Kong, and that's in addition to various government training centers," he adds.

Government support plays no small role in establishing Hong Kong as a prime destination for those who want to train to become professional sailors. And according to Partridge, government investments in elite training programs pay off. "We've had a team that finished 3rd at the 420th Championships in 2015 and another that made it to the top 10 at the same year's 29th World Championships," he tells us. And with boats in a variety of classes ranging from the Optimist to 100 ft. ocean racing yachts and children as young as six years old joining the courses (and even younger sailing on their parent's private boats), Hong Kong seems to have something to offer to anyone willing to try their hand at sailing. "Plus there are big offshore taking place here, going to Philippines, Vietnam and Hainan, so Hong Kong is attracting race boats from Australia, Japan and all over Asia," adds Partridge.

On top of that, one of the biggest draws of Hong Kong is the diversity of its landscape. Most people think that Hong Kong is only a crazy city with lots of noise and bright lights, "But actually around ¾ of Hong Kong is a National Park," says Partridge. "So if you sail away from the city, you can find some incredible beaches which can give you a feel of being on a deserted island in the middle of an ocean."

*For more information visit [rhkyc.org.hk](http://rhkyc.org.hk)*



# GORGEOUS RESTRAIN

Words by Maciek Klimowicz

Much has been said about minimalism, maybe too much – after all it's a philosophy of removing all but the necessary. But apparently, it's been around long enough for anyone to have a say on it. And so Da Vinci said that "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication," Jules Verne added that "a well-used minimum suffices for everything," while Picasso called art "the elimination of the unnecessary".

We will say no more; instead we'll introduce someone who deviously practices the minimalist principle in his designs. Meet Christian Liaigre.





Liaigre's conviction that "comfort does not lie in superficial affluence but in delicacy and rareness," is the foundation of his style and turned out to be a key to his success. Having managed to combine a certain modesty with great elegance, he built his reputation as a masterful craftsman and perfectionist. Notable customers followed, amongst them the likes of Calvin Klein, Karl Lagerfeld, and Francois Nars.

According to Liaigre, interior architecture and design are synonymous with timelessness, calm beauty and subtle luxury and are far from fashion and trends. That's why a visit to any of his twenty-six showrooms across the world, including those in Singapore and Bangkok, is a bit like stepping into a place that has been removed from the passing of time. Careful restraint and respect for the space, designs based on local cultures and traditions and creative utilisation of light result in interiors perfectly balancing aesthetics and comfort.

And with "less is more" being one of Liaigre's main principles, the focus is placed not on quantity but on quality. Liaigre manufactures its pieces according to an artisanal method of production.





The wood comes from a small number of workshops which are specialised in woodworking or upholstery, all Liaigre's leathers are full grain treated by a French tannery with a special «semi-aniline» tinted finish, its textiles are composed with natural fibres such as linen, silk, wool and cotton and its lighting include finishes and patinas made by hand, some similar to an old-fashioned black patina reproduced by a process used in the 18th century.

This artistry can be seen in these images of a New York glass penthouse – a space filled with light, where gold and silver play with the rays of sun rising over the city. The quiet and simple style of Liaigre adds a layer of silent intimacy in this noisy, bustling megalopolis.

Find out more on [chanintrliving.com/brands/christian-liaigre](http://chanintrliving.com/brands/christian-liaigre)



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# A Greener Side

They say that the grass is always greener on the other side... and it is, if the other side happens to be in the hotels we present to you on the following pages. Simply looking at images of those lush and airy spaces will have a calming, relaxing effect. To visit to any of them in person, is a chance to soak yourself in the most soothing shades of green, breath deeper and reconnect with your natural self.

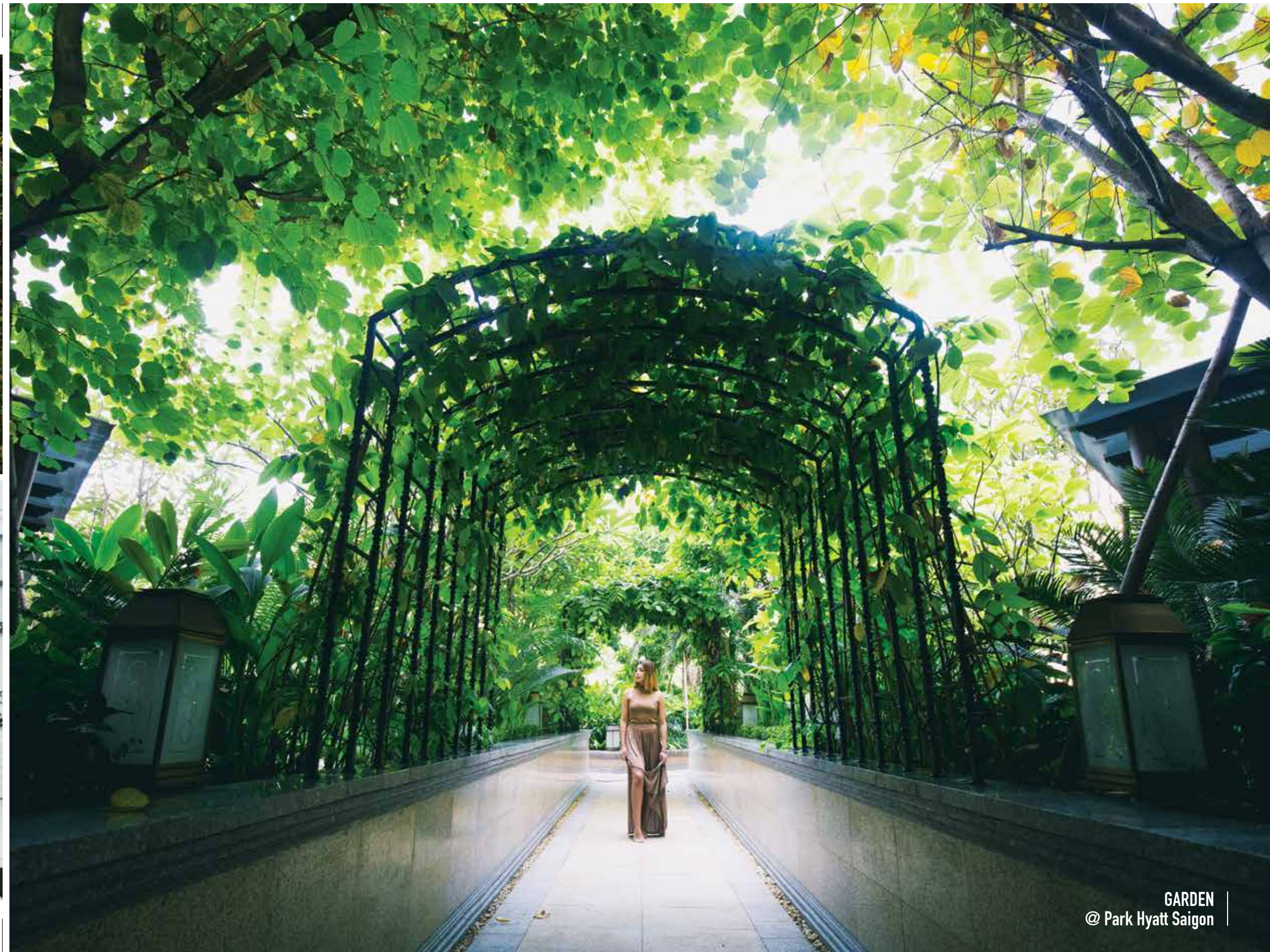
INFINITY POOL  
@ Sofitel So Bangkok



TREEPOD DINING  
@ Soneva Kiri, Koh Kood

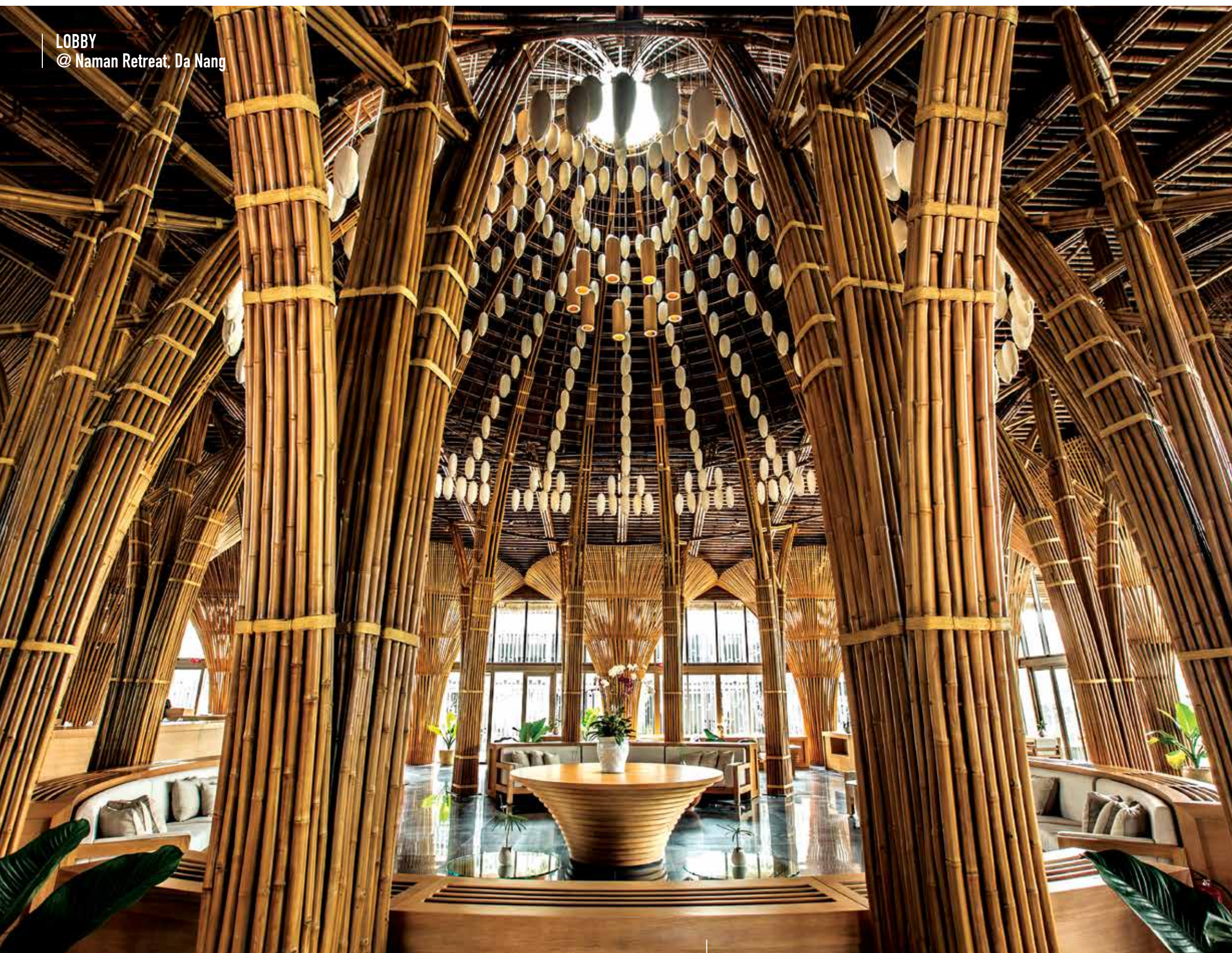


VERTICAL GARDEN  
@ Hotel ICON, Hong Kong



GARDEN  
@ Park Hyatt Saigon





LOBBY  
@ Naman Retreat, Da Nang

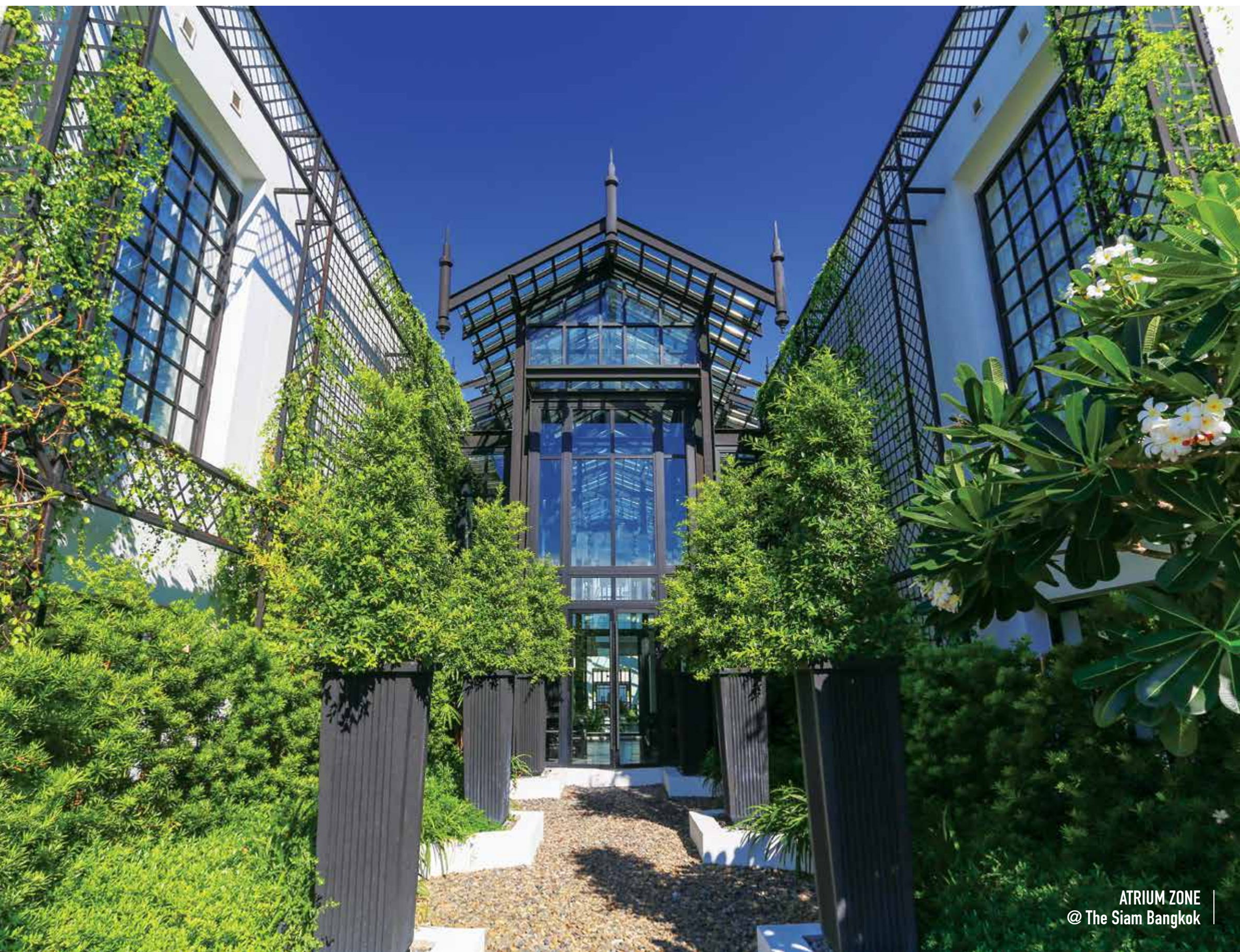


GARDEN COURTYARD  
@ The Sukhothai, Bangkok

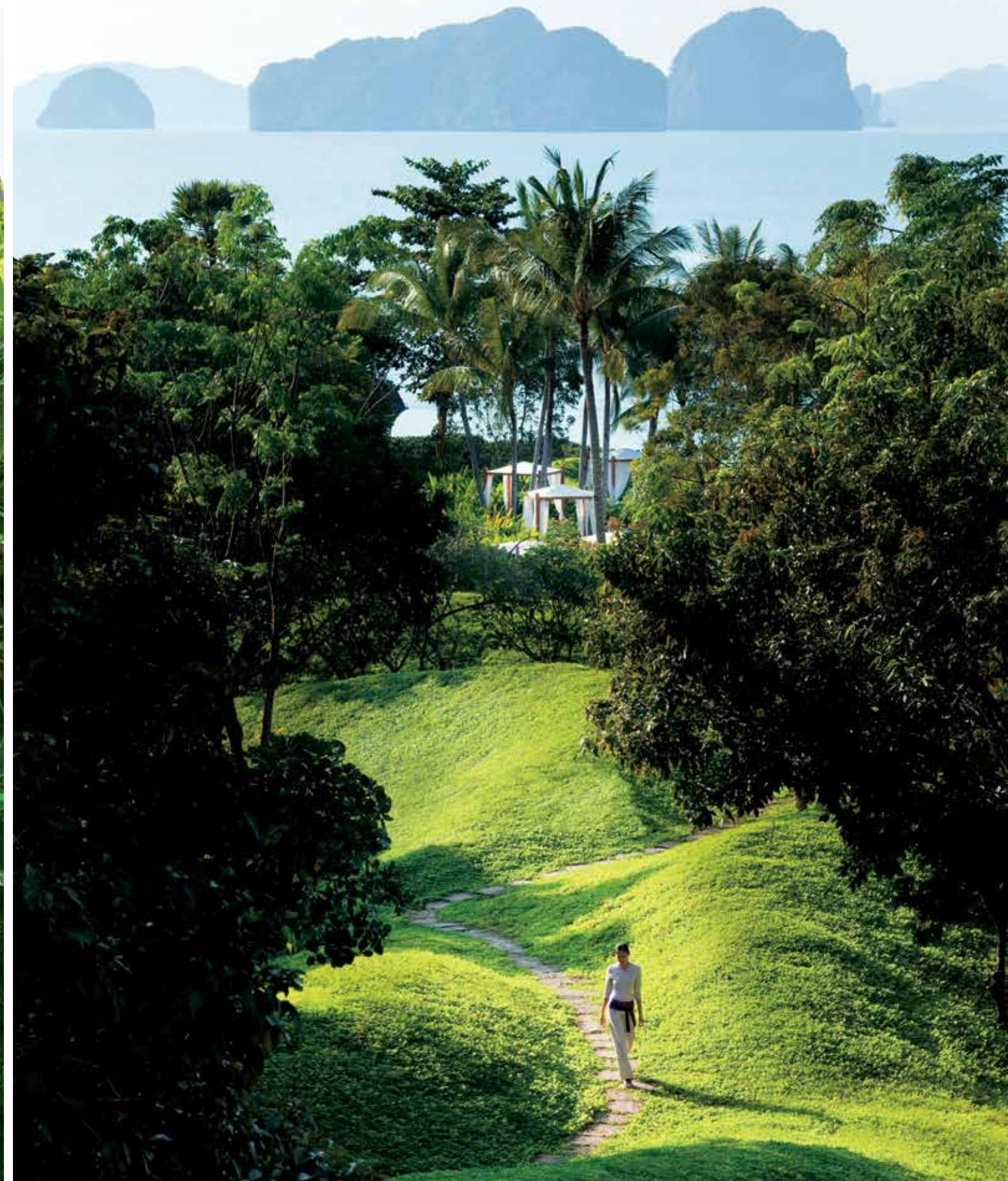


GARDEN  
@ Sofitel Luang Prabang





ATRIUM ZONE  
@ The Siam Bangkok



PATHWAY  
@ Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Krabi



# 24 HOURS IN KOH SAMUI

Words by Matt Clemens

Koh Samui offers enough beauty, leisure, luxury, indulgence, fun and flavours to last a lifetime. But what if all you have is 24 hours? Do not despair and make every minute count. Follow our guide and experience the best of Koh Samui, in a concentrated form.

9:30 – 12:00



## Golf at Santiburi Samui Country Club

After breakfast, it's time to challenge yourself. And what better place to do that than on Samui's only championship 18 hole golf course. Santiburi Samui Country Club fits in harmoniously with the rolling contour of hills and valleys and surrounding coconut plantations. With elevation's changes, from 25 to 180 meters above sea level, the course provides some tricky moments of play.

For more information visit [santiburisamui.com/golf-detail](http://santiburisamui.com/golf-detail)

12:30 – 14:30



## Cooking Class at Banyan Tree

You must be hungry after all that swinging. But hold on for just a little while longer. Before you eat, immerse yourself in the aromas of the freshest of ingredients and discover local cooking techniques. The classic Thai dishes you'll prepare during Banyan Tree's cooking class such as Yum Neua Yang, Tom Yum Goong, Geang Khiew Wan Gai and other, will taste heavenly.

For more information visit [banyantree.com](http://banyantree.com)

17:30 – 19:00



## Cocktails at WOOBAR

Spectacular Samui sunset deserves a spectacular viewing point – such as one offered by WOOBAR with its 270-degree panorama of the Gulf of Thailand and the surrounding hillside. Prepare yourself to be wowed with the surrounding nature as much as with the bar's unique design, its selection of signature cocktails and innovative nibbles, served to the tune of a live DJ.

For more information visit [wretreatkohsamui.com/woobar](http://wretreatkohsamui.com/woobar)

6:00 – 9:00



## Night and breakfast at Belmond Napasai

Welcome to your perfect paradise escape, welcome to Koh Samui. And what a place to start the day off! Belmond Napasai, with its private white sand beach, infinity pool and softly lit restaurants, set against the backdrop of the turquoise sea, is an ultimate combination of natural beauty and unparalleled luxury living. And all this is served sprinkled with Thailand's famed hospitality.

For more information visit [belmond.com/napasai-koh-samui](http://belmond.com/napasai-koh-samui)

15:00 – 17:00



## Wellness Session at Banyan Tree Spa

What awaits you now are two hours of much deserved bliss at Banyan Tree awards-showered spa. Try "The Rainforest" – Samui's first hydrotherapy spa offering a holistic and innovative wellness experience, designed to heal and soothe. Ten Spa Treatment Pavilions, and Vitality Pool, will help you find perfect rejuvenation.

For more information visit [banyantree.com](http://banyantree.com)

19:30 – 22:00



## Dinner at Jahn

The recent winner of three global awards at the World Luxury Restaurant Awards 2016, Jahn at Conrad Koh Samui delivers an ultimate Samui dining experience every time. We recommend the 'Journey of Jahn' – a five-course dinner set menu, inspired by local flavours. Jahn's chef has selected each dish to celebrate Koh Samui's culture, using local ingredients such as fresh coconut, red tuna, lobster and local meats with a touch of culinary arts. A perfect ending to your perfect 24 hours in Koh Samui.

For more information visit [conradkohsamui.com](http://conradkohsamui.com)



## | ONWARDS AND UPWARDS |

After more than 15 years of research and development it's finally here – a flying motorbike. Yes, you've read it right – Aero-X is a hovering vehicle powered by a water-cooled 240 horsepower engine and two large rotors. It can travel at speed of up to 70 mph at an altitude of 3.5 meters and carry a load of approx. 150 kg. Aero-X developer Aerofex claims that it's easy and safe to control – we'd love to try.



## | BLOCKS OF TIME |

Google may have dropped its modular smartphone project but there are dreamers out there who don't quit so fast. And they dreamt out BLOCKS – world's first modular smartwatch. Modules are added to the watch's face into the watch's metal straps and expand the device's functionality by adding extra battery power, a heart rate monitoring, a GPS module, SIM module, NFC contactless payment module, galvanic skin response module, gesture control, body temperature module and other.



## | IMMERSE YOURSELF |

Avegant Glyph is a take away movie theater experience... without a screen. Instead it uses retinal imaging technology and mimics natural eyesight through LED projection onto millions of microscopic mirrors resulting in image clarity that is hardly distinguishable from viewing the natural world – ideal for new media like 360-degree video.



## | PLAYING WITH LIGHT |

On paper the L16 camera looks complicated – it captures light through many small apertures and uses folded optics technology to bounce light off angled periscopic reflex mirrors and through slim, horizontally positioned lens barrels before reaching an optical sensor. But what matter is that it can take DSLR-like photos and it fits in your shirt's pocket.

## | SHOWING IT LIKE IT IS |



Flat screens move aside – it's time for 3D holographic vision. Yes, same as we've dreamed of since Star Wars virtual chess set. And now it's here with the introduction of Holus holographic platform. The device creates an immersive holographic experience that utilises gestures, voice and other forms of interaction removing the barrier between human and digital information.



## | DRONE WARS |

Long long time ago in a galaxy far away... wait, stop! It's happening here and now. The drone wars have just begun! At just about the same time two technological giants – DJI and Go Pro, introduced two different models of ultra-portable drones to the market. Which one is better? You decide – Go Pro is not just a drone, it's a system with a detachable camera and hand held stabiliser. And it's small. DJI's Mavic pro... is even smaller and has an optically stabilised camera, smarter internals and longer battery life. Whoever wins, we're bound to see more drones zipping over our heads in the coming years.

## | HALF A BIKE |



Halfbike is exactly what you think it is – half a bike. It combines running and cycling to propel you forward on your daily city commute. There are no handlebars, no A-frame and no seat of a standard bike; instead you pedal from a standing position, clutching the single upright break handle. No wonder it caught our attention. Oh, and it weighs just 7.8kg.



## | TABLE TABLET |

Someone has finally found the word "table" in the word "tablet". CROSS2DESIGN Smart Table combines the two by serving the impressiveness of a tablet in a table shape becoming the ultimate school bench. Of course it's touch sensitive (what isn't these days?), the position of the flat screen is adjustable, and allow us to say, it looks mighty cool.



# Nepal's Greatest Sharpshooter

Words by Bill Bensley

Winter can be pretty damn bleak in the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, so it is no wonder that when warmth of the spring starts to bring colour back to their landscape, the Nepalese want to party. The celebrations begin the night before Holi, with a communal bonfire where mystical rituals are performed to destroy the evil that exist in all caste levels of their society. That is cool, though somewhat serious. But having visited Nepal close to 50 times over the past 35 years, and having fallen in love with this place where laughter comes easily and smiles are free, I have learned that no day on the Nepalese calendar brings more smiles, than the day of Holi.

Back in the 80s we were commissioned to design a Dusit Thani in Pokhara. To take us on that nine-hour drive to the proposed hotel site, we chartered a horrible minivan, with wheels the size of a dinner plate, three bench seats some six inches off its floor, and not more than eight inches legroom between each row. Lek Bunnag, a famous Thai architect and my Harvard classmate were sat shotgun, shoulder to shoulder with the driver. Lek's wife Louisa and my better half Jirachai sat together on the middle bench while I took the back bench and sat cross-legged in the middle, as that was how I afforded a little more comfort for my lanky 6'4" frame.

As we left the sanity of our gated compound at the Yak and Yeti Hotel in Kathmandu, we got our first taste of the madness about to unfold on the long journey ahead. Just beyond the hotel's gates and to our total surprise, we were ambushed by a gathering of some 100 purple children, wielding plastic bags filled with colourful tinted water. In no time, Lek's signature of a perfectly starched white shirt and pants was splattered, violating his pristine image. Us, passengers in the back, all had a quiet snigger while we rolled up the windows, thinking that behind them we were safe from the mayhem. Only then did the driver explain to us that during this one day of Holi, anyone and everyone, rich or poor, friend or stranger, is fair game for a pelting.

Hour after hour, we soldiered on down the dusty track to Pokhara. We made our way through villages and past roadside stations of elated and drunken villagers who bombarded our tiny tinny van with water balloons. But it was just outside Pokhara when I was smacked in the head.

"Shit! What the hell was that?!" I screamed, as I was jolted from a lovely catnap to see what looked like blood all over my face and body. Some cheeky scallywag had actually hit the target of the two-inch gap of the driver's open window! His bag full of concentrated red dye flew past the driver, somehow took a left turn between the heads of Louisa and Jirachai, and hit me square between the eyes! To this day I can't explain the physics of such a feat but I swear it is true. I stopped the van and got out, thinking that I might be able to get myself a bit cleaner... only to be drenched by a gang of absolutely hysterical teenagers, who thought their friend's bullseye shot was the funniest thing that ever happened on the face of the planet. I was initially shocked, then pissed, but the villagers' joyful exuberance on this wonderful day of Holi was so infectious that I gave in and laughed myself silly until my stomach ached.

To this day, I love Holi. Experience it, embrace it, and go with the flow. You will love it too.

*About the author: Bill Bensley is one of the most revered landscape designers in the world. Known as the king of exotic luxury resorts, he left his unique mark on more than 200 properties in 26 countries. Find out more on [Bensley.com](http://Bensley.com)*





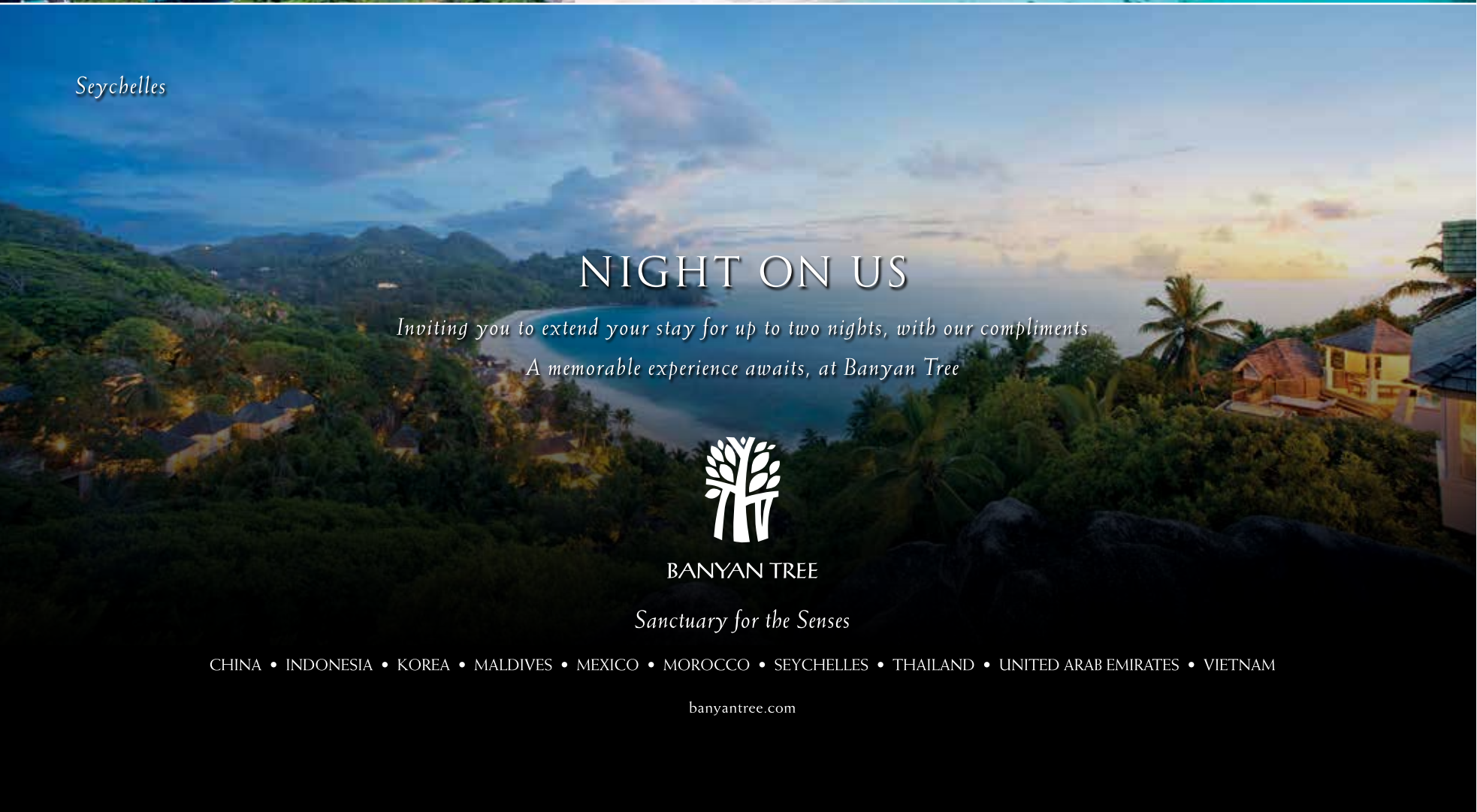
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