

ISSUE #8

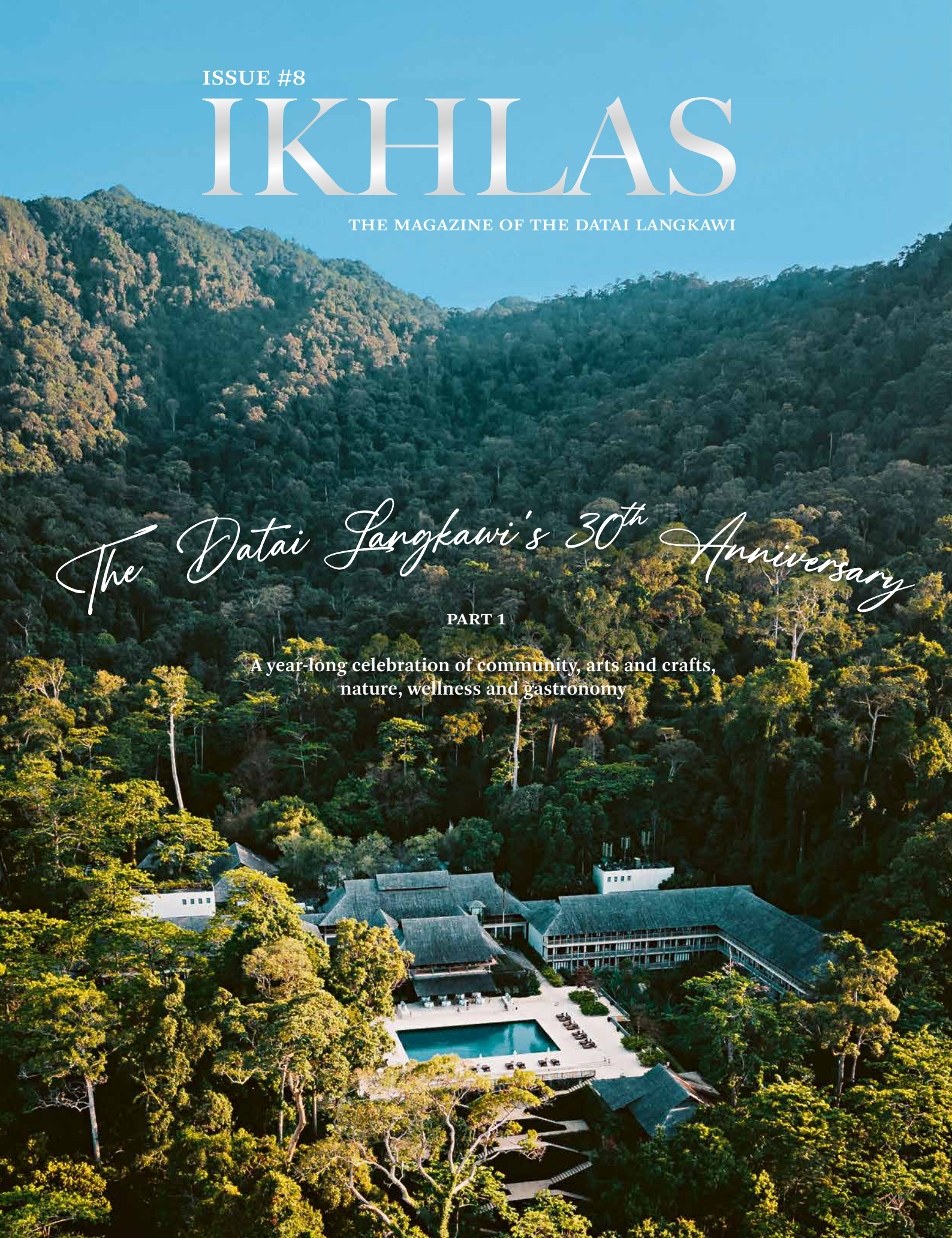
IKHILAS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DATAI LANGKAWI

The Datai Langkawi's 30th Anniversary

PART 1

A year-long celebration of community, arts and crafts,
nature, wellness and gastronomy





THE DATAI

LANGKAWI

Celebrating
30 years
of hospitality

30TH ANNIVERSARY



EST. 1993

In 1993, we opened our doors for the very first time. Our ethos of providing exceptional nature, culture and gastronomic experiences inspired by the ancient rainforest surrounding us, and our dedication to preserve nature's uniqueness, remain as true today as they were then.

Looking forward to the next 30 years, we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our guests who have supported us throughout the past three decades, and eagerly await to welcome new and familiar faces to our mystical hideaway, embedded between lush rainforest and pristine beach.

A portion of all proceeds from our Anniversary celebrations will go to The Datai Pledge.



EARTHCHECK
50th CERTIFIED
2023

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THE LEADING HOTELS
OF THE WORLD

W

elcome to a very special issue of IKHLAS. This year marks the 30th anniversary of The Datai Langkawi, a milestone that we are all excited to celebrate with you.

This issue – the 8th since we began publishing IKHLAS in January 2019 – is the first of the two-part Special Collector's Edition that tells the stories of The Datai Langkawi's 30-year voyage. Across the pages, you'll embark on a journey through the many facets of The Datai Langkawi. These stories revolve around our culinary, nature and well-being offerings, in addition to an exploration of cultural festivals in Malaysia and the design inspiration behind our rainforest resort.

You will also find in-depth narratives illustrating why we consider The Datai Langkawi our second family, as each and every member of the team represents an equally vital cog in providing guests with indelible memories of a rainforest getaway like no other. Moreover, through our annual The Chef Series and this year's new Serenity – The Datai Well-being Series, we hope to create plenty of new memories in both gastronomy and wellness, with a line-up for 2024 already in the works.

As we look towards the future, we are celebrating the best of The Datai Langkawi with our guests, as we did in March during Chapter 1 of our 30th anniversary programme under the overall theme of Community, and then in June with Chapter 2 that was all about the traditional Arts and Crafts from Langkawi and the region. The spirit of Community is one of our guiding lights, and we are



thrilled that we are able to continue supporting the upward mobility of those around us through collaborations with artisans and entrepreneurs from South East Asia, resulting in exquisitely crafted artisanal products that you'll find in The Boutique.

Each and every day at the resort, I am reminded of the spectacular flora and fauna that we are blessed with on this magical island. The unique biodiversity that makes up this UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) Global Geopark is a major reason why we created The Datai Pledge in 2019. From small beginnings, we have been able to gradually establish concrete initiatives that conserve and preserve the priceless wonders of nature all around us as you will read about in this edition of IKHLAS.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed producing it, and I look forward to continuing the celebrations of our 30th anniversary with you this year!

Arnaud Girodon
General Manager

Arnaud Girodon will fully focus on his Chief Executive Officer responsibilities of Datai Hotels and Resorts from September 2023, while Stephane Duvacher will take over as General Manager of The Datai Langkawi.

IKHLAS

A MAGAZINE OF THE DATAI LANGKAWI

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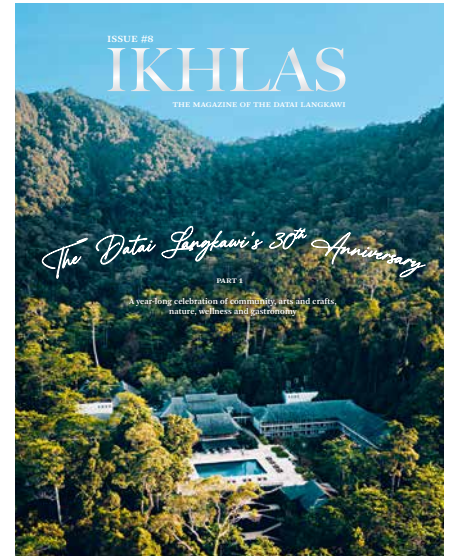
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This magazine is printed on ECHO GREEN 100% RECYCLED paper – with ISO9001, ISO12001 Environmental Certificate, Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF), Acid-free Paper and Fully Recyclable.



THE DATAI
LANGKAWI

IKHLAS is owned and published by The Datai Langkawi, Jalan Teluk Datai, 07000 Pulau Langkawi, Kedah Darul Aman, Malaysia
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CONTENTS

VISION

Embracing The Past, Reimagining The Future 4-5

A candid chat with Arnaud Girodon, General Manager of The Datai Langkawi and CEO of Datai Hotels and Resorts.

ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

All Together Now 6-9

Chapter 1 of The Datai Langkawi's anniversary celebrations was full of community spirit.

From Air To Earth 10-13

SC Shekar's stunning aerial photography shows a different side of Langkawi island.

A Tribute To The Makers And Creators 14-17

Chapter 2 of our anniversary celebrations showcased the best of arts and crafts as well as amazing styles from acclaimed fashion designers.

DESIGN

Past, Present And Nature 18-21

Architect Didier Lefort looks back on The Datai Langkawi's extensive renovations.

IN THE KITCHEN

Straight From The Pass 24-27

This year's The Chef Series is a feast for the senses.

London Calling 28-29

Chef Chai Chun Boon reflects on his time in London at Tom Aiken's Michelin-starred restaurant, Muse.

IN THE KITCHEN

Traditional Malaysian Cuisine, Reimagined 30-31

The Gulai House's Chef Jais explains the influences behind the restaurant's traditional Malaysian cuisine.

Honouring Thai Classic Cuisine And Culture 32-33

The Pavilion's Chef Somkeat Lok, who joined in 2012, on honouring the teachings of his mother and classic Thai cuisine.

THE DISH

Top Of The Morning 34-35

Why guests love our wide variety of breakfast offerings.

WINE

An Ode To Bacchus 36-38

Immerse yourself in the world's best bottles from our Wine Cellar.

COMMUNITY

Sustainable Luxury 39-41

Highlighting the products and artworks of Langkawi's local artisans and entrepreneurs that The Datai Langkawi works with.

CULTURE

Festive Celebrations At The Datai Langkawi 42-45

How we celebrate Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Lunar New Year, Deepavali, Christmas and New Year's Eve.

WELLNESS

Serenity – The Datai Well-Being Series 48-49

Introducing the practitioners for this year's series of wellness events, from traditional Chinese medicine to singing bowl therapies and more.

WELLNESS

The Gold Standard 50-51

Learn more about traditional Chinese medicine with Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro.

Renewal And Rejuvenation 52-53

Book a session with The Datai Langkawi's fitness instructors.

CREATIVE MINDS

A Malaysian Treasure Trove 54-57

A retrospective on our many collaborations with Malaysian designers and artists.

THE DATAI PLEDGE

The Path Forward 60-61

Arnaud Girodon, Irshad Mobarak, and Juliet Kinsman explain how this initiative began.

NATURE

Making A Difference 62-65

An explainer on how The Datai Langkawi protects the wildlife and marine life around the resort.

ENVIRONMENT

Doing The Right Thing 66-69

How The Datai Langkawi strives to uphold sustainability.

TEE OFF

History Making 70-71

Why you should book a round at The Els Club Teluk Datai.

PAGE TURNER

Discovering Malaysia From The Comfort Of Your Room 72

The best from Malaysian authors, such as Lee Su Kim, Betty Saw and Lat, is available in all rooms at The Datai Langkawi.

Embracing The Past, Reimagining The Future

This year, The Datai Langkawi celebrates its 30th anniversary. We speak to Arnaud Girodon, General Manager of The Datai Langkawi, who reflects on how The Datai Langkawi has evolved since its opening in 1993 and what's in store for the future.

The Datai Langkawi celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2023. What are your thoughts on this milestone?

When The Datai Langkawi opened in 1993, it was quickly recognised as one of the top resorts in the world. That it has managed to maintain this position over the course of 30 years is an incredible achievement, and something that all of us at The Datai Langkawi are extremely proud of.

How did the story of The Datai Langkawi begin?

It began with visionary architect Kerry Hill, who fell in love with Datai Bay the first time he saw it. Together with designer Didier Lefort, he set about creating a groundbreaking luxury resort. By setting the main building on a forest ridge 40 metres above sea level and 300 metres back from the beach, Hill achieved his vision to preserve the pristine beauty of the coastline and unveil the hidden treasures of the rainforest. The Datai Langkawi is a pioneer in many ways. It was the first luxury resort on Langkawi; it is set within an ancient rainforest; and its respect for nature in its design and construction was ahead of its time.

In 2017, The Datai Langkawi underwent an extensive renovation. Why was this significant?

The refurbishment was ambitious, costing USD60 million. We shut the resort for a year in order to carry out the work, which included renovations to the guest rooms, suites and villas; the construction of a Nature Centre; additional spa pavilions; a refreshed retail space; a fitness centre by the beach; and overall enhancement of the landscaping. To ensure that The Datai Langkawi retained its signature DNA, Didier Lefort, who was responsible for the original design in 1993, was appointed to lead the refurbishment. We also built the Rainforest Pool Villas, and launched a new accommodation category, The Datai Estate Villa. This is designed for guests seeking a rarefied hospitality experience, which includes 24-hour dedicated in-villa butler service and a private chef.

During the renovation, we had the opportunity to further embed nature and sustainability within The Datai Langkawi's DNA. We incorporated environmentally friendly and energy-saving equipment and measures into our facilities,

business operations and practices. We also created nature- and culture-based guest experiences and services.

Tell us more about the nature and sustainability aspects of The Datai Langkawi.

We're committed to preserving Langkawi's biodiversity, which is under threat due largely to unsustainable anthropogenic activities. By integrating conservation and sustainability into our business operations, company ethos and guest experiences, we aim to improve the well-being of the environment, wildlife, marine life and local community. Our nature and sustainability philosophy and initiatives are consolidated under The Datai Pledge, a private trust created in 2019. It comprises four pillars: Pure For The Future, Wildlife For The Future, Fish For The Future and Youth For The Future. These pillars respectively focus on our business operations and practices, fauna and flora, marine life, and the children of our community.

How do you ensure that The Datai Langkawi's sustainability efforts are not just greenwashing?

We are committed to sustainability. That is why we established The Datai Pledge, with advisors and a board of trustees comprising external stakeholders who hold us to account. We also have independent third parties who review our work and audit our financial figures. All of this information is published in an annual Impact Report.

What would you attribute The Datai Langkawi's success to over the past three decades?

Our people are the main reason for its success. They embody the spirit of The Datai Langkawi in their commitment to our purpose, and their passion for service, collaboration and teamwork.

We have also remained true to our unique location. Furthermore, we are committed to supporting our locale, its heritage, culture and traditions, and to sharing them with the world. All of our stakeholders – from our owners to our people – share in our vision, embracing it wholly.

To preserve the natural beauty of its surroundings and the island, The Datai Langkawi regularly invites children from Langkawi (like Geng Bersih Kampung) to visit and learn about sustainability and conservation through The Datai Pledge.



GROUP PHOTOGRAPHY: JANINA WENZEL.

What's next for The Datai Langkawi?

We intend to double down on our sustainability and conservation efforts and lead in these areas. We are also exploring incorporating new technology into our services, in response to what today's luxury travellers expect, but without compromising the DNA of The Datai Langkawi.

Additionally, we are looking to further embrace the family segment, which is a growing component in our guest profile. At the same time, we are careful not to alienate our loyal repeat guests, hence, the creation of services, facilities and experiences to cater to the different demographic segments.

Another exciting project is our plan to develop and integrate The Datai Residences into our portfolio, a new private villa product that will remain sensitive to and respectful of our surroundings. And finally, we look forward to expanding The Datai Langkawi brand to other parts of Malaysia and the region. Our expansion will stay true to the core values of The Datai Langkawi, focusing on nature and environment, but we may also develop adjunct brands that centre on culture and heritage. However, all will carry the genuine human touch The Datai Langkawi is known for. 🌱



All Together Now

The first chapter of The Datai Langkawi's 30th anniversary celebrations shines a light on the compelling power of its community spirit.

What is an island resort without its island? And what is an island without the people who make it special? There can be no better time to contemplate the unique bond between The Datai Langkawi and the island's community: a synergistically supportive relationship that has played an essential role in the resort's 30 years of longevity and success. "Today, we talk about Original Travel and one of the key aspects is how to engage local communities in what we do, whether it's supplies, food or arts and crafts," says

Arnaud Girodon, General Manager of The Datai Langkawi, at the starting point of the 30th anniversary celebrations.

"We are living in an environment where we need to leave a positive impact on Langkawi Island's community. It is also our belief and ethos to give back. We don't just do it because that's what today's society demands, but because we believe in the innate necessity to do so," he adds. "We want to make a tangible effort to involve more and more of the local community in our future projects.

Around 400 of our employees are either from Langkawi or moved here with their children and are already part of the community, so it's important that they feel they contribute to the good of the island."

Fully determined to put the importance of Langkawi's local population in the spotlight, The Datai Langkawi selected the theme of 'Celebrating our Community' for Chapter 1 of its 30th anniversary celebrations, which took place from 10 to 19 March 2023. To start with, a standing exhibition in The Lobby



This and facing pages: Chapter 1 of The Datai Langkawi's 30th anniversary celebrations was centred on 'Celebrating our Community'.

“There’s a lot of local talent here that isn’t heavily promoted, so we wanted to make sure that we include them as part of our celebrations by inviting them to exhibit at our dedicated Atelier,” says Arnaud Girodon, General Manager of The Datai Langkawi.

Below: guests learnt how to make handmade soap from propolis at a Propolis Workshop with local beekeeper Pak Long, which was held at The Lab.

took guests on a nostalgic trip down memory lane by detailing the history of the resort – from the days before The Datai Langkawi’s construction in 1990, through to its opening in October 1993 and the magnificent results of its most recent renovation in 2018. Also on display was an exhibition of photographs by photojournalist SC Shekar, a contributor to The Datai Pledge. *(For more on these photos, please read the story on page 10.)*

An introduction to a Young Reporters for the Environment session provided insights for younger guests into ways to research pressing environmental issues and explore solutions using reporting, photography and video journalism.

Meanwhile, a Propolis Workshop at The Lab with local beekeeper Pak Long took guests through the process of harvesting propolis – a resinous substance with a wealth of antioxidant and antimicrobial compounds – from the resort’s colony of stingless bees, then transforming it into handmade soap.

An emphasis on the talent of Malaysian artisans was another important aspect of The Datai Langkawi’s Chapter 1 festivities that Girodon was keen to emphasise. “In my opinion, it’s a shame that Malaysia isn’t known for its arts and crafts when you compare it to Thailand, Bali or Vietnam,” he says. “There’s a lot of local talent here that isn’t heavily promoted, so we wanted to make sure that we include them as part of our celebrations by inviting them to exhibit at our dedicated Atelier.”

The Kanshalife Project – founded in Langkawi by Malaysian artist and eco-activist Skaii de Vega – presented a perfect fusion of holistic education, green leadership and buzzing creativity at The Lab, which hosted classes on transforming old T-shirts into boho bags, and biodegradable waste products into floating pirate ship toys. Local fabric artist





This page: from arts and crafts to local delicacies, the best of Malaysia was on display during the Chapter 1 celebrations.

Kak Liza dropped by to deliver workshops on batik and tie-dyeing, while Penang-born accessories designer Ash Majid – best known for her striking custom-made batik chokers – instructed guests on how to sew batik keychains and weave paracords at The Atelier.

Next door at The Boutique, Malaysian fashion brand Kapten Batik hosted a pop-up to unveil its 2023 Lebaran Collection in time for the annual Hari Raya celebrations, featuring architectural motifs adopted from well-known landmarks such as the Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Penang, A Famosa fortress in Malacca and Saloma Bridge in Kuala Lumpur. It was an opportunity for retail therapy topped only by the finale of the Chapter 1 celebrations – a spectacular night market-style artisanal food festival held under the starry evening sky beside The Gulai House restaurant.

Under the close supervision of Indra Mohan, Director of Food and Beverage – who credits the success of the event to The Datai Langkawi's teamwork – a wide selection of stalls offered Malaysian gourmet treats that ran the gamut from *cekodok* (fried banana dough balls) to an entire spit-roasted lamb. As the stalls were manned by representatives of the local community alongside the resort's culinary team, guests – many of whom were resplendently attired in *sarongs*, courtesy of The Datai Langkawi – were able to meet and speak with the locals, and even purchase island-made glass sculptures, virgin coconut oil, honey, and batik paintings.

Within The Gulai House, an incredible array of carved fruit, popular traditional dishes including *rendang* (meat dish stewed in coconut milk and spices) and *kuih* (bite-sized cakes, many of which were made by local vendors) and biscuits stood ready for perusal against a backdrop of Malaysian live music and dancing.

It was a taste – a first taste – of what remains to be seen of The Datai Langkawi's anniversary festivities in the months to come this year, and a heartwarming reminder of the joys and delights of a collaborative community when they join together as one. 🍷

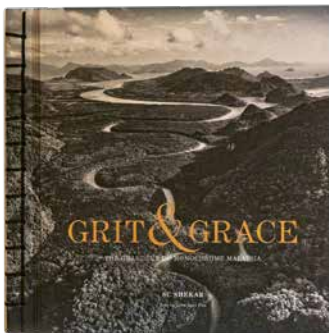


From Air To Earth

An interactive gallery at The Datai Langkawi displaying photographer SC Shekar's stunning series 'The Grandeur of Monochrome Malaysia' presents unique perspectives of the country's majestic landscapes and indigenous people.

Over a three-decade-long career, award-winning Malaysian photographer SC Shekar has had time to sharpen his nerves of steel, which might explain why he embraced the art of aerial photography with such ease in pursuit of his recent photographic series, 'The Grandeur of Monochrome Malaysia'. In what he describes as "a well-choreographed dance", Shekar's mission to capture the beauty of his homeland on camera saw him "dangling precariously out of a helicopter with the door removed" (and a safety harness firmly attached), snapping away on his trusty Fuji and Nikon cameras with a range of prime lenses.

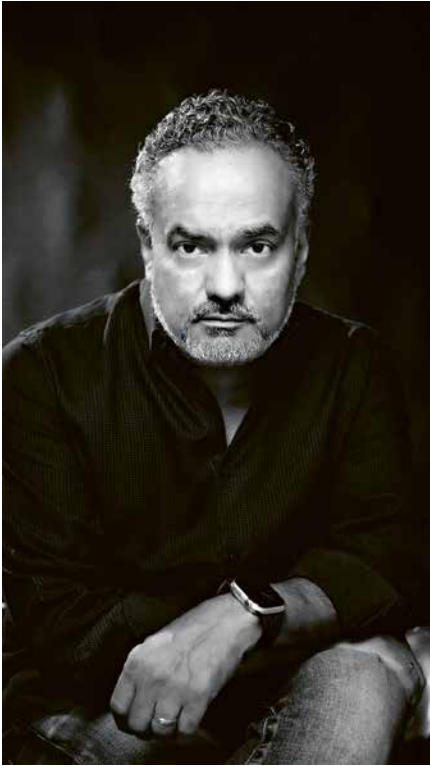
"I began this project in 2014 after seeing Brazilian photojournalist Sebastião Salgado's 'Genesis' exhibition in Paris,



Above: 'Grit & Grace' is SC Shekar's tribute to the beauty of the landscape and people of Malaysia.
Facing page: the Machinchang Cambrian Geoforest Park on Langkawi as captured by Shekar.







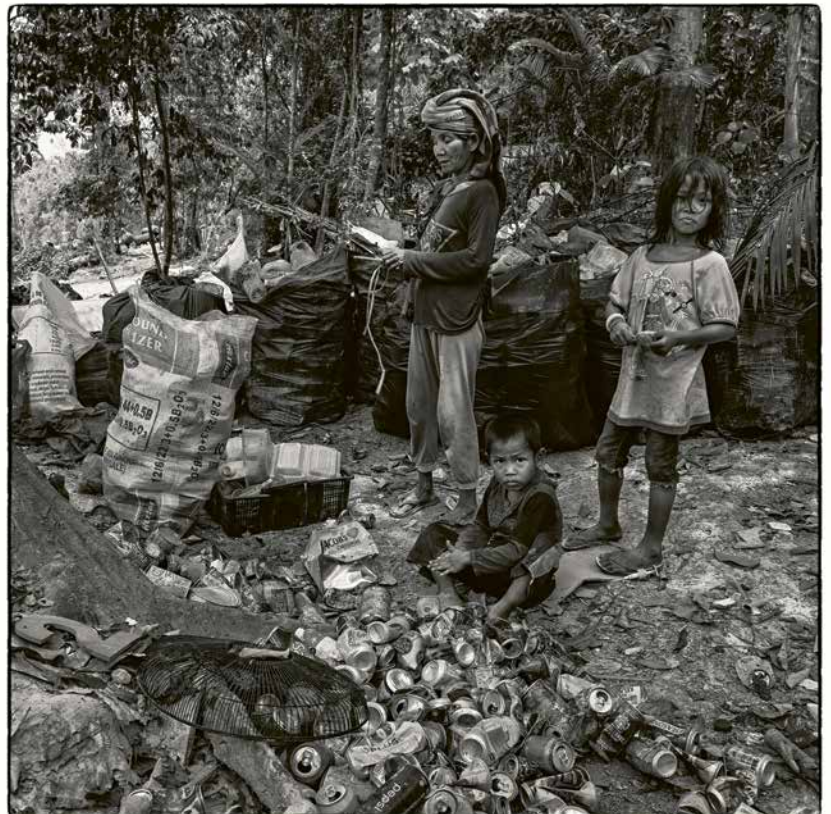
In 2019, Shekar (above) captured these scenes of the Jakun tribe of *orang asli* in the town of Muadzam Shah in Pahang.

Facing page: Kilim Geoforest
Park Langkawi.

where he photographed the whole world from the air," Shekar explains. "It was beautiful, but I was disappointed he didn't photograph Malaysia. So, I decided to do it myself." Over the years, Shekar has soared above rainforests, mountains, waterfalls, mangroves and beaches, eschewing drones for helicopters and colour photography for monochrome – a decision that touches on the foundational roots of his career.

"My early days as a photojournalist betray my predilection for documentary-style images in black and white," Shekar says. "By stripping away the distraction of colours, I draw the viewer to observe details such as textures and shades usually lost in a flurry of hues."

The results of his adrenaline-fuelled adventures in the sky, along with strikingly intimate, contemplative portraits of members of Malaysia's indigenous communities, are now on display





at The Datai Langkawi as part of its 30th anniversary celebrations.

Launched during the Chapter 1 festivities in the first quarter of the year, limited-edition prints of Shekar's series line The Datai Langkawi's main corridors

just below The Lobby Lounge, complete with QR codes linked to individual videos narrated by Irshad Mobarak, who is The Datai Pledge's Chief Advisor and a Consultant Naturalist for The Datai Langkawi. He is also the

author of 'Discovering Langkawi with Irshad Mobarak'. Both men share a fierce passion for environmental conservation, with Shekar acting as the official photographer for The Datai Pledge and Irshad accompanying him to many of the photographic sites on Langkawi.

Beyond depicting the majesty of Malaysia's landscapes and the dignity of the indigenous *orang asli* people, Shekar's photographic series serves as a reminder to us all that without determined conservation efforts, such beauty is increasingly fleeting. "The ecosystem of this country is so delicate and fragile. When it vanishes, there is no contrivance on Earth that can make it come back again," he remarks.

Guests are invited to purchase any of the photographic prints, with proceeds channelled towards funding initiatives under The Datai Pledge. 📍

"The ecosystem of this country is so delicate and fragile. When it vanishes, there is no contrivance on Earth that can make it come back again."

A Tribute To The Makers And Creators

For Chapter 2 of its 30th anniversary celebrations, The Datai Langkawi places arts and crafts at centre stage. A 10-day itinerary of craft workshops, artisanal brand pop-ups and displays, and special exhibits culminates in a spectacular evening of fine dining, fashion and a silent auction.

As The Datai Langkawi celebrates three decades of being a cornerstone of happy memories for generations of guests, as well as a source of pride, community-building and sustainable practices on Langkawi, the luxury resort unveiled Chapter 2 of its year-long anniversary festivities.

While Chapter 1 was a celebration of community that honoured partners such as Green Growth Asia Foundation, Chapter 2 shone a spotlight on the arts and crafts that have come to define culture at The Datai Langkawi. Fashion, fine food and one-of-a-kind items were at the heart of this 10-day itinerary that ran from the end of June to early July.

The luxury resort commemorated successful creative partnerships from across the region that have breathed life into its day-to-day activities and atmosphere throughout the years. Designers and brand partners from all over Southeast Asia were invited to participate in or host a series of events such as exhibits and pop-ups by the likes of Kapten Batik and eco-friendly premium swimwear brand Ozero, as well as interactive sessions for guests.

The sessions included batik masterclasses by Suria Artisan Batik and Kapten Batik, a wood upcycling workshop by Harith The Green Carpenter, glass

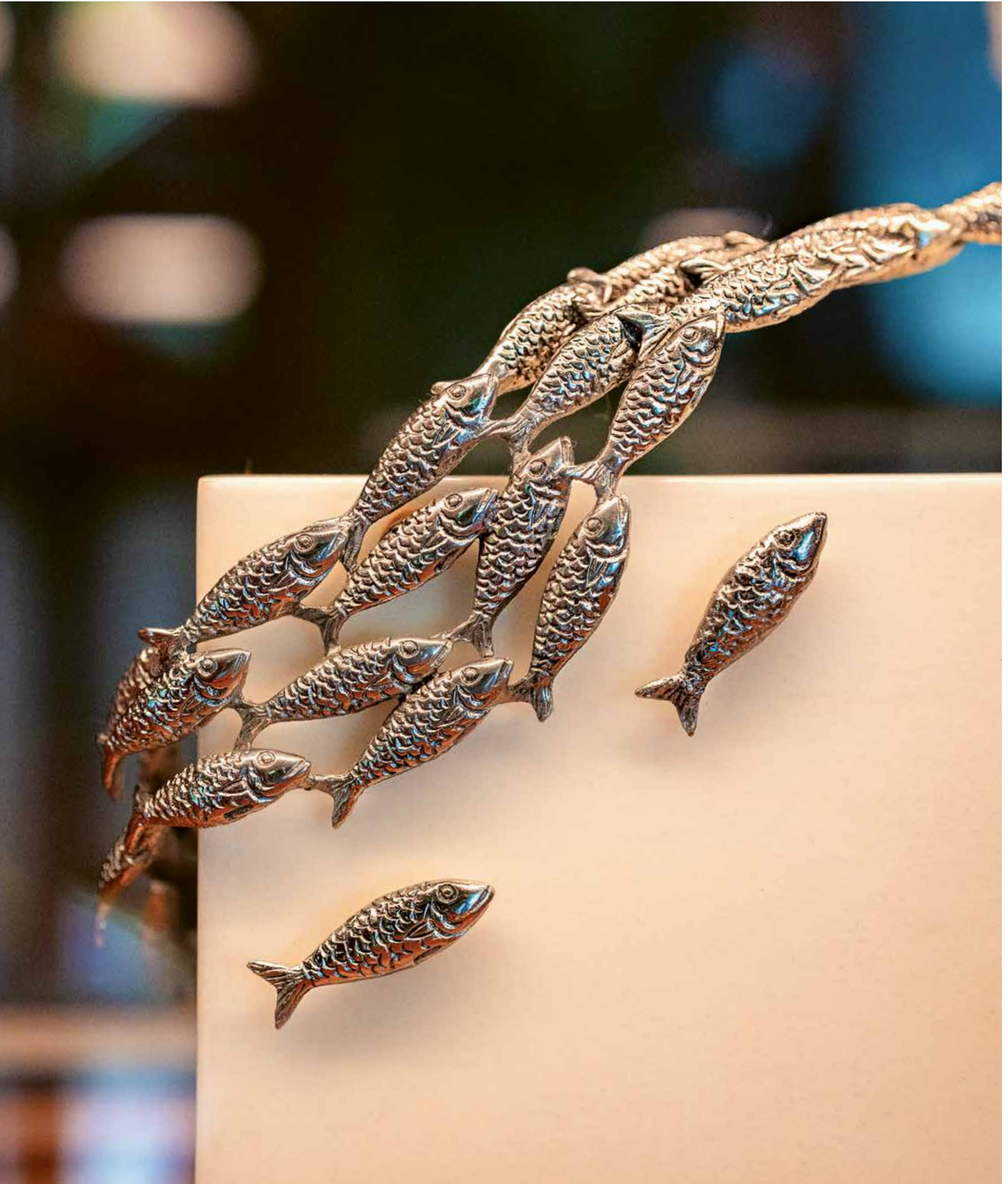
bottle upcycling with Beatrice Hew, a custom-designed *minaudière* masterclass with luxury clutch designer and metal craftsman Neil Felipp, a jewellery sculpture demonstration by Penang-based jeweller Jonathan Yun, and a dive into the intricate craft of beaded jewellery with Ranong Peru.

Although most of these designers display their creations at The Datai Langkawi's elegant Boutique, some also added beautiful jewellery, bags or fashion collections to The Dia Showroom at The Atelier, an upscale destination on-site curated exclusively by Dia Guild. Founded by a trio of enterprising Malaysians – Kylie Francis, Alia Farouk and Aisha Hassan – this regional platform champions ethical fashion, handmade gifts and extraordinary accessories by artisanal Southeast Asian brands.

Dia Guild was a key partner throughout the Chapter 2 festivities as it hosted a craft conservation session, a historical batik exhibit and the chapter's closing event – a glamorous fashion show and charity auction woven into one exquisite evening. Guests whose visit coincided with these activities delighted in the unexpected thrill of experiencing hands-on workshops or learning more about the storied arts and crafts that contribute to Malaysia's

Facing page: a custom *minaudière* by Neil Felipp, a designer and craftsman, who helped guests customise their own versions.







Proceeds from the auction were channelled to The Datai Pledge, a Private Trust dedicated to improving the well-being of Langkawi's environment, wildlife and local community.



and Southeast Asia's multicultural identity. Some even decided to be part of the grand finale.

As the sun set on a balmy Saturday evening, with the sea breeze cooling a crowd gathered poolside for *al fresco* cocktails, the thump of music uplifted the tempo of the evening and cued a bevy of models to showcase contemporary designs from Fern Batik's brand new Marine series, appropriately framed by the ocean in the background and, later,

the deep blue pool. Dusk settled and the crowd did so too beneath makeshift clear tents set up next to The Beach Club & Bar for a sumptuous six-hand dinner by Chefs Chai Chun Boon, The Datai Langkawi's Senior Chef de Cuisine; Shaun Ng from Hide in Kuala Lumpur; and Su Kim Hock from the one-Michelin-starred Restaurant Au Jardin in Penang.

A second catwalk within the dining area, demarcated by a red carpet, then premiered the breezy, tropical designs of Lee Khoo Hooi's A Cotton Story collection, new to his eponymous label. Although these wearable designs enticed guests to be the first to don them, a silent auction running throughout the event also tempted them to open their wallets and hearts. Other one-of-a-kind items that were up for bid were gifted by Dia Guild's design partners, such as Felipp, handmade fan label Pubumésu, luxury Japanese *kimono* and *obi* silk specialist Sophia by Shirley, and hand-woven bag and accessories brand Zacarias 1925.

Alia Bastamam, who had also previously showcased her fashion designs at The Datai Langkawi, donated The Alicia Dress for the auction, promising to customise its fit to the recipient's figure. Proceeds from the auction were channelled to The Datai Pledge, a Private Trust dedicated to improving the well-being of Langkawi's environment, wildlife and local community.



Facing page: Kapten Batik's pop-up and masterclass were very popular with guests, as was the fashion show held on 1 July featuring designs by Lee Khoo Hooi, Dia Guild and more.

Below: highlights from the six-hand dinner menu by Chefs Chai Chun Boon, Shaun Ng and Su Kim Hock.

Local live band Mix N Match and guest DJ Amy Margerax maintained an upbeat tempo throughout the evening and ensured guests had a terrific time.

Although The Datai Langkawi's 30th anniversary celebrations are centred around specific themes that are dear to its heart, the ultimate objective of these festivities is to create memorable yet meaningful moments for guests. After all, this is a place of not only rest and respite, but also one of sustainable growth that gives back to the environment and the people who make it the success it is today. 🍷





Past, Present And Nature

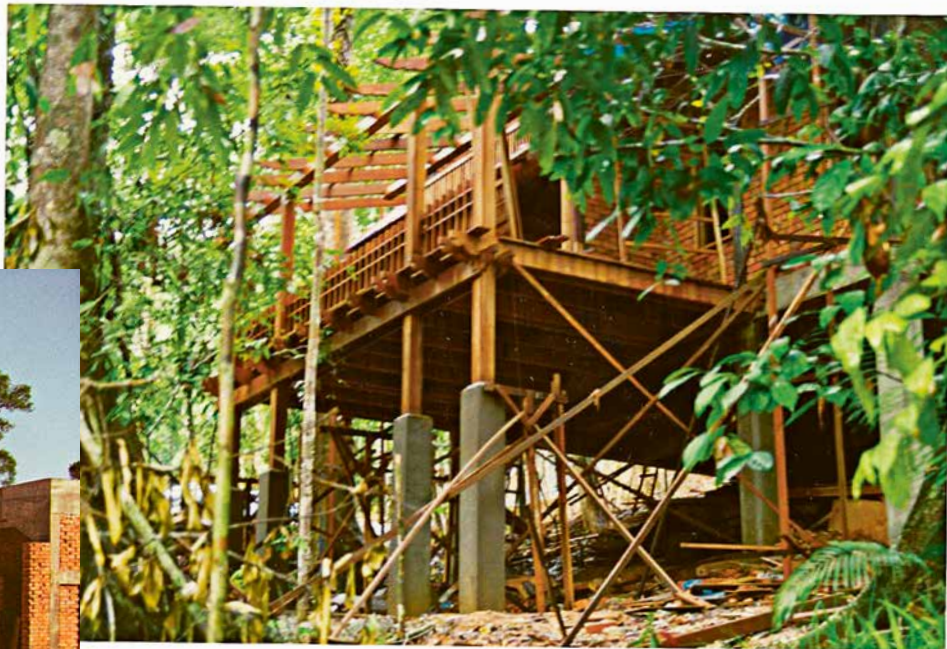
The Datai Langkawi's renovation five years ago led it to enhance the essence of its original spirit of design, renewed for the coming decades.

When The Datai Langkawi closed its doors towards the second half of 2017 for refurbishment, expectations naturally ran high for how it would re-emerge after a year-long renovation programme. This sort of breathless anticipation was merited by The Datai Langkawi's lofty standing among resorts worldwide, having ranked

among the world's top five resorts when it first opened in 1993, and achieving the extraordinary honour of being the recipient of two Aga Khan Awards in 2001, for architecture and interior design.

In order to recall the magic that had captured audiences from around the globe when it debuted in 1993,

The Datai Langkawi called upon the talents of its original designer Didier Lefort of Paris-based design studio DL2A. Accepting the project with joy and full of anticipation, Lefort understood straightaway what he had to do. "When we first started thinking about this resort some 35 years ago, we (the late architect



Kerry Hill and himself) conceived of a philosophy that is integrated with nature, and a reflection of Malaysian culture,” Lefort remembers.

True to form, that ‘Datai DNA’ has endured and been redefined, with Lefort striving to rekindle all the high points of modernity, simplicity and luxury among nature. To achieve that ‘sense of happiness’ that resorts would need to resonate with, Lefort added colours and energy to corridors and lights, with modern-day lighting technology enabling him to introduce greater precision and creativity – not to mention savings in electricity – to the resort. Balau timber, which forms some of the columns and

roofing, was sanded down to obtain a brighter burnish; while more than 90 per cent of the furniture was replaced with new pieces that recall the colours of nature, notably those of Langkawi’s myriad butterflies, and transposes them onto the textiles and fabrics.

The efforts invested in the refurbishment also extended to an overhaul of the wiring, plumbing and roofing. It took 20 mock-ups to get the bathtubs designed exactly right and a total of 1,100 drawings before commencing with the renovation. “What was tricky at the beginning was that we wanted to maintain the language of the space and atmosphere,” Lefort says. “It’s easy when

designing from nothing but, in our case, so many important people had visited and stayed at The Datai Langkawi, and we didn’t want to detract from anything they would recognise and love. We didn’t want to destroy the symmetry of the resort’s modernism and heritage.”

Arnaud Girodon, The Datai Langkawi’s General Manager who has been with the resort for nearly a decade, concurs. He notes that from the start, it was clear that only Lefort had the natural authority to introduce a 21st-century design language to the resort, evolving his earlier ideas into a more contemporary representation.

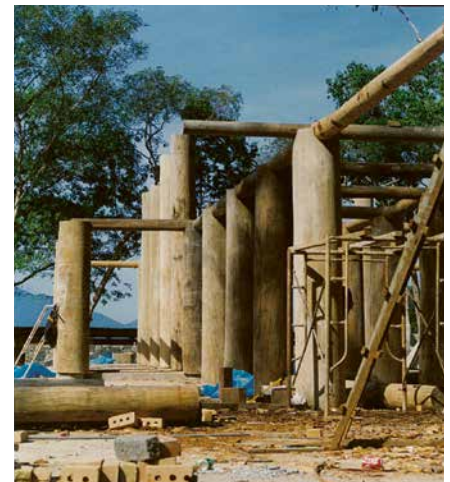
Lefort immediately reached out to his Malaysian counterpart Jay Yeunh, whom



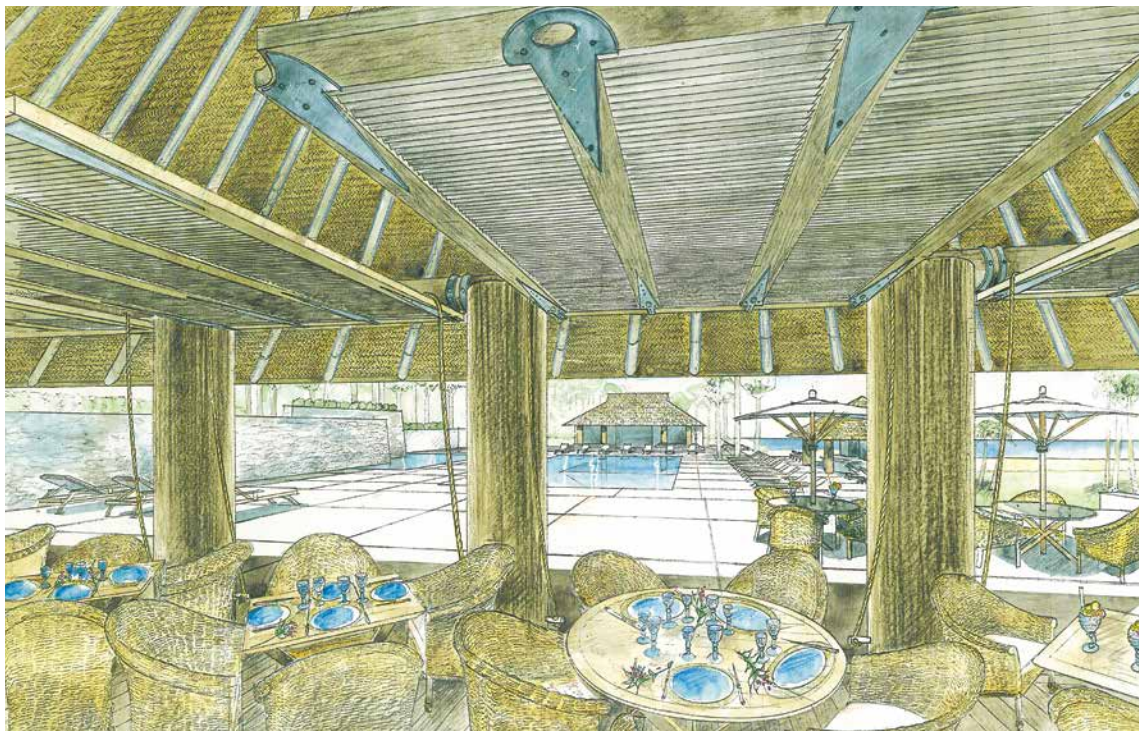
he had worked with all those years ago during the initial construction of the resort, and the duo quickly formulated ideas that would further the concepts of nature and Malaysian culture that they had crafted more than three decades ago.

When The Datai Langkawi emerged from its chrysalis in late 2018, it was clear that the reinvigoration of its design retained its original sensitivity to the ancient rainforest that it inhabits. “We want to protect what makes The Datai Langkawi so special, and it is important that we show respect for nature and this area’s biodiversity,” Girodon says.

This original ethos of respecting nature has endured throughout The Datai Langkawi’s existence up till the present day, a purpose which Girodon was keen to double down on, while also ensuring there is no line demarcating where The Datai Langkawi’s 121 rooms, suites and villas end and nature begins on the present property. “From the moment we decided to renovate, one thing was for sure and very clear to us,” Girodon says. “Due to the fact that we sit in one of the richest biodiverse areas in Asia, we have to protect it, so future generations don’t lose out on experiencing the natural wonders all around us.” 📍



This page: rare behind-the-scenes photos taken during the construction of The Datai Langkawi from 1990 to 1993, including the lead design team of Didier Lefort, Jay Yehnh from DMP Architects and Wong Mun Summ from Kerry Hill Architects.



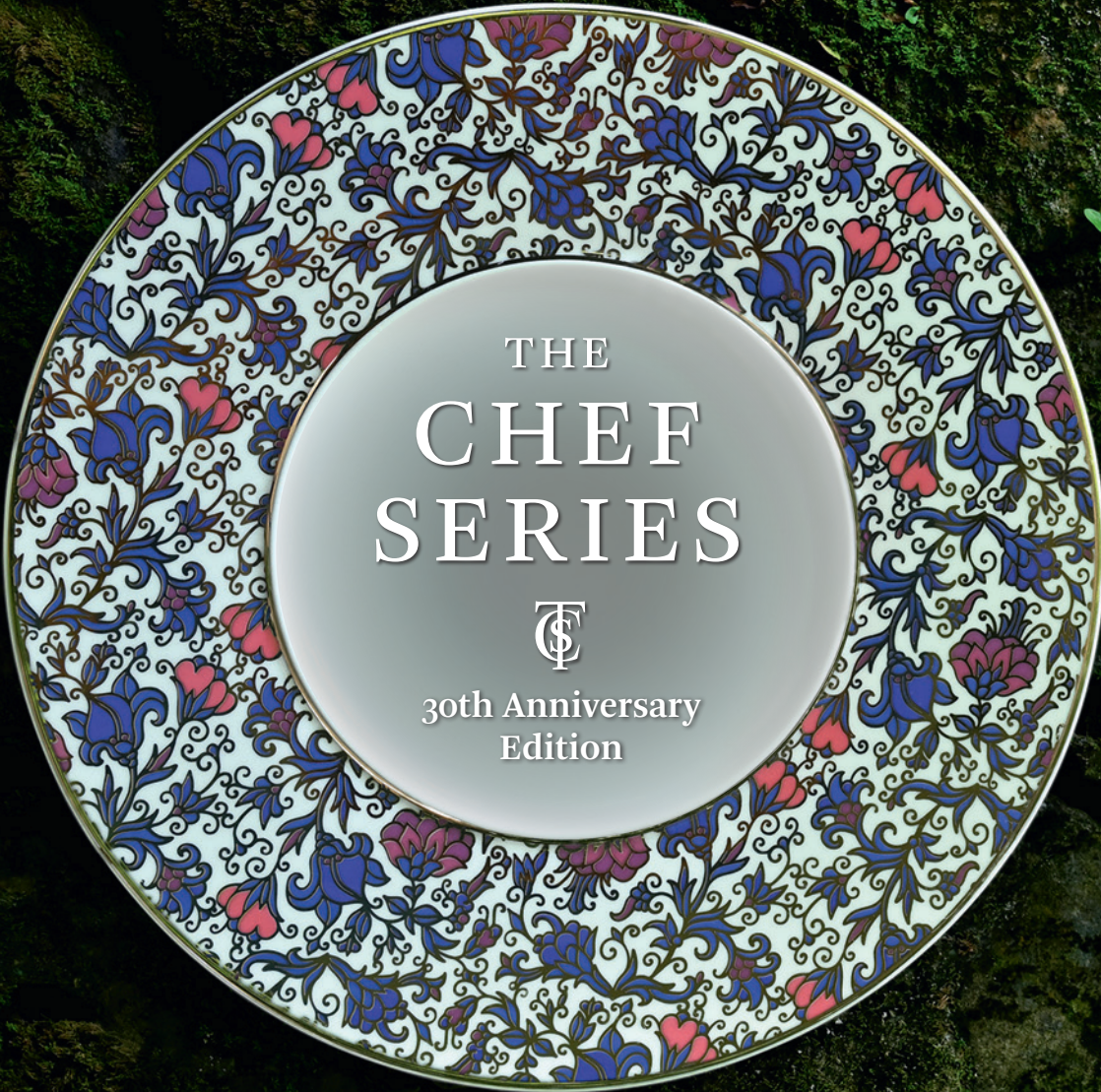
The original ethos of respecting nature has endured throughout The Datai Langkawi's existence up till the present day.



Top: original drawing from 1993 by Didier Lefort for the look of The Dining Room.
Above: The Dining Room today, looking out over the main pool and surrounded by lush rainforest – a close reflection of the original plan, adapted to today's sensibilities.



THE DATAI
LANGKAWI



THE
CHEF
SERIES



30th Anniversary
Edition

EXPERIENCE THE EXCEPTIONAL
FROM WORLD-CLASS CHEFS



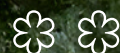
TOM AIKENS



Muse, United Kingdom
21, 27-28 December 2022



ARNAUD FAYE



La Chèvre d'Or, France
3-5 February 2023



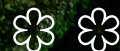
DARREN TEOH



Dewakan, Malaysia
28-29 April 2023



MANO THEVAR



Thevar, Singapore
23-24 June 2023



MICHEL AND SÉBASTIEN BRAS



Bras and Le Suquet, France
14-15 December 2023

Straight From The Pass

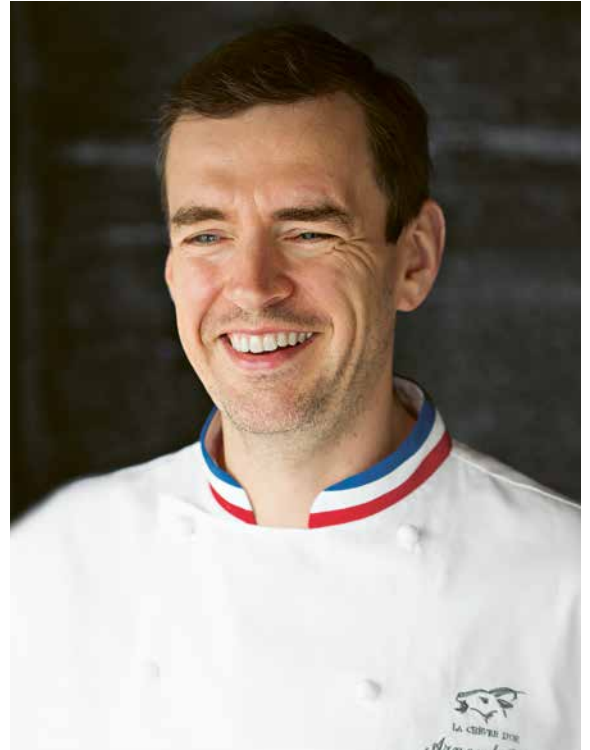
With The Datai Langkawi's The Chef Series firmly in full swing, let's dive behind the scenes and examine the complexities of chef-to-chef collaborations – from the nuanced selection process at the very beginning to the near-military precision of the kitchen's operations.

What happens when one chef steps into another chef's kitchen? Or, for that matter, when two chefs arrive to take over the cooking stations and the pass? It's an intriguing setup, and one that The Datai Langkawi's The Chef Series has been exploring since its inception, with delicious (and sometimes surprising) results. But what actually goes on in the lead-up to a collaboration between The Datai Langkawi and one of its illustrious guest chefs, long before the finishing touches are being carefully applied to an exciting, one-of-a-kind degustation menu?

Much of the planning for a full year's line-up of The Chef Series begins



Scan this QR code to watch two-Michelin-starred Chef Arnaud Faye of La Chèvre d'Or in France at The Chef Series - 30th Anniversary Edition.



Scan this QR code to watch Malaysian-born Darren Teoh, Head Chef of one-Michelin-starred Dewakan in Kuala Lumpur, prepare modern Malaysian cuisine for The Chef Series - 30th Anniversary Edition.

the year before for senior members of The Datai Langkawi's team, particularly Indra Mohan, Director of Food and Beverage. "We start early!" he exclaims. "The finalised line-up should be in place by December of the preceding year so that we can start marketing it to our guests. We aim to select chefs who appeal to our clientele, then connect and negotiate with them to explain the details of The Chef Series and secure their participation."

Suggestions for potential guest chefs can come not just from Indra's list of local and overseas contacts, but also from other well-connected members of the team including the resort's General Manager Arnaud Girodon, Senior Chef de Cuisine Chai Chun Boon, and Director of Sales and Marketing Céline Maginel. Indra explains: "We had Tom Aikens from one-

Michelin-starred Muse, London, visiting us in December last year, and then we had Mano Thevar of the two Michelin-starred Thevar in Singapore this June.”

Once the selection process has been completed and confirmed, it's here that the practicalities of bringing a series of chefs and their teams to The Datai Langkawi – sometimes over thousands of kilometres and several time zones – kick up several notches. “There are a lot of things going on,” Indra says. “We have to ensure that we know every detail from the menus, itineraries for the chefs, the number of chefs accompanying them (Sébastien Bras once arrived with five in tow) and the ingredients that they'll need, through to the marketing and service experience.”

Although The Chef Series doesn't always take place in The Dining Room (as exemplified by chefs from Kuala Lumpur, Masaki Arakawa of Sushi Azabu and Azli Ahmad of OpenHouse, who both cooked at The Gulai House last year), it's Chef Chai who's often responsible for overseeing the kitchen operations that come with playing host to a guest chef. “The hardest part is the logistics of obtaining specific ingredients, depending on their cuisine,” says Chef Chai, adding that timing is a crucial factor. “You might assume that snails and very rare foods are the trickiest elements, but the most simple ingredients are often the hardest to get. Root vegetables need to arrive a week in advance. Some ingredients need to be air-flown. Oyster leaf plants and sea herbs perish easily within a certain period of time, so you can't order them too early or too late. You also have to bear in mind that Malaysia has a lot of public holidays, so we have to work around those when dealing with our suppliers.”

Individual chefs' approaches towards their produce can also differ considerably. Chef Chai remembers Aikens' complex menus necessitating the use of multiple fridges in the kitchen to store his many ingredients, while the locavore-focused foraging of Dewakan's Darren Teoh this April had to be realigned in cohesion with The Datai Pledge, which meant the exclusion of wild-hunted meats.

It is within these differences, however, that Chef Chai and The Datai Langkawi's kitchen team have gained fascinating insights into how high-profile, industry-leading chefs – often with a clutch of Michelin stars – apply themselves to their craft. Last year's collaborations



Scan this QR code to watch one Michelin-starred Chef Tom Aikens of Muse prepare exclusive dinners as part of The Chef Series - 30th Anniversary Edition.



Fresh, seasonal ingredients are the hallmark of Tom Aikens' highly lauded creations.



saw him marvelling at Raymond Tham of Beta's gutsy flavour profiles, bonding with Entier's Masashi Horiuchi over golf at dawn and their dedication towards cooking (“He's one of the only chefs with the same mentality as me, where we'll eat at another chef's kitchen to learn and understand what they're doing,” Chef Chai says), and watching the off-the-wall ideas of the chef duo Lee Zhe Xi and Soh Yong Zhi behind Eat and Cook fall into place, like their *budu* anchovy sauce ice cream.

Even witnessing Aikens' discipline proved an inspiring experience for Chef Chai. “Straight after touching down in Langkawi, Tom went to the kitchen immediately to take a look at it,” Chef Chai remembers. “He's a very well-organised, well-travelled, seasoned professional. He'd tell his team of chefs to come in at 9am, but he himself would be there an hour earlier – awake, bright and ready. He's clearly used to getting the results he wants, but it doesn't mean he's inflexible. Tom was actually quite open to letting me



take the lead when it came to adapting his dishes for guests with vegan and vegetarian dietary requirements.”

Just like Chef Chai had the opportunity to turn the tables and cook as a guest chef at Muse a month before Aikens’ arrival in Malaysia, other members of the kitchen team at The Datai Langkawi have also been given the chance to gain exposure and develop their talents. Executive Sous Chef Azman Azali, for instance, spent a fortnight at Hengelo in the eastern part of the Netherlands, absorbing as many new ideas as possible from Chef Lars van Galen’s meticulous, detail-driven cooking at ‘t Lansink.

“I get to see all these elements in our guest chefs during The Chef Series,” Chef Chai says. “They can be very intense, and then at other times, they’re so relaxed that they joke with you. I’ve seen different

Senior Chef de Cuisine Chai Chun Boon, together with the kitchen team of The Datai Langkawi, worked closely together with Tom Aikens to prepare the menu for last December’s edition of The Chef Series.

perspectives, too, where I might look at a certain ingredient and think, ‘There’s no way to tenderise this!’ and then a guest chef demonstrates his way of doing it – and it works.

“I’ve enjoyed meeting ingredient-focused Japanese chefs, watching the way British chefs convert their understanding of French cuisine to their own culinary culture, and seeing how other Malaysian chefs blend local flavours with Western techniques. They are all about relying on and believing in one’s team to execute their vision for them.” 🍴





Red Mullet with Butter Sauce (this page) and Baked Scallop with Fermented Grains, Veal Osso Bucco and Yeasted Mash (facing page) are just two highlight dishes from the eclectic menus served at The Chef Series.



London Calling

Senior Chef de Cuisine Chai Chun Boon ventures forth from The Datai Langkawi and into the British capital, delighting London diners with his Malaysian creations during guest appearances at The Conduit as well as Muse, Tom Aikens' Michelin-starred restaurant.

After nearly a full year spent welcoming guest chefs to the kitchens of The Datai Langkawi throughout 2022, the shoe was firmly on the other foot for Senior Chef de Cuisine Chai Chun Boon when he headed to the United Kingdom in November 2022. Two guest appearances were lined-up in London for the Sarawak-born chef – a dinner at The Conduit in Covent Garden as well as a chance to experience cooking at Muse, a one-Michelin-starred restaurant headed by British culinary sensation Tom Aikens.

Keen to spread the word about Malaysian cuisine and its leading role at The Datai Langkawi, Chef Chai travelled to London with 60 kilograms of local ingredients, which included crispy *keropok* (seafood crackers), Trigona Itama honey harvested from the resort's stingless beehives, turmeric leaves and vacuum-packed parcels of *sambal* (pounded chillies and shrimp paste). These ingredients were essential to the dishes he planned to prepare for both guest appearances, starting with the Chef's World Series event at The Conduit, which was a collaboration between Condé Nast Traveller, The Datai Langkawi and Malaysia Airlines.

The Conduit, a private members club that prides itself on offering sustainable and ethical hospitality, hosted a total of 60 people that evening – all of whom devoured Chef Chai's carefully assembled menu with pleasure, opening with *rojak* (salad tossed with tofu and peanuts) and jasmine dragon pearl tea-infused rum with clarified citrus sherbet. Centred around the theme of a 'Taste of Malaysia', the menu included starters of fried beef *satay*, a *kerabu* salad of Devenish mussels and toasted coconut, and *keropok* with *sambal* aioli.

The Datai Langkawi's Senior Chef de Cuisine Chai Chun Boon and English Michelin-starred chef Tom Aikens.

Chef Chai pulled no punches with his spices and heady Malaysian flavours, turning out a *sup kambing*-style lamb bone broth with allium rice; *sambal* tomato with eggplant, langoustines cooked with turmeric, pineapples and long beans; and The Datai Langkawi's signature short rib *rendang*, braised and artfully caramelised in seasoned coconut milk. Aware of a shared propensity for sweet treats between Malaysian and British palates alike, his desserts were crispy *pisang goreng* in a black peppercorn and jaggery sauce, and *teh tarik* ice cream ago and coconut milk.

An intense travel schedule meant that Chef Chai sped off to Belgravia the next afternoon to Muse, where an intimate invitation-only lunch was being held for select media guests. Not only was it an opportunity to serve diners an intriguing teaser of the irresistible Malaysian dishes that would await them should they visit this iconic rainforest resort, but it also allowed Chef Chai to familiarise himself with Aikens' cooking style before the English chef's guest appearance in Langkawi for The Chef Series later on in December 2022.

Within the converted mews house, which seats a total of just 25 diners, both Chef Chai and Aikens worked together at Muse's pass, watching as Chef Chai's starter of Trigona honey, cucumbers and lime and his famous Tribute Royale – a truffle- and jungle garlic-infused egg topped with caviar that appears at the beginning of The Dining Room's degustation menu in The Datai Langkawi – were woven around Aikens' bespoke tasting menu, and created in accordance with the winter season and his personal memories.

"Working with Tom, you can see how disciplined he is, and how he prioritises efficiency and getting everything done on time," Chef Chai says contemplatively. "It was a good learning curve. When he came to The Datai Langkawi a month later – all by himself – I was able to plan for the two menus he created, both of which had a minimum of three snacks and five to six courses. Bear in mind that this was during the peak period in December, when we had to cater for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve as well, and still keep enough space in our fridges clear for Tom's many ingredients. Perhaps I can take comfort in knowing that no one else's The Chef Series collaboration will be more of a challenge than this!" 🍴



Chef Chai cooking with Tom Aikens at Muse (above) and one of Aikens' creations (below).



Diners at Muse, which is set within a converted Georgian mews house in London's Belgravia district (below), can sit at the counter to watch Aikens' culinary team at work (above).





Traditional Malaysian Cuisine, Reimagined

At The Gulai House, savour authentic traditional Malaysian cuisine, carefully prepared using locally sourced ingredients, timeless techniques and a dash of creativity.

“In Malay cuisine, *gulai* is a spicy, rich gravy, often infused with coconut milk – in other words, a curry,” explains Chef Jais, Head Chef of The Gulai House. “However, unlike Indian curries, no curry powder is added. Instead, an assortment of rich spices, including dried chilli, shallots, turmeric, coriander, galangal and lemongrass are pounded together with *kerisik* (grated coconut that is toasted)

into a paste to which coconut milk is then added.”

Since its opening, The Gulai House has gone on to win critical acclaim and awards, building a sterling reputation for preserving the authenticity and integrity of Malaysian cuisine. Tucked deep in the rainforest, the restaurant is built in the style of a traditional Malay *kampung* (village) house, where diners are welcome

to *bersila* (sit on the floor) or to take their seats at rustic dining tables to enjoy a Malaysian feast. A traditional hand-washing ritual is performed at the start of every meal.

Chef Jais was part of the team at the original Gulai House, which opened in 1998. Returning to it in June 2022 as Head Chef, this native son of Kedah (the Malaysian state in which Langkawi is located) was keenly aware that taking on the mantle would be a great responsibility, given the name and reputation that The Gulai House had built. Nevertheless, he was undaunted. After all, Chef Jais is a passionate advocate of The Gulai House's purpose and philosophy of preserving authentic Malaysian cuisine and promoting it to the world.

THE MENU

In drawing up The Gulai House's menu, Chef Jais drew inspiration from the past, with its emphasis on traditional ingredients and timeless techniques, and imbued it with creative twists for the modern day, cognisant that for the cuisine to thrive long into the future, it needed to adapt and innovate. The result is a new menu that stays true to the heritage, cooking methods and essence of the traditional flavours of Malaysian cuisine, but one that is also refreshed in terms of taste and presentation.

Ninety per cent of the dishes on The Gulai House's menu are Malay, with some Indian cuisine on offer as well. In terms of its Malay cuisine, the focus is on Kedah Malay cuisine, characterised by the use of *assam* (tamarind), curry leaves and *kerisik*. Launched in September 2022, The Gulai House's new à la carte menu includes signature dishes such as Sup Ketam Wangian Serai Titik (freshly dressed crab in lemongrass-flavoured soup), Itik Seranti Gulai Kawah Kundur Kampung (traditional Kedah curry with duck, instead of the traditional beef, and fresh winter melon) and Rendang Tulang Rusuk (dry, slow-braised beef short ribs with coconut milk, chilli, turmeric root and lemongrass). Duck and short ribs are unusual meats in Malay cuisine, the use of which are examples of Chef Jais's innovativeness and creativity.

"We respect the taste and flavours of our traditional old-style Malay dishes, but we also make them in our own ways," Chef Jais says. "My style of Malay cuisine is quite modern. I believe we need to innovate and adapt flavours and presentations, make the cuisine more accessible to our diners, and elevate it into a fine-dining experience."



Chef Jais (above), Head Chef of The Gulai House, created a menu that serves modern Malay cuisine, such as this Rendang Tulang Rusuk (right).



THE CULINARY ETHOS

In line with the resort's philosophy of sustainability, The Gulai House sources its ingredients from local suppliers. Some of the ingredients, particularly herbs and spices such as turmeric, Ulam Raja (king's salad), lemongrass and torch ginger, are picked from The Datai Langkawi's Permaculture Garden.

According to Chef Jais, the secret to good Malay food is technique and patience. "How you grind or pound the different spices by hand (not a blender); how you cut, slice and dice the ingredients; how you *tumis* (a technique

akin to sautéing over a low fire for a prolonged duration) – these timeless techniques are key," Chef Jais says with a smile. "Some dishes require hours of preparation and even more to cook. Therefore, having patience is critical."

In Malay culture, the concept of *air tangan* (handwork) generally refers to the noble effort of preparing or cooking dishes with love, devotion and sincerity.

At The Gulai House, you can be assured that this concept is behind every culinary creation that the team, under the leadership of Chef Jais, serves. 🍴

Honouring Thai Classic Cuisine And Culture

Make your way to The Pavilion for authentic Thai cuisine and an unforgettable dining experience.

From a distance, the traditional triangle-style roof design of The Pavilion is visually arresting against the twilight sky. Modelled on a customary Thai stilted home, the restaurant, which is suspended above the rainforest canopy on 30-metre stilts made from Keruing wood, features an open-air setting that welcomes the sounds of the rainforest and a gentle breeze wafting through the tree tops.

THE CUISINE

Due to the proximity of Kedah (the state which Langkawi is part of) to the border of Thailand, there is a significant Thai community in the state that has influenced and contributed to its culinary heritage. As such, the choice of Thai cuisine at The Pavilion was natural.

When The Pavilion opened in 1993, its menu focused on cuisines from the Northern and Central regions of Thailand. Then in 2012, when Chef Somkeat Lok joined The Pavilion as Head Chef, he brought with him the more piquant signature palate of Southern Thai cuisine.

“Southern Thai food is characterised by flavours that are spicy and sour. It is more intense and less sweet than food from the Northern region,” Chef Somkeat explains. “In Southern Thai food, we use lots of fresh herbs, spices and roots like turmeric, Thai basil, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves, bird’s eye chilli and galangal. These add a certain vibrancy to the flavours. Coconut milk is another common ingredient that makes for thick, rich curries.”

Born in the Southern region of Thailand, Chef Somkeat spent his early childhood there before his family moved to Langkawi. Crediting his Thai mother and grandmother as his major influences, Chef Somkeat recalls: “I was often in the kitchen when I was young, helping my mother prepare our meals. And from my grandmother, I learnt how to prepare the different chilli pastes and balance the spicy, sweet and sour flavours.”

Notwithstanding his early visits to his family’s kitchen, Chef Somkeat began his professional career in Chinese cuisine.

However, eventually, he followed his heart’s desire and moved to work with and train under a Thai chef who also became his mentor. “I spent years perfecting the art of Thai cuisine, honing my skills and experimenting with the different flavours and ingredients,” Chef Somkeat says. “It was hard work, but I didn’t mind as I love cooking.” He still visits Thailand on a regular basis to glean new techniques and styles that inspire his innovations.

With his mentor’s encouragement to always be authentic in his cooking etched in his mind, it is not surprising

therefore that authenticity is the keystone of Chef Somkeat’s culinary ethos.

In fact, “authentic Thai classic” is how Chef Somkeat describes The Pavilion’s cuisine. “We stay true to the heritage, the cooking methods and the essence of the traditional flavours,” he says. “To me, it is all about the taste, not trends or fashion. It is traditional Thai food, elevated to the level of fine dining.” Nevertheless, he is open to adapting the spiciness level of his dishes to cater to the palates of diners if that may entice them to try his cuisine. After all, what is the use of preparing the





best dishes if his patrons are unable to enjoy the flavours, as Chef Somkeat tells us with a cheeky smile on his face.

The menu is refreshed every three to four months, and new dishes are determined according to the ingredients available in the season. Signature dishes in The Pavilion's carefully curated menu include the spicy crab meat yellow curry, and the robust beef short rib curry with kaffir lime leaves.

THE CULINARY ETHOS

Seventy to eighty per cent of the ingredients for The Pavilion's dishes are sourced locally from sustainable producers and suppliers. Seafood is freshly caught daily from the Andaman Sea, organic vegetables are purchased from local farmers and community-based enterprises, and much of the herbs and spices are picked from the resort's Permaculture Garden. The rest is imported from Thailand.

A distinctive feature of Thai cuisine is its unique flavour, which can be attributed to the way the disparate elements of salty, sweet, sour, bitter and spicy flavours are combined. In the hands of Chef Somkeat and his team, the layers of complex flavours are harmonised and balanced with elegant skill, producing delicious flavours with depth and potency.

Presentation is an important aspect of the Thai culinary tradition, too, reflecting the respect and care that the Thais have for their food and ingredients. Vegetables and fruits in assorted colours are delicately carved into floral or geometric shapes to decorate serving platters or to be included in the dishes. In the art of carving, the chefs at The Pavilion also excel, creating a delightful visual feast that enhances the overall dining experience. 🍴

Clockwise from above: Chef Somkeat Lok, Head Chef of The Pavilion; sticky rice with mango, a classic Thai dessert not to be missed here; The Pavilion's design is based on a traditional Thai stilted home.





The wide variety of breakfast offerings at The Dining Room includes freshly baked pastries, morning bubbles and egg live stations, all of which are immensely popular with guests.



Top Of The Morning

At the beginning of each day, The Datai Langkawi's sumptuous breakfast spread – ranging from local favourites and artisanal pastries to nutrition-packed juices – puts a spring in every guest's step.

Upon awakening to the sound of morning birdsong from the surrounding jungle, the first thought on most guests' minds at The Datai Langkawi is usually "What's for breakfast?" It's a question that becomes all the more important in the context of the resort's signature buffet breakfast at The Dining Room.

The breakfast service, which starts at 7am, is a veritable feast for the palate. Besides an extensive selection of hot and cold offerings, several live stations have chefs on duty to produce *à la minute* eggs, pancakes, waffles and Malaysian specialities. Meanwhile, the pastry section – featuring freshly baked treats that change daily – is a firm favourite with guests.

"Croissants with sea salt, almonds and chocolate are our most popular signature pastries," says Executive Pastry Chef, Said Hazar. "Our 10-person pastry team likes to incorporate flavours from around Langkawi into traditional pastries, so we have Danish pastries with passionfruit, lime, coconut, mango and pineapple."

The Lebanese chef's fondness for Malaysian ingredients extends to the many breakfast breads that he bakes every day before sunrise, which feature turmeric, cumin, star anise and even curry focaccia, which proved a hit with guests. The accompanying jams are also the work of Chef Said, right down to a

vegan-friendly *kaya* (coconut jam). "It's important to impart flavour into each item, which is why I make our sourdough using a four-year-old starter, or prove bread with lemongrass for 24 hours," says Chef Said, who has been delighting guests with his edible creations for almost five years. "For the breakfast service, we begin baking at 5am – never in big quantities – and continue doing that in four rotations over breakfast, for maximum texture and freshness."

Executive Pastry Chef, Said Hazar, encourages his team to use Langkawi-grown produce in the freshly baked cakes and pastries.



One member of The Datai Langkawi's team who has seen the breakfast service change and evolve is Indra Mohan, Director of Food and Beverage. "We were the first Malaysian resort to offer bubbles for breakfast," he recalls of his 17 years at the property. "Since guests are here on holiday, why shouldn't they enjoy their morning with a mimosa or two?" The 'make your own' cocktail station adds another luxurious touch, inviting guests to follow the resort's recipes for Bellini, Kir Imperial and Kir Royale.

Indulgence aside, the wellness-focused aspects of the breakfast buffet have expanded over recent years to cater to vegan guests and those who prefer a healthier approach to their mornings. Indra points to overnight oats with toppings as diverse as spirulina powder and bee pollen, an assortment of leafy greens and vegetables as well as gluten-free bread as highlights. All juices are freshly squeezed on-site (the resort machine presses 80-100 kilograms of oranges per day during peak season), with blends of locally sourced fruit offering hydrating, immune-boosting and anti-inflammatory benefits.

Most memorable of all are the Malaysian dishes, which change daily, except for the classic, *nasi lemak* (rice steamed with coconut milk) that is on the menu every day. Guests have the opportunity to try hand-tossed *roti canai* (grilled flatbread), *pek nga* (sticky coconut pancakes with fish curry) or *nasi ulam* (rice with fresh herbs and spicy *sambal*). With such a vibrant sample of Malaysia's multicultural culinary fabric on offer, it's safe to say that The Datai Langkawi has managed to elevate the humble breakfast buffet to new heights. 🍴



An Ode To Bacchus

Wine aficionados and enthusiasts are bound to be delighted by the selections of wines from the award-winning Wine Cellar.

Tucked away in the corner of The Dining Room is The Datai Langkawi's award-winning Wine Cellar. The warm glow of the lights is inviting, but it is to the bottles of wines and champagnes stacked from floor to ceiling on three sides of the room that your eyes are immediately drawn. Bottles stand upright, three deep on open shelves facing the entrance. To the left and right are glass-fronted climate-controlled cabinets,

four on each side, showcasing an enticing collection of wines and champagnes resting at an angle.

"There are nearly 500 labels of wines and champagnes in The Wine Cellar at any one time, including wines from the Screaming Eagle Winery and Vineyards, Petrus and La Tâche, as well as the Grand Cru from Château Lafite Rothschild, Chateau Latour, Margaux, Chateau Mouton Rothschild

The bottles at The Wine Cellar hail from all over the world.



and Chateau Haut-Brion,” says Indra Mohan, The Datai Langkawi’s Director of Food and Beverage, with pride. “The Wine Cellar is also the only stockist of the Michel Roux champagne that is otherwise served exclusively in Roux’s restaurants, which include The Waterside Inn, the longest-standing Michelin-starred restaurant in the UK,” adds Indra.

The wine list at The Datai Langkawi runs more than 60 pages long, with Old World wines making up 60 per cent to 65 per cent of the list, while New World wines comprise approximately 30 per cent.

“From the beginning, The Datai Langkawi offered an extensive selection of wines from a variety of quality producers,” says Indra, a certified sommelier. “In 2006, The Datai Langkawi earned the Wine Spectator’s Best of Award of Excellence, a recognition that it has continued to receive every year since.”

‘BOTTLED POETRY’ AND BEYOND

Much of this success may be attributed to Indra who, together with Zulikernain (‘Zul’) Rosli, Assistant Manager of Food and Beverage, and himself a certified sommelier, determines the selection list. Indra actively carries out research, attends trade shows, and makes bi-annual visits to wineries and vineyards around the world to offer guests at The Datai Langkawi interesting vintages, choices that are appropriate to the cuisines on offer at the resort, and wines that appeal to a wide range of enthusiasts.

The Datai Langkawi is the only resort on the island with a licence to import alcohol directly. This means it does not depend on third-party importers for its supply of wines and other liquor. Instead, it can import the wines directly from wineries and vineyards, with whom it has developed a strong relationship.

Wine pairings are also taken into consideration. “Our dining outlets serve a range of cuisines that allow for wine pairings to complement the food, enhancing the flavours as well as the dining experience,” Indra says. “Our annual ‘Chef Series’ events, featuring renowned guest chefs, many of whom have been distinguished with multiple Michelin stars, also provide opportunities for interesting wine pairings and for introducing new wines that we are excited about or that have just become available.”

Selecting wine from The Datai Langkawi’s wine list can be a daunting experience, but the friendly wait staff dispel any trepidation thanks to their knowledge and advice, providing confidence in the selection or



encouraging an adventurous spirit to explore different options. The excellent storage and display facilities in The Wine Cellar are also key factors that have helped promote the sale of wines in the resort.

“With The Wine Cellar, guests can walk in and see how the wines are stored,” Indra says. “They can view the selection of wines and their vintage, study the wine labels, and make their own choices with confidence. We can even make top-tier wines available by the glass. These wines can be stored in carafes without any impact to their quality.”

PROMOTING THE LANGUAGE OF WINE

The Wine Cellar also offers wine-tasting sessions to interested guests. These are conducted by Indra, Zul or by a member of the F&B team. Indra encourages the staff in all of The Datai Langkawi’s F&B outlets to

educate themselves in the language of wine and the art of wine pairing as this can help them take better care of guests and elevate the guest experience.

Currently, more than 15 wait staff are studying for their qualifications from the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET), all sponsored by The Datai Langkawi. The WSET is the largest global provider of wine, spirits and *sake* education and qualifications.

Indra’s pride is clear in his voice as he speaks of the staff members’ commitment and perseverance in obtaining their qualifications. “It is not an easy course and is made more challenging because, for many of them, wine-drinking is not part of their culture,” he adds. “So, for them to be able to confidently explain and make recommendations to guests who may be wine connoisseurs is impressive and heartening indeed.” 🍷

Guests of The Datai Langkawi can walk into The Wine Cellar to view for themselves the award-winning, rare wines and champagne (above), such as those from Screaming Eagle Winery, Château Lafite Rothschild and Michel Roux champagne.

Sustainable Luxury

Giving back to the local community is a vital part of The Datai Pledge. Through exciting collaborations with artisans and entrepreneurs, The Datai Langkawi supports promising small businesses while creating unique experiences for guests.



No business is an island, which is truer than ever when your business is nestled on an island and is also an integral part of the local community. As Langkawi, the jewel of Kedah, is home to an abundance of artistic and enterprising talents, The Datai Langkawi identifies

The Datai Langkawi regularly collaborates with local entrepreneurs, such as Nor Harliza Ariffin (top), Ash Majid (above) and The Kanshalife Project (following page).

those who share its ethos of sustainability to collaborate with on special projects and to develop long-term relationships.

One such enterprise is The Kanshalife Project with co-founder Skaii de Vega and single mother Mak Tok. This local social enterprise initiative has plans to create an island eco-hub as an upcycling, design and environmental resource centre for Langkawi. The centre aims to teach visitors about conservation, permaculture, sustainable living and the blue economy model through projects such as its ever-expanding food forest, a research and development micro-factory, as well as a recycling and upcycling eco-design centre where waste is transformed into durable green products. The Kanshalife Project also recycles candles used in operations by The Datai Langkawi in a dedicated buy-back scheme and supplies virgin coconut oil for sale in the resort's Boutique.

Guests browsing the exquisitely curated merchandise, designer products and bespoke collections created for The Datai Langkawi will come across the name Ash Majid. The local jewellery designer translates traditional Malay batik patterns and accessories into contemporary designs that are on display at The Boutique. She has also conducted jewellery workshops for in-house guests.

Another artisan offering hands-on experiences to guests is the multitasking Rebecca Yau of BÖHÖ By Bujbecs, a brand that promotes repurposing and reusing where possible while reducing carbon output. At The Datai Langkawi, she led workshops showing guests how to upcycle plastic waste into bangles, necklaces, beaded plastic curtains and plastic dream catchers, all of which she also carries in her online store.

'Kak Liza' Nor Harliza Ariffin regularly runs similar activities for the hotel in the form of tie-dye classes that show guests how to create intricate patterns on discarded bedsheets to give them a new lease of life as beautiful cotton cloths.





Ceramic products from Radzi Ismail (left) and crystal products from Kamarul Faizy (above) can be purchased at The Boutique.



as well as in soap-making workshops, in the form of propolis.

These are just a few of the entrepreneurs and artists whom The Datai Langkawi works with as part of its initiatives under The Datai Pledge. Established in 2019, the Pledge is a Private Trust that is dedicated to improving the well-being of the environment, wildlife and local community. It recognises the symbiotic relationship that the resort has with its surroundings and encourages responsible and sustainable business practices that maintain this delicate balance. Supporting local artisans and entrepreneurs is part of that commitment and contributes to a memorable guest experience at The Datai Langkawi. 📍

Meanwhile, artisans Radzi Ismail of Ilham Ceramics and Kamarul Faizy of Faizy Crystal Glass Blowing, both with representation at the Langkawi Craft Complex, have taught holidaymakers the ins and outs of ceramics and glass-blowing at their studios on the island. Their expertly crafted artisan wares are available for purchase at The Boutique. In fact, these are collectibles to showcase in pride of place: Radzi's designs and glazes are inspired by Langkawi's natural beauty, while Kamarul's crystal products convey a variety of techniques and creative expressions.

If guests ever need a side of honey for fresh waffles or a cup of tea at The Datai Langkawi, they would do well to ask the staff if any Trigona honey is available. Local beekeeper Pak Long runs a Trigona Itama bee farm, though locals know the species as *kelulut* or stingless bees. In fact, some of Pak Long's bees have built the basis for the resort's own bee hives. The slightly tangy and more liquid honey from these special bees is also harvested for use in the resort's cuisine

Pak Long (below) is a beekeeper of *kelulut*, or stingless bees.



Festive Celebrations At The Datai Langkawi

Immersive experiences that build bonds and create lasting memories. That's what festive celebrations at The Datai Langkawi are all about.

Malaysia is a melting pot of diverse ethnicities, communities and cultures. Therefore, it is unsurprising that there is always a festival to celebrate at one time or another throughout the year. And central to all these joyous occasions are people and food.

At The Datai Langkawi, the festive celebrations of the major ethnic groups in Malaysia are significant events in its calendar of guest activities. They align with its ethos of offering culture-based experiences that enrich, educate and uplift, as well as deepen connections with the community.

HARI RAYA AIDILFITRI

The Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebrations, known as Eid-al-Fitr in other parts of the world, mark the end of Ramadan, a month of spiritual renewal and fasting from dawn to sunset, observed by Muslims around the globe. A celebration of faith, gratitude and forgiveness, it is one of the most important festivals for Muslims in Malaysia. As part of the celebration, Muslim families will visit each other and open their houses to friends and neighbours to join in the festivities, an activity commonly known as 'open house' in Malaysia.

At The Datai Langkawi, guests are invited to an 'open house' hosted at The Gulai House on the first day of Hari Raya Aidilfitri, and treated to a sumptuous buffet of traditional Malay festive dishes and delicacies.

Guests have the opportunity to savour *rendang* (a meat dish stewed in coconut milk and spices), *lemang* (glutinous rice cooked in bamboo tubes), *ketupat* (rice cakes wrapped in palm leaves), *laksa* (noodles in a spicy soup or broth)



and *satay* (skewered grilled meat) as well as delectable, colourful *kuih-muih* (bite-sized cakes and pastries), *dodol* (a sweet, toffee-like sticky confection) and *sirap bandung* (rose syrup drink) – all of which are traditionally served during the Aidilfitri celebration.

Dressed in the traditional Malay attire of *baju Melayu* (for the gentlemen) and colourful *baju kurung* or *baju kebaya* (for the ladies), staff members of The Gulai House welcome guests to this joyful event, as the mesmerising rhythms and melodies of a traditional Malay *gamelan* ensemble play in the background.

Above: The Datai Langkawi team members wear their traditional Hari Raya outfits for the celebrations.

Facing page: lion dance performances are held throughout Malaysia during the Lunar New Year.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

The Lunar New Year is a major festive celebration for the Chinese community in Malaysia. It symbolises a time for change and new beginnings, and a time for families and friends to reunite, feast and celebrate.

Reflecting the traditional Lunar New Year's Eve reunion dinner, guests at The Datai Langkawi gather at The Beach Club on the eve of the Lunar New Year for an evening of feasting and festivities, strengthening bonds with family and friends while sharing a meal. A veritable feast is on offer, featuring a bountiful sea harvest

of traditional, symbolic foods that bring good fortune and prosperity, including fish (symbolising abundance) and prawns (laughter and joy) as well as noodles (long life) and mandarin oranges (wealth).

The *yee sang* (prosperity toss), a colourful vegetable salad with raw fish, is also an integral part of the Lunar New Year celebrations in Malaysia. Symbolic ingredients (such as fish, carrots, white radish, cucumbers and more) are coated in a sweet plum sauce before being mixed with chopsticks and tossed in the air as high as possible by a gathering of family and friends to bring good luck and good fortune for the coming year.

The colours of red and gold, symbolising strength and prosperity, are predominant during the festivities, in the decorations and in the traditional dress of the figure-fitting *qipao* or *cheongsam* worn by the ladies, as well as the Tang suit, a Chinese-style jacket with a Mandarin collar and knotted 'frog' buttons, worn by the men. Red packets containing money are also handed out to children and unmarried individuals to wish them good luck and good health.

A lion dance performance adds to the festivities, bestowing good fortune to those in attendance. The acrobatic performers, the beating drums and





clashing cymbals all contribute to a lively and celebratory atmosphere. At The Datai Langkawi, guests can attend the vibrantly coloured lion dance, and follow its procession from the Lobby all the way down to The Beach Club, to bestow blessings on each and every one.

The Lunar New Year celebrations come to a close on the 15th day of the new year, known as Chap Goh Meh to the Hokkien community. Traditionally considered the Chinese equivalent of Valentine's Day, the night of Chap Goh Meh sees unmarried ladies throw mandarin oranges marked with their names into the sea, lakes and rivers in hopes of finding love, while single men attempt to retrieve the oranges. These activities are still practised today, though sporadically and only to add a bit of fun for singles and to make friends.

DEEPAVALI

Deepavali, also known as the Festival of Lights and as Diwali in other countries, is celebrated by the Hindu community in Malaysia. The celebrations are centred on praising the triumph of Light over Darkness, of Good over Evil. To mark the occasion, small clay lamps are lit and placed around the home. Like the major celebrations of the other communities in Malaysia, Deepavali is a time for family

reunions and gathering friends to share a meal.

Deepavali celebrations at The Datai Langkawi's Gulai House restaurant are often a feast of aromatic curries, *biryani*

(highly spiced rice dish flavoured with saffron and layered with meat) and *tandoori* (food cooked in a clay oven (*tandoor*)). Various breads are also savoured, such as *roti canai* (unleavened bread cooked on a griddle) and *naan* (leavened bread cooked in a *tandoor*). Sweetmeats such as *halwa* (made from sesame seeds with glucose or sugar) and savoury snacks such as *samosa* (pastry stuffed with peas and potatoes) are also laid out for the enjoyment of guests.

Above: team members enjoy dressing up in traditional attire for various celebrations.

Below: Santa Claus and carollers entertain guests during Yuletide.



CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S EVE

A Christmas tree made from upcycled glass bottles and decorated with colourful glass baubles by Faizy Crystal stands in splendid glory at the *porte-cochère* to welcome guests to The Beach Club, marking the arrival of the year-end festivities.

Guests at The Datai Langkawi are spoiled for choice when it comes to culinary options for the celebrations – from a White Christmas buffet on the beachside on Christmas Eve and a five-course dinner at The Dining Room on Christmas Day, to a gala buffet dinner at The Beach Club or an eight-course degustation dinner at The Dining Room on New Year's Eve. Pairings of fine wines from The Datai Langkawi's award-winning cellar are also available for all the festive culinary events at The Dining Room.

In conjunction with the season of gifting, The Datai Langkawi hosts an annual Christmas Bazaar, showcasing Langkawi-inspired creations by Malaysian artisans, while The Atelier welcomes Malaysian artists to exhibit their artworks and conduct workshops.

Carollers, deejays and live bands are also invited to entertain guests, who often sing along to their favourite tunes. Finally, for the countdown to the New Year, guests are ushered to the beach to watch a spectacular firework display over Datai Bay at midnight. An after-party then continues into the early hours of the new day. 🎉

From Christmas Eve to New Year's Day, the party atmospheres at The Beach Club and The Dining Room—complete with a gingerbread house and jolly hats—are fantastic ways to celebrate the end of one year and to welcome in the new year. Not forgetting its sustainability focus, the resort's Christmas tree is made from upcycled glass bottles.







THE DATAI
LANGKAWI

Serenity

The Datai Well-being Series



CURATED WELL-BEING
FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Dr Rafael Bagheri
Chiropractor, Canada
24-31 December 2022



Bastien Gonzalez
Podiatrist, France
14-18 March 2023



Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro
TCM/Acupuncture, Portugal
1-10 April 2023



Paul Emery
Creator: A Peaceful Mind, Thailand
14-25 June 2023



Roxanne De Guzman
Fitness and Yoga Instructor, Canada
7-17 August 2023



Christina Shiu
Singing Bowl Practitioner, Singapore
7-14 October 2023





Serenity – The Datai Well-Being Series

A diverse wellness programme rooted in a natural, authentic core features some of the best practitioners in their respective fields.

If you're seeking therapeutic experiences to rejuvenate mind, body and soul, then look no further than The Datai Langkawi's new wellness programme, Serenity – The Datai Well-Being Series. Launched in December 2022, this Series sees some of the best holistic practitioners from around the world take up residency at The Datai Langkawi to conduct group workshops, individual consultations and one-to-one sessions exclusively for the resort's guests.

Under the guidance of these practitioners, guests can experience diverse well-being traditions and practices: from the ancient disciplines of acupuncture, yoga and traditional Chinese medicine to singing bowl sound healing therapy, alternative medical

SERENITY GUEST PRACTITIONERS



Dr Rafael Bagheri – Chiropractor
24-31 December 2022 | Canada

Dr Rafael Bagheri is an experienced, professional chiropractor who is passionate about optimal postural and spinal health. He emphasises a proactive, prevention-based approach using spinal correction.



Bastien Gonzalez – Podiatrist
14-18 March 2023 | France

A Paris-trained podiatrist, Bastien Gonzalez was one of the first practitioners to pioneer an integrated approach to hands, nails and feet, combining health and natural beauty in his treatment protocol.



**Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro –
TCM and Acupuncture**
1-10 April 2023 | Portugal

Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro is a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) doctor and licensed acupuncturist who combines ancient wisdoms with contemporary diagnostics in his practice.



**Paul Emery –
Creator: A Peaceful Mind**
14-25 June 2023 | Thailand

Paul Emery uses a unique and powerful combination of the best and most effective mind and body techniques to create a new form of treatment called A Peaceful Mind, which gently releases stress, anxiety and worry.



**Roxanne De Guzman –
Fitness Professional and
Yoga Instructor**
7-17 August 2023 | Canada

Roxanne De Guzman is a highly experienced fitness professional and yoga instructor who works one-to-one with guests, focusing on their unique fitness and well-being goals while incorporating a youthful and playful mindset.



**Christina Shiu –
Singing Bowl
Sound Healing Practitioner**
7-14 October 2023 | Singapore

Christina Shiu is a singing bowl specialist whose therapies employ sound healing to restore peace and harmony.

practices including chiropractic and podiatry, as well as contemporary therapies such as neuroscience.

Central to this Series is The Spa, which is situated along a small winding stream and is imbued with the sounds and subtle aromatic scents of the rainforest. The Spa's signature treatments harness the healing and health benefits of ingredients from the rainforest, mangroves and sea, which are then administered according to age-old traditions and philosophies of the Malay culture known as Ramuan.

With Serenity – The Datai Well-Being Series, The Datai Langkawi is giving its guests the opportunity to look forward to exclusive experiences that are infused with a sense of harmony and tranquillity. 🌿

The Gold Standard

Traditional Chinese medicine doctor and acupuncturist Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro discusses the power of 24-carat gold needles, why faster results are always better, and being part of 'Serenity – The Datai Well-Being Series'.

"It's usually said that diamonds are a girl's best friend, but in this case, it's gold!" chuckles Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro as he goes over the finer details of his Holistic Facial Rejuvenation programme – cosmetic acupuncture performed using 24-carat gold needles. This 'natural facelift' – which shifts micro-circulation within the skin, improves collagen production and enhances the firmness of facial muscles – was one of Dr Loureiro's six signature treatments during his time as a visiting practitioner at The Datai Langkawi for its inaugural 'Serenity – The Datai Well-being Series'.

Making his journey to the resort for the first time, the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) doctor and acupuncturist took up residence at The Spa from 1 to 10 April, putting 23 years of study and research into practice as he treated guests at the resort. Besides employing his golden needles to great effect, Dr Loureiro also offered clinical acupuncture treatments, full epigenetic testing, VIP facial rejuvenation, anti-cellulite acupuncture, and his Quit Smoking for Life auricular therapy – a compact overview of the services available at Cura Pura, his clinic in his home country of Portugal.

No stranger to practising acupuncture in exotic destinations, Dr Loureiro – who holds degrees from Chengdu's and Beijing's University of Chinese Medicine – is very much in demand as a healing master and frequently travels between luxury wellness retreats in Qatar, Greece, Spain and the Maldives, to name a few. "I realise that guests who stay at these properties – the most premium hotels in the world – want fast results. I have to show them within a 30-minute session that acupuncture works," he says. "But



Scan this QR code to watch Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro in action at The Datai Langkawi in April 2023.

Dr Rui Pedro Loureiro is a traditional Chinese medicine doctor and acupuncturist based at the St Louis Hospital in Lisbon, Portugal. He was at The Datai Langkawi in April 2023 for Serenity - The Datai Wellbeing Series.



I like demanding guests because I like challenges! Everything that is easy is for others."

By fusing the time-honed approaches of TCM with contemporary diagnostics, Dr Loureiro has developed his own methods that result in astoundingly quick improvements. "I'm light years away compared to the traditional TCM treatments I used to practice," he states. "My techniques allow me to produce faster results, and anything that can give me faster results is better." Nowhere

is this more apparent than with his Quit Smoking for Life treatment – the fruit of a smoking cessation study conducted at Lisbon's St Louis Hospital (where Dr Loureiro is responsible for the TCM department) in 2016.

Out of the 43 volunteers, half received mild electrical stimulation on the outside of their ears. The trial resulted in a success rate of between 87 and 90 per cent within one session. "It's still medicine, not magic," Dr Loureiro clarifies. "My auricular therapy targets an



Dr Loureiro combines ancient wisdoms with contemporary diagnostics in his practice.



area of the brain that stores addictions to substances. Every addictive substance responds to a different electromagnetic frequency, so I ‘clean’ the brain using a frequency that resonates with nicotine. The brain will be almost the same as it was before the first cigarette of that person’s life. It doesn’t know what nicotine is anymore, so there are no cravings.”

The calm, serene environment of The Datai Langkawi has no doubt contributed to the efficacy of

Dr Loureiro’s TCM and acupuncture treatments (“The energy around the resort is amazing. The connection with nature and the rainforest is in perfect balance!” he exclaims), and reinforced his own warm, reassuring positivity. “I feel like Leonardo da Vinci when I’m sculpting a body with my cosmetic acupuncture techniques or helping people to be happier,” he smiles. “When we help someone to be happier with themselves, we change their lives a little – and that is a nice feeling.” ☺

Renewal And Rejuvenation

The Datai Langkawi offers a wide range of health and fitness activities, conducted by qualified professionals in the most nurturing of all environments – nature.

From the wooden Holistic Pavilion on the beach, your gaze is drawn to the stretch of fine sand that segues into the clear blue waters of the Andaman Sea. Nature's music fills the air in the rhythmic lapping of the waves and the chirping of the birds. A gentle breeze blows, and the leaves of the surrounding trees and foliage dance in their wake. It's a picture of serenity, the perfect surroundings to gently execute the various Hatha-style yoga movements and postures under the practised eye of Langkawi resident, Dorothy Ang, the yoga instructor at The Datai Langkawi.

With more than two decades of experience in yoga, Pilates and reiki, Dorothy has been the yoga instructor at The Datai Langkawi for the past 10 years. She conducts group yoga sessions four times a week for the resort's guests (the frequency is adapted per the season, sometimes more, sometimes less). Each complimentary session lasts one hour and is limited to eight participants, ensuring close attention for each participant. On request, Dorothy also provides private one-to-one yoga sessions, tailored to the individual guest.

That Dorothy excels in her job is attested by the waiting list of participants for her sessions, and can be attributed to her passion and commitment to the highest standards. "I enjoy engaging and working with people, helping them de-stress, and seeing them refreshed and re-energised at the end of a session," Dorothy says. "It's particularly heart-warming to have returnee guests to The Datai Langkawi seek me out on arrival, eager to begin their sessions." This is borne out by the enthusiastic greeting from a returnee guest who has just checked in.

"Despite having been in the field for more than 20 years, I feel that I'm continuously learning and growing still, which is really motivating. I am also encouraged by the positive feedback and praise from highly experienced yoga practitioners from around the world, as well as international yoga instructors who have participated in my sessions while guests of The Datai Langkawi," Dorothy adds.

All are welcome to Dorothy's yoga sessions, regardless of whether you are new to it or an experienced practitioner. Dorothy is able to tailor the flow and poses to suit all ages and skill levels.





Muhammad Danish's face breaks into a big smile of welcome as you approach the entrance to The Health Club of The Datai Langkawi.



A personal fitness trainer, Danish is based at The Health Club. This state-of-the-art facility is fitted out with the latest gym equipment by Life Fitness for maintaining optimum physical health, including workout benches, treadmills, stationary bicycles, elliptical machines, a punching bag, dumbbell sets, kettlebells, rowing machines, pull-up frame and bar, and fitness balls. Complementing the gym are a steam room and a sauna.

Constructed in 2018, The Health Club is a wooden pavilion that sits on a slight elevation next to the beach. A floor-to-ceiling glass wall along one length of the structure provides a panoramic vista of foliage and trees bordering a stretch of fine white sand on which the waves of the expansive Andaman Sea break, as well as Thai islands looming on the distant horizon. An open-air wooden deck makes

Highly experienced trainers such as Dorothy (left) and Danish (above) help guests reach their health, fitness and well-being goals at The Datai Langkawi.

the perfect platform for outdoor exercises, including pad work boxing.

A certified body-building national coach, Danish leads guests through group circuit training and core conditioning sessions twice a week. Each session lasts an hour and is limited to 12 persons. Danish also offers cardio kick-boxing classes for beginner to intermediate levels. For guests who prefer private one-to-one fitness training sessions, Danish is able to draw up customised programmes according to the guest's fitness condition and goals, with the option of a tailored nutrition and exercise take-home plan.

And for more intensive fitness sessions, guests may consider the challenging beach boot camp, carried out during low tide on the long stretch of sandy beach, which was voted one of the Top 10 Beaches in the World by National Geographic. Alternatively, Danish is able to conceptualise creative and fun boot camps on the beach for families.

Engaging and reassuring, Danish is committed to helping each of his clients attain their fitness goals within a safe environment, based on a relationship of trust. 🧘



A Malaysian Treasure Trove

The Boutique at The Datai Langkawi takes pride in showcasing the heritage arts and crafts of Malaysia, by Malaysians, for Malaysians and the world.



Natural light streams through the floor-to-ceiling windows inviting the outside in. On the opposite wall, a window frames the lush foliage growing along the walkways. Crossing the threshold, you are enveloped in an ambience of quiet and calm. A light scent of Penaga Laut, the signature scent of The Datai Langkawi, fills the air. Artistically displayed throughout the 100-square-metre space is a treasure trove of some of the finest examples of craftsmanship and works of art. Welcome to The Boutique.

Located on the Lobby level of the Main Building, The Boutique is home to an extensive collection of extraordinary creations – from handprinted textiles, painted ceramics and leather goods to handwoven rattan baskets, kiln-worked glass and natural beauty products, all mindfully sourced from

talented local artisans, designers and craftspeople. “At The Datai Langkawi, we are committed to offering the best of Malaysian hospitality and traditions,” says Norhayanti Jamil (Yanti), Retail Manager, The Boutique. “Similarly, in The Boutique, we are committed to showcasing the best of Malaysian arts and crafts. Through the selection of the products on display, we aim to promote an understanding and appreciation of Malaysia’s culture and heritage, her tradition of arts and crafts, as well as support the local community of artisans, designers and craft makers.”

The Boutique’s collection consists of about 80 per cent of artisanal creations that are made in Malaysia, with the rest

sourced regionally to offer variety. As you peruse the shelves, you notice cards with brief descriptions about the items and their creators, discreetly placed next to the displayed pieces. “Each item has a unique story – about the artisan, the inspiration and the craftsmanship. Our aim is to share these stories with our guests,” says Yanti, who is responsible for curating the collection of The Boutique as well as scheduling the Artist-in-Residence Programme at The Atelier.

Guests are encouraged to linger in The Boutique – to explore the gallery, discover the works of art, and deepen their understanding and appreciation of Malaysia’s cultural heritage.

“Yanti” Norhayanti Jamil (above), Retail Manager of The Boutique (facing page) is always happy to introduce the latest collections to guests.



From luxury fashion items by Alia Bastamam (right) to ethically produced goods by local craft makers (above), and plenty more besides, they're all available at The Boutique.

The merchandise and interior décor are refreshed every three to four months to create new enriching experiences for The Boutique's visitors, particularly the resort's high percentage of returning guests.

"The curation of The Boutique is guided by three key criteria. Firstly, the items must be artisanal goods ethically made by Malaysians; secondly, they need to be of high-quality workmanship and reflect attention to detail; and finally, they should use high-quality or eco-friendly materials," Yanti says. "We are open to working with little-known artisans, young emerging designers, social enterprises, non-governmental organisations and charities as long as their products meet our criteria."

Yanti adds that she discovers the craft makers through social media, visits to bazaars and craft fairs, word-of-mouth, and sometimes, the resort's own guests. Some of the Malaysian brands carried in The Boutique include Alia Bastamam, Ash Majid, Fugeelah, Ilham Ceramic, Kapten Batik, Khoon Hooi and Raaquu.

PROMOTING MALAYSIAN BATIK: KAPTEN BATIK X THE DATAI

Recognising a shared passion for preserving traditional heritage, commitment to sustainability and attention to detail, The Datai Langkawi has collaborated with contemporary batik

fashion brand Kapten Batik to create the Kapten Batik x The Datai Langkawi collection. A line of resort wear inspired by the colours of the ancient rainforest surrounding the resort and a brand pattern specific to The Datai Langkawi, the collection is produced in the timeless tradition of Malaysian batik, using hand-block printing and natural colours. The garments are made from GOTS-certified organic cotton that supports sustainability in the cotton industry as well as REPPEVE fabric made from recycled plastic bottles.

"The collaboration with Kapten Batik was our first fashion brand partnership, and we were delighted by the positive response from our guests," Yanti says. "It has encouraged us to explore similar collaborations."

For The Datai Langkawi's 30th anniversary celebrations in 2023, Kapten Batik showcased a capsule collection at its pop-up store at the resort. It also had its own artisans on-site to give demonstrations and conduct workshops.

ENTERING THE WORLD OF LUXURY FASHION: ALIA BASTAMAM X THE DATAI LANGKAWI

The Datai Langkawi's venture into the world of luxury fashion came about through its collaboration with award-winning Malaysian fashion designer Alia Bastamam, whose labels Alia Bastamam



and Alia B are among Malaysia's most eminent fashion brands. A regular guest at The Datai Langkawi, Bastamam found inspiration for her Resort 2023 collection, titled Oasis, at the resort. The Oasis line includes a six-piece capsule collection, Alia Bastamam x The Datai Langkawi, that incorporates naturalistic prints inspired by the resort's surroundings, such as the Lily Pond at the Lobby Lounge, the waves of the Andaman Sea and the butterflies along the Butterfly Walk.

Bastamam unveiled her Resort collection at Kuala Lumpur Fashion Week in August 2022. It officially launched at The Datai Langkawi in October 2022, with a fashion show, the resort's first, staged around the Lily Pond at the Lobby Lounge. The Oasis collection is featured in The Boutique as part of the resort's 30th anniversary celebration, with 50 per cent of the resort's share of the proceeds being contributed to its



own sustainability and conservation programme, The Datai Pledge. Bastamam also contributes a portion of her share of proceeds from the collection to The Datai Pledge.

THE ATELIER

Located next to The Boutique is The Atelier, a creative space where guests can meet and engage with visiting artisans,

designers and craftspeople; discover their stories and inspirations; and learn about their craft products. Guests also have the opportunity to participate in interactive workshops hosted at The Atelier.

THE ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAMME

The Artist-in-Residence Programme was introduced in 2018, in line with

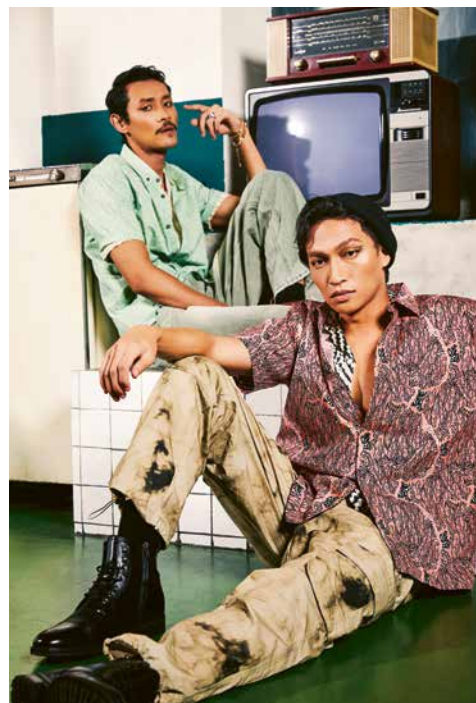
“The curation of The Boutique is guided by three key criteria. Firstly, the items must be artisanal goods ethically made by Malaysians; secondly, they need to be of high-quality workmanship and reflect attention to detail; and finally, they should use high-quality or eco-friendly materials.”

The Datai Langkawi’s commitment to cultural vitality, and to support the community of local artisans, designers and craftspeople. “For these residencies, our focus is on Malaysian artisans who are masters of their respective crafts, with priority given to spotlighting local Langkawi artisans and their works,” Yanti explains.

These talented artisans are invited to take up residence throughout the year, especially during festive celebrations. During their residency, which could last between three and 10 days, they give demonstrations, conduct workshops and exhibit their craft wares at pop-up stores.

Artisans for this year’s Artist-in-Residence Programme, in conjunction with The Datai Langkawi’s 30th anniversary celebrations, include Dia Guild’s craft makers, Sarawak-born Ranong Peru of Ran & Nong Creations, and Jonathan Yun of Jonathan Yun Jewelry from Penang. 📍





From Kueh Lapis to Kueh Bahulu, all of the tasty treats Malaysians love to eat are stylishly represented in the Kueh Collection by Kapten Batik.

Sweet Styles

Introducing the Kueh Collection by Kapten Batik, an exclusive range of clothes that pays tribute to the culinary traditions and delights everybody loves.

Step into a realm of Kueh treasures enchantment with Kapten Batik's latest collection. Drawing inspiration from the rich culinary heritage of Malaysia, the local fashion brand presents the captivating Kueh Collection.

Embrace the symphony of tastes and textures that transport us to a timeless place. This collection celebrates the vibrant flavours and cultural significance of traditional Malaysian sweets, paying homage to the artistry and craftsmanship behind these delectable treats.

The Kueh Collection showcases exquisite batik motifs that bring to life the unique colors, patterns, and shapes of beloved Kueh. From the intricate layers of Kueh Lapis to the delightful texture of Kueh Bahulu, each batik shirt in this collection is a celebration of the diversity and creativity found in Malaysian culinary traditions.

Experience the joy and excitement that Kueh brings to our taste buds and cultural experiences through vibrant colors and

intricate details. Kapten Batik's collection offers a delightful variety of batik shirt styles, including designs inspired by the elegance of Kueh Rempeyek and contemporary motifs that pay homage to Kueh Tepung Pelita.

Aligned with the brand's commitment to sustainability, the Kueh Collection emphasizes the importance of preserving and promoting traditional culinary practices. By showcasing the beauty of these edible treasures, Kapten Batik hopes to inspire a deeper appreciation for the cultural heritage they represent and encourage the preservation of local traditions. Join Kapten Batik on an enchanting journey through the flavours and textures of Malaysia's Kueh. Step into a realm where tradition and heritage come alive, where every bite and every batik shirt tells a story. Indulge your senses and savour the symphony of tastes and textures that the Kueh Collection offers. 🍷

kaptenbatik.com.my

The Path Forward

Against the backdrop of The Datai Langkawi's 30th Anniversary, three key individuals behind The Datai Pledge present their own insights into what makes the Private Trust such an effective champion for environmental conservation.



Left: Irshad Mobarak, Chief Advisor to The Datai Pledge.

Below: the Pure For The Future pillar includes upcycling and recycling glass bottles for use all around the resort.



Few people in Langkawi have more respect and affection for the archipelago than Irshad Mobarak, Chief Advisor to The Datai Pledge and former Head Naturalist at The Datai Langkawi. He joined the resort two months before it opened its doors in 1993. Over the subsequent three decades, his now-legendary nature tours have introduced multiple generations of visitors to the wonders of the island's sky, sea and land. A passionate conservationist, he recognised the urgent need to preserve and protect the natural surroundings that make The Datai Langkawi so special – the seed from which The Datai Pledge would eventually germinate.

“When I first came to the island, terms like ‘eco-tourism’ and ‘sustainability’ barely existed,” Irshad reminisces. “I wrote a concept paper proposing ideas such as Fish for the Future, Wildlife for the Future and Youth for the Future, and carried those thoughts with me for quite some time until our General Manager, Arnaud Girodon, joined the property in 2014. He listened to the programmes I outlined and decided they should be adopted as soon as possible.” Irshad’s concepts, along with Pure for the Future, would go on to inspire the Four Pillars, the backbone of The Datai Pledge.

Even before The Datai Pledge was formally established in 2019, Girodon – with characteristic swiftness (“He always wants to be the first!” Irshad jokes) – had assembled Pillar Leaders and Advisors from both within and outside The Datai Langkawi to implement the Private Trust’s conservation and sustainability programme. The installation of Fish Aggregating Devices in 2019 to combat unsustainable fishing practices in Datai Bay was the first of many tangible changes enacted under The Datai Pledge, while long-haul projects such as advocating for the creation of wildlife corridors have come to fruition only recently.

“Mr Girodon has played a very important part in the whole process by always being one step ahead,” Irshad says. “He’s thinking about The Datai Langkawi as a property that has been entrusted to us

for safekeeping, and knows that it is our responsibility to look after not only the resort but also the surrounding natural environment. It comes from a really deep place within his soul.”

Girodon himself attributes the substantial progress made by The Datai Pledge entirely to teamwork. “I must say we have a very dedicated team, and they embarked on this journey with open arms,” says the General Manager of The Datai Langkawi. “Once we’d established the priorities and objectives of each Pillar, they invested their own time in working towards those goals.”

Keeping The Datai Pledge firmly grounded in the significance of its geographical and social context was also a key starting point for Girodon. “I remember Jane Goodall’s saying, ‘Start small, start local;’” he comments. “The Pillars are what represent us – from the rainforest to Datai Bay, and the surrounding community and their children – so we had to keep things local and act on issues that made sense for our location.” It is an approach that has produced quantifiable results, such as saving 493,473 kilograms of waste from Langkawi’s landfill.

“Transparency is very important to me,” adds Girodon, who is also the Executive Administrator of The Datai Pledge. “The last thing I wanted



for our property was greenwashing. It’s all well and good to say a resort is sustainable, but who controls that? The Datai Pledge was created as an independently audited organisation, with a board of trustees that lends structure and exercises checks and balances.”

This perspective is echoed in the views of Juliet Kinsman, an ambassador and advisor to The Datai Pledge, whose work as a journalist and broadcaster has made her an expert on sustainable luxury hospitality. “What matters to me is the financials,” Kinsman says firmly. “If a property is transparent about how they fund their sustainability activities, that is the counter to greenwashing.”

She adds that committing to effective environmental practices and demonstrating that such practices are not only compatible with running a resort like The Datai Langkawi, but can also appeal to and educate its guests, is hugely important.

“The Datai Pledge helps people understand what makes a luxury hotel tick, and how,” she explains. “It invites you to look behind the scenes at The Permaculture Garden and how the hotel operates or handles its waste.”

And the further The Datai Pledge goes towards narrowing that gap between intention and action, the natural world is all the better for it. 🌱



From top:
Juliet Kinsman, an ambassador and advisor to The Datai Pledge;
Arnaud Girodon, General Manager of The Datai Langkawi and the Executive Administrator of The Datai Pledge;
hornbills at The Datai Langkawi.



Scan this QR code to download The Datai Pledge Impact Report 2022.



Scan this QR code to see the lush, diverse flora and fauna around The Datai Langkawi in an engaging video shot by Irshad Mobarak and The Datai Pledge team.



Making A Difference

An advocate of nature and sustainability, The Datai Langkawi is striving to make a difference to the welfare of the extraordinary wildlife and marine life in its surroundings.

Langkawi's rich geodiversity dates back nearly 550 million years and is a major determinant of its astonishing variety of flora and fauna. In 2007, Langkawi was designated a UNESCO Global Geopark for its geo- and bio-diversity heritage.

"To date, more than 535 species of butterflies, more than 270 species of birds and 90 species of reptiles have been recorded on the islands," says Irshad Mobarak, a Langkawi-based naturalist, conservationist and educator, and Chief Advisor for The Datai Pledge.

"The Wildlife For The Future pillar of The Datai Pledge aims to protect, restore and regenerate the island's natural heritage using a holistic approach of reforestation, protection of wildlife and their habitats, and community engagement," says Dev Abdullah, a naturalist and Manager of The Datai Langkawi's Nature Centre. He is also the leader of the Wildlife For The Future pillar.

According to Irshad's research, Langkawi has lost nearly 50 per cent of its natural wildlands. To combat the effects of deforestation, The Datai Langkawi is replanting native tree species.

"We've worked with the Forestry Department Peninsular Malaysia to plant more than 2,500 trees in Langkawi," Dev says. "To that end, we carry out regular seed collection activities. The seeds and seedlings are nurtured in our Native Tree Nursery in The Garden for replanting in strategic areas of the island's rainforests."

Deforestation is also a threat to hornbills as it has resulted in the reduction of trees with natural cavities in which these birds nest. In partnership with Gaia, a social enterprise dedicated to wildlife conservation in Malaysia, The Datai Langkawi has identified natural cavities in trees and plans to place more Artificial Nesting Boxes

The Datai Langkawi is focused on protecting and restoring marine life in the waters surrounding the island.

in hopes of increasing the number of mating hornbills.

Meanwhile, The Datai Langkawi has created an optimal environment to encourage sea turtles to lay their eggs on the shores of Datai Bay. For example, the resort has made the beach more turtle-friendly by adjusting the light intensity at night and planting more *Scaveola taccada* along the beach, a flowering plant that provides shade for the turtles to lay their eggs. Once the eggs are laid, the nests are transplanted into the climate-controlled turtle hatchery, so that the babies can hatch safely and then be guided back into the ocean.

The Datai Langkawi is also focused on protecting and restoring marine life in the waters surrounding the island. The Fish For The Future pillar was established to address threats and imbalances to these ecosystems through rehabilitating coral reefs and promoting sustainable fishing. Following a study of the marine life and ecological patterns in Datai Bay, The Datai Langkawi built five artificial reefs or Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), each 3.7 metres x 3 metres in size, according to the guidelines of the United Nations Environmental Programme. The FADs were deployed away from Datai Bay's natural coral reefs in January 2019 to encourage the settlement of marine plants and small crustaceans, which in turn attract fish. Since the FADs' deployment, coral larvae from nearby natural reefs have attached themselves to the structures, leading to a proliferation of fish and the

creation of alternative sustainable fishing grounds away from the natural coral reef area. The Datai Langkawi purchases fish from the local fishermen if it meets the resort's sustainable requirements (such as medium to large fish only, to allow the small fish to thrive).

Another initiative as part of The Datai Langkawi's work as one of 11 organisations appointed Reef Care partners by the Malaysian Department of Fisheries, and being the first organisation on Malaysia's West Coast invited to protect its vital reefs, is the in-house coral rehabilitation where vulnerable corals are taken to the Coral Nursery at The Nature Centre. When the corals have recovered and grown sufficiently, they are transplanted to artificial coral reefs including the five FADs as well as smaller coral frames, expanding the existing habitat for marine life.

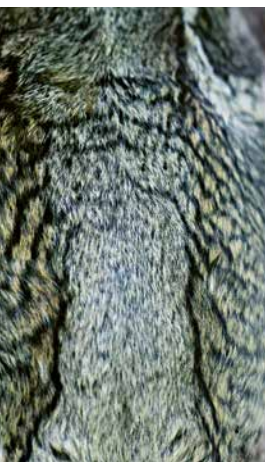
Central to the Wildlife For The Future and Fish For The Future pillars is The Nature Centre. This unique open-air bamboo building is surrounded by the rainforest and is situated close to the beach to allow direct contact with both environments. Built in 2018, it functions as a knowledge, conservation and guest recreation centre for nature experiences and activities. The Nature Centre also facilitates research and development work carried out by a team of resident naturalists, marine biologists, a botanist and zoologist, who help guide The Datai Langkawi's conservation and environmental policies and activities. 📍

Below: The Nature Centre is a multi-faceted centre where hotel guests can learn more about nature on the island and around the world.

Clockwise from right: the threatened Mountain Cycad, Great Hornbill, Black Giant Squirrel, Clownfish, Green Turtle, Sunda Colugo and Dusky Langur.



Scan this QR code to see one of two Juvenile Hawksbill Turtles that was rescued and released by The Datai Langkawi.





Doing The Right Thing

Striving to act responsibly, The Datai Langkawi places sustainability at the heart of its business operations, integrating it into its company ethos and guest experiences.

The bedrock of The Datai Langkawi's existence is nature, which has been the resort's inspiration since the beginning. Grateful for nature's bounty, The Datai Langkawi feels a deep sense of responsibility to conserve and strengthen the increasingly fragile resources and to reduce the negative impact of man's footprint on the environment.

The Datai Langkawi embarked on an extensive renovation in 2017, which

gave it the opportunity to go back to the drawing board to see how it could become more environmentally sustainable. "Sustainability is at the heart of The Datai Langkawi's business operations," says Remi Giromella, the resort's Director of Quality Control and Improvement, and Head of Sustainability. "Our business practices are cultivated to respect and protect the unique biodiversity of the island by reducing the

use of natural resources, reducing our carbon footprint, and achieving zero-waste to the landfill. We have introduced many new policies, such as a ban on single-use plastic for front-of-house purposes, along with a host of recycling and upcycling programmes." Remi is also the leader of the Pure For The Future pillar of The Datai Pledge (the resort's programme on sustainability and conservation). Pure For The Future focuses on the

“Although new facilities were added during the renovation, the resort’s energy consumption is less today than before the renovation,” says Agus Rida, The Datai Langkawi’s Executive Director of Engineering.

resort’s business operations and is based on the tenets of a circular economy in which waste and pollution are designed out, products and materials are kept in use, and natural systems are regenerated.

SIX CENTRES FOR SUSTAINABILITY Remi speaks animatedly about how it all began for him – single-use plastic bottles. He was appalled at the quantity of such bottles that were discarded in landfills by households and corporations. So, he decided to start where he could make an impact and rid the resort of all single-use plastic bottles, replacing them with customised glass bottles and stainless-steel flasks that are reused.

“Zero waste to the landfill can be achieved through recycling and upcycling initiatives,” Remi says. “That is why we developed six centres where these initiatives can be carried out efficiently and effectively. Although it is an ongoing pursuit, we are proud and delighted to have achieved zero-waste-to-the-landfill for the first time in December 2021.”

The Water Bottling Plant, which was set up in March 2019, processes an average of 500 to 600 bottles a day. Empty or used bottles are collected from all over the resort and sent to the Bottling Plant, where they go through a deep cleaning process. Water treated at the source is purified on-site using UV filters and reverse osmosis before being filled into the clean bottles. The filled water bottles are then manually inspected before the lids are affixed with paper security seals.

The Sorting Centre was also established in March 2019, to sort all trash to be either recycled or upcycled. “For example, dry waste, paper, cans, plastic and glass are all further sorted, while recyclables are sold to local recycling agents or donated to local non-profit organisations,” Remi says.

As for food waste, it is first compacted to remove its water content before being sent to farmers to use as chicken feed. The

chickens are then subsequently purchased by The Datai Langkawi’s kitchens.

The rest of the compacted waste is sent to the Organic Wealth Centre, a dedicated area set up in December 2021 to compost organic matter, turning it into bio-fertiliser as part of a closed-loop system. At the Composting facility, the compacted waste is left to decompose and is used as compost in The Garden (created in December 2018). And finally, a wood chipper reduces tree branches and twigs from the resort grounds into woodchips, which are also used in composting.

The Upcycling Centre comprises different facilities for glass and polystyrene crushing, as well as plastic shredding. Set up in September 2019, the glass-crushing facility crushes 500 to 1,000 glass bottles daily; the end product, which is like fine sand, is used for in-house construction projects and decorative items at The Lab or donated to social enterprises. At The Upcycling Centre, paper is shredded and composted for use at The Garden, while shredded plastic is

mixed with crushed glass and cement to make concrete slabs for use in the resort, or melted and injected into moulds to create products. Reusable handbags are also created from upcycled plastic, while crushed polystyrene is used as filling in bean bags.

Non-toxic, non-recyclable and non-upcyclable waste is incinerated in the eco-friendly Asher, using heat pyrolysis. The ash produced is used as soil conditioner for ornamental crops.

THE GARDEN AND THE LAB

The Garden at The Datai Langkawi has been designed according to permaculture principles where nothing is exploited or wasted. Compost from the Organic Wealth Centre is used to cultivate local and international herbs and spices, which are used as ingredients in the resort’s kitchens and The Spa. Irrigated using rainwater and treated wastewater, The Garden produced 430kg of herbs between 2021 and 2022. The Garden also hosts hives of stingless bees that help with pollination and producing the honey used and sold at the resort; an Aquaponic Farm to increase harvest; and the Native Tree Nursery, where seeds and saplings are nurtured for the resort’s

Remi Giromella (below) is the Director of Quality Control and Improvement, and Head of Sustainability at The Datai Langkawi.

The Lab (facing page) was designed and built by the Sustainability and Engineering team.



reforestation programme and to create wildlife corridors on the island.

Meanwhile, The Lab was set up in response to team members looking for a place to carry out further upcycling experiments and activities before implementing them in the resort's programme of guest activities. Built at the end of 2020, The Lab has today evolved into a place for guests to attend workshops, for partner artisans to showcase and teach their craft, and for the team to showcase the variety of products from the resort's upcycling initiatives. The Lab itself is a construction marvel made up of recycled bottles and used plastic items. The exterior walls and pillars consist of 3,199 whole bottles; the interior and exterior back walls feature crushed plastic; while the interior flooring incorporates crushed glass bottles. In total, more than 7,900 glass bottles were used to create The Lab.

ENERGY-SAVING INITIATIVES

Low carbon emissions and energy consumption that reduces carbon footprint and energy wastage are paramount to The Datai Langkawi's maintenance operations. "A completely new system of heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) was installed in the resort during its renovation, and it is fully monitored by The Datai Langkawi's Building Management System (BMS) to ensure continuous energy-saving practices," says Agus Rida, the resort's Executive Director of Engineering.

"With BMS, we are able to schedule the automatic switching off of electrical

The Garden (facing page) at The Datai Langkawi enables the resort to grow its own fruit, vegetables (below), herbs and honey in a zero-waste production system.





fixtures,” Agus continues. “To give a few examples: we can vary the frequency drive of various equipment; adjust the fan speed motor in air-conditioning units and exhaust fans; and regulate the supply of fresh air. This has resulted in more than 80 per cent in energy savings since its implementation in 2018.”

Fresh Air Handling Units (FAHUs) have also been installed to supply treated fresh air with a reduced humidity level to the air-conditioning units in the resort. “Humidity can affect electronic equipment, causing them to short,” Agus says. “It can also cause wooden floors to buckle and wall paint to peel. By maintaining a lower level of humidity, we encounter fewer issues and achieve savings in maintenance costs, besides allowing for the smooth operations of the resort.”

The pools in the resort are heated using heat pumps that do not emit CO², and generate 30 to 50 per cent energy savings; while the cold air produced by the heat pumps is used to cool the pump room and equipment. In addition, all fitted lights in the resort are LED, which are up to 80 per cent more energy efficient than traditional lighting. “They consume less power and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They are also free of toxic materials like mercury,” Agus explains. “Although new facilities were added to the resort during the renovation, such as The Nature Centre, The Health Club and additional rooms at The Spa, the resort’s energy consumption is less today than before the renovation.”

MEASURING ITS CARBON FOOTPRINT

With the aim of offsetting greenhouse gas emissions in its surroundings, The Datai Langkawi has been calculating its carbon emissions since 2018. It works with third parties to assess its greenhouse gas emissions and to devise ways to reduce its carbon footprint. It has also been working with a local university to conduct a tree inventory and a study of the health of the trees and their carbon stock estimation in order to estimate the area’s carbon emission and sequestration.

The sustainability efforts and achievements of The Datai Langkawi are reported in The Datai Pledge’s annual Impact Report, and have been recognised locally and internationally. It has received the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard Certification 2020-2024, the EarthCheck Silver Certification 2019 and 2022-2023, and the Malaysia Green Hotel Certification 2019-2020. 🌱



History Making

At The Els Club Teluk Datai, nature becomes the guiding hand to one of the most incredible courses within the Ernie Els Design Collection.



At The Els Club Teluk Datai, a proverbial stone's throw from The Datai Langkawi, golf enthusiasts who tee off for the first time at this course will discover a modern classic, set amid the 500 million-year-old Cambrian-era Machincang limestone mountain range and an 8,000-acre geoforest preserve.

The course is a 2012 redesign by golfing great and four-time major champion Ernie Els, who paid close attention to the many elements of nature on the site. In conceiving this 18-hole, par 72 championship course that plays to 6,750 yards, Els respectfully allowed the centuries-old rainforest – with its variety of flora and fauna – to take centre stage with tropical hardwoods, palms, ferns, creepers and broad-leafed plants. Towards the north, the sparkling Andaman Sea provides a captivating backdrop, with Hole 17 running alongside the beach and the

brilliantly blue water. Across the course, crystalline streams trickle merrily, offering a visual and aural sense of calm as you set yourself up for the birdie putt.

The Els Club Teluk Datai's Club Manager, 'Saha' Sharudin bin Kamarudin, is well acquainted with the course, having served as operations manager on an earlier stint. For him, the course stands out for its unique design aspects including the decision to forgo sand bunkers in favour of a more nuanced focus on a scenic golf playing experience, as well as manicured fairways and greens interspersed with ancient rainforest trees – thus providing a habitat for the wildlife surrounding the course. "We've seen so many of our golfers return across the past decade because of how much they enjoy the course and navigating the greens because of its contours and speed," Saha says.

"The best thing is that in Langkawi, we can play golf all year round," he continues. He lends a pro tip for the 12th, a short 472-yard par 5: "Carefully place your tee shot on the right side of the fairway to avoid the cluster of trees on the fairway's left. Then you have an open view of the green, which is reachable on your second shot or, at least, to be as close as possible to have a chance for a birdie."

Beyond the natural design features envisioned by Els that you encounter when playing this course, perhaps the greatest experiences arrive at the most unexpected moments. On almost any given day, golfers will be able to glimpse the interesting local wildlife on the course, and appreciate gorgeous views even as they're waiting their turn. From the picturesque beauty of the mist-strewn mountains in the distance to the scent of sea and the sound of waves, nature's beauty finds golfers at every hole. As for Saha, his most memorable moment playing the course arrived when he was about to play his second shot on the 12th. "A hornbill swooped extremely close to me, and I really loved seeing it so close up," he remembers. "But the best part is that I birdied the hole." 📍

The Els Club Teluk Datai features an 18-hole course designed by Ernie Els, the latest in club facilities (such as buggies equipped with GPS), a fully stocked golf shop, full-amenity locker rooms, The Hornbill Café and the Els Club Lounge.



Discovering Malaysia From The Comfort Of Your Room

"Reading is like travel, allowing you to exit your own life for a bit, and to come back with a renewed, even inspired, perspective." – Laurie Helgoe

Neatly arranged on a shelf above the writing desk in each guest room at The Datai Langkawi is a small, but select, collection of books that cover a broad range of topics relating to Malaysia, or that are authored by Malaysians.

Leaf through the pages of the books to learn about the history, peoples and traditions of Malaysia – her literature and architecture, her health and beauty traditions, her arts and crafts, including the world's foremost name in quality pewter.

Get a unique look at the country by perusing the essays of renowned author and public speaker Lee Su Kim, who uses humour tinged with satire to discuss the quirks and

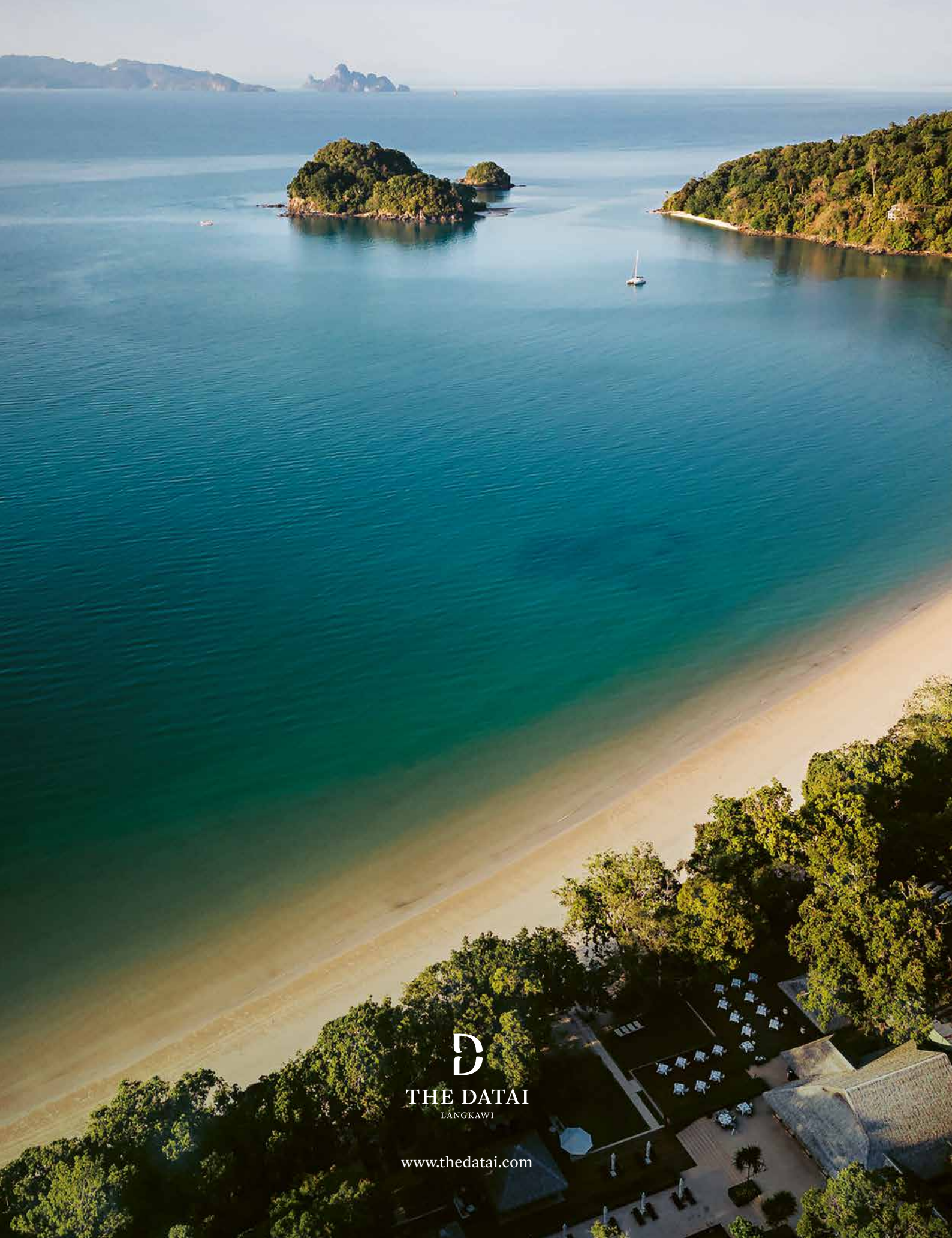
idiosyncrasies of Malaysians. For a lighter read, the visual narratives by Malaysia's favourite cartoonist, Lat, will surely bring a smile to your face; while a stunning photographic journey of Malaysia by SC Shekar, award-winning photographer, will awe and inspire. And if culinary arts are what you relish, then the anthology on the traditions and flavours of Malaysian cuisines by the well-loved veteran chef, Betty Saw, will sate your curiosity.

No matter which books you decide to pull off the shelf, you can be assured of wondrous discoveries, new perspectives and a deeper, more enriched connection to Malaysia at the journey's end. 📖

Above: learn more about Malaysia from the books in your room at The Datai Langkawi.



The Dining Room hosted many festivities during the 30th Anniversary celebrations in 2023.



THE DATAI
LANGKAWI

www.thedatai.com