

ISSUE #9

IKHLAS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DATAI LANGKAWI

The Datai Langkawi's 30th Anniversary

PART 2

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

D

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 went to The Datai Pledge.



A MEMBER OF

THE LEADING HOTELS
OF THE WORLD

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alam Sejahtera and welcome to our special two-part collector's edition of *Ikhlas* issues celebrating the 30th anniversary of The Datai Langkawi. 2023 was an incredible year that saw us tell our story during four 'Chapters' throughout the year to celebrate this milestone. Each chapter was focused on a specific theme – Community, Arts and Crafts, Nature and, finally, an overall celebration of 30 Years of The Datai Langkawi. These specially curated events highlighted the essence of the resort and what makes The Datai Langkawi exceptional, not only for all of us on staff (who worked tirelessly for the events with a full house of guests) but also for our partners and collaborators (whose dedication continues to inspire us), and especially for you, our dear guests and friends.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our guests, whether you're a first-time visitor or one of our many loyal returnees. Even with all the travel and tourism challenges we've faced in recent times, you've continued to select The Datai Langkawi as your holiday destination, and I am grateful for your support and friendship. We would not be here without you and we look forward to fostering our relationships with all of you even further in the years to come.

If you haven't read Part 1 of our 30th Anniversary special in *Ikhlas* #8, then I highly encourage you to do so, as it is packed with intriguing stories – some of which are two-parter that conclude with this issue – documenting the journey of our beloved rainforest resort. In this issue, you will also be treated to wonderful tales that look back at the resort's history, the people who've made everything possible and, most importantly, the island's natural wonders. In addition, you'll read about



our head chefs' recommended dishes at our exquisite restaurants, what took place during the resort's extensive renovations in 2017, the plans of Pillar Leaders within The Datai Pledge, and plenty more.

I would also like to highlight the recipients of The Dataians Long Service Awards: Azhari bin Mohd Salleh, F&B Manager; Zulyazan bin Md Yusoff, Credit Manager; Anizam bin Ramli, Assistant Human Resource Manager; Norzi bin Kamis, Chef de Partie; Mahazer bin Abdul Malik, Assistant Chief Steward; and Aziana binti Saud, Senior Laundry. Read about

their commitment and service to The Datai Langkawi in this issue.

I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful year ahead, and I thank you for visiting The Datai Langkawi. We have a lot more excitement planned for the near future, including an expansion of The Datai brand, and I'd love for you to join us in these new thrilling adventures.

Arnaud Girodon
Chief Executive Officer
Datai Hotels and Resorts

PHOTOGRAPHY: SC SHEKAR.

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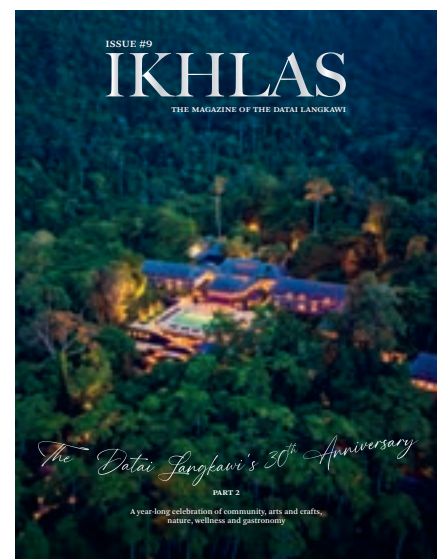
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Charting New Waters

As The Datai Langkawi marked its 30th anniversary in 2023, Arnaud Girodon (Chief Executive Officer of Datai Hotels and Resorts) reflects on the resort's resilience during challenging times, outlines plans for Southeast Asian expansion, and unveils exciting news about future developments.



Arnaud Girodon wants to fly The Datai flag in other Southeast Asian destinations, carefully selected to rival the beauty of Datai Bay.

Returning guests to The Datai Langkawi will recall Arnaud Girodon, the former General Manager (GM) of The Datai Langkawi between 2014 and 2023. He has now assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Datai Hotels and Resorts. As his 10th anniversary with the resort approached last year, this momentous occasion coincided with The Datai Langkawi celebrating its 30th anniversary. Reflecting on the journey, Arnaud has the fondest memories of returning guests, the team members who have become like family, and the positive impact of The Datai Pledge on the community. Even amid the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, he expresses gratitude for the team's resilience. "It was a new learning experience and has helped us bounce back even stronger than before. Where previously, the majority of our guests were foreigners, we now had Malaysians coming to stay with us. If locals find The Datai Langkawi a beautiful haven and keep returning to us, that shows that we have been doing something right," Arnaud says. "Our returnee guests from overseas are back as usual, and now we also have more Malaysian guests. So, it has been a record-breaking time for us in terms of occupancy."

Transitioning from GM to CEO, Arnaud is now focused on the bigger picture. With the award-winning The Datai Langkawi being considered the best resort not only on the island but also in Malaysia, he envisions expanding The Datai brand to other breathtaking locations in Southeast Asia. "We are looking at Borneo (East Malaysia), Indonesia and the Philippines. We think there is great potential, and the concept of nature and nurturing the environment would work amazingly well in these places," he says.

Apart from the expansion of The Datai brand, Arnaud and his team have also been busy working on a new brand that appeals to the upscale millennial traveller seeking

inspirational and immersive experiences with a pronounced wellness angle and within a convivial social atmosphere, all while contributing to the community and learning from local cultures, arts and traditions. Arnaud says more details on this exciting development will be revealed in due course.

As for The Datai Langkawi, a property that is so well-known for its exceptional service, how does this rainforest haven continue to elevate itself and stay atop the luxury market? Among others, Arnaud cites a renewed focus on well-being, in line with the Serenity Series launched in 2023, as just one of the many strategies to maintain its world-famous reputation. "We want to increase our wellness and spa facilities, introduce more holistic treatments and spa specialties as well as more exciting things to come," Arnaud says. "We are also looking to offer butler and in-villa chef services for more room categories, to provide guests with an enhanced personalised experience." For all these and more, Stéphane Duvacher, the new General Manager, will lead the way.

Arnaud and Stéphane share a longstanding professional relationship. "We have known each other for many years and have worked in many luxury properties around the world," Arnaud enthuses. "When I thought of who would be the right fit to take on the role of General Manager for The Datai Langkawi, Stéphane immediately came to mind. He is perfect to continue operational excellence at the resort, and we complement each other very well in terms of vision for The Datai Langkawi and passion for this industry."

As for The Datai Langkawi's winning formula that has propelled it to its current point of excellence, Arnaud credits his staff. "We wouldn't be where we are today without the enthusiasm and dedication of our team members who have stayed with us for many years," he says. "With their loyalty comes a sense of ownership and a commitment to delivering only the best for our guests, with humility and grace." 🙏

A New Chapter In Paradise

Stéphane Duvacher, the new General Manager of The Datai Langkawi, reflects on the resort's remarkable charm, guest loyalty and deep connection to nature, as he continues to lead the resort's exceptional practices forward.



“What makes The Datai Langkawi so remarkable?” This question is posed to Stéphane Duvacher, the resort's recently appointed General Manager. After 25 years of managing prestigious establishments worldwide, he has now chosen to call Langkawi home. He smiles before answering: “The Datai Langkawi, in its three-decade existence, stands as one of the world's most breathtaking places. Our most significant asset is our people. They bring excellence in service to

The rainforest setting of The Datai Langkawi is a welcome change for Stéphane Duvacher, who had previously worked mainly at city hotels or in beach resorts.

our guests, and the warm embrace of Malaysian hospitality forms the heart of what keeps this place truly exceptional.”

Almost 40 per cent of The Datai Langkawi's guests are returning visitors, a statistic that astounds Stéphane as he has never seen such guest loyalty throughout his hospitality career. There are guests from the United Kingdom who have visited the resort more than 20 times, and regulars who spend every Christmas here. Some even book their stay years in advance. “This reaffirms my belief that I've chosen the right place, and that The Datai Langkawi has been getting things right for years.”

For Stéphane, the change in scenery is also welcome. Having worked primarily in city-based hotels in Thailand, Dubai, New York and more – catering mainly to business guests – he now looks forward to engaging with nature-loving guests.

Taking the helm from Arnaud Girodon – who now serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Datai Hotels and Resorts, a fellow hospitality professional Stéphane has known and worked with over the years – what impressed Stéphane the most about The Datai Langkawi was its profound connection to the rainforest and the sea's biodiversity. The resort's mission statement, The Datai Pledge's (a private trust dedicated to improving the well-being of the environment, wildlife and local community of Langkawi) initiatives consisting of the Four Pillars (Pure For The Future, Fish For The Future, Wildlife For The Future and Youth For The Future); The Serenity Well-being Series; and The Chef Series are not only sources of inspiration for travellers seeking unique experiences, but they are also dreams for professionals in the hospitality industry to be able to participate in, according to Stéphane. The Datai Langkawi's remarkable employee loyalty, with many staff members serving for more than two decades, is testament to this fact.

Discussing global environmental concerns, Stéphane emphasises the importance of responsible practices in



the hospitality industry, especially in the face of climate change. One of the things that has excited him recently is the discovery of a new tree species in Datai Bay by the Ministry of Forestry together with the The Datai Langkawi's resident naturalist team, reinforcing the resort's commitment to preserving biodiversity – another area that is close to his heart.

The Datai Langkawi marked its 30th anniversary in 2023, and Stéphane is eager to continue the outstanding work initiated by Arnaud.

“Working closely with the entire team to further enhance the offerings in natural luxury, leading sustainability practices, and delivering exceptional guest service and experiences is truly

fulfilling work,” he says. “I hope The Datai Langkawi will be the final chapter in my career, and that I get to spend as much time as possible in this beautiful environment with these wonderful people, delivering exceptional experiences for both returning and new guests in this rainforest paradise.” 🌿

A Lustrous Pearl In Nature's Mosaic

The third instalment of The Datai Langkawi's year-long celebration of its 30th anniversary turns the spotlight on its greatest muse – nature.

Thirty years is no small feat. Arnaud Girodon, Chief Executive Officer of Datai Hotels and Resorts, describes The Datai Langkawi's storied journey as “an incredible achievement” and a testament to three decades of harmonious existence with the island's spectacular natural environment. It's fitting, then, that the resort savoured this milestone with a series of festivities that celebrate the rich tapestry of peoples, cultures and passions that have been instrumental in its success. Where Chapter 1 feted the community and Chapter 2 spotlighted the creative arts, Chapter 3 paid tribute to the resort's greatest inspiration – nature.

From 22 September to 1 October 2023, the luxury retreat became a nexus for environmental education and appreciation as a series of nature- and conservation-related exhibitions, workshops, talks and excursions were curated for guests under the banner 'Celebrating our Nature'. For those with inquisitive minds, direct engagement with field scientists offered an unparalleled window into the world of conservation science. Wildlife photographer Peter Ong provided an intimate glimpse into his work through a captivating exhibition that brought Malaysia's unique fauna into focus. Ong and fellow wildlife photographer Sanjitpaal Singh (of social enterprise Gaia) also shared tricks of the trade as well as the joys and challenges of their work through photography workshops.

Chapter 3 provided a platform for partners of The Datai Pledge, the private conservation trust founded by The Datai Langkawi, such as Wildlife For The Future pillar partner Gaia and Fish For The Future pillar partner



“As a partner of The Datai Pledge, MareCet is proud to participate in the celebrations and to partake in such a significant milestone that honours nature that is 500 million years in the making.”

MareCet, to share about their work. MareCet is Malaysia's only NGO (non-governmental organisation) focused on marine mammal conservation. Thanks to its efforts, the Langkawi archipelago is internationally recognised as an IUCN Important Marine Mammal Area (IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature, an organ of the United Nations). Guests were invited to spend the day with MareCet's team of dolphin researchers on the lookout for the playful cetaceans and to engage in land-based activities such as batik painting and storytelling sessions recounting the tales of two fictional Indo-Pacific Finless Porpoises as narrated by MareCet co-founder Dr Louisa Ponnampalam. “As a partner of The Datai Pledge, MareCet is proud to participate in the celebrations and to partake in such a significant milestone that honours nature that is 500 million years in the making,” Dr Ponnampalam enthused.

Avid birdwatchers were not left out. Dr Ravinder Kaur, hornbill expert and Scientific Director of Gaia, led walks to observe the nest of the resort's resident Oriental-Pied Hornbill couple and to spot exotic avian life on the verdant slopes of Gunung Raya, the island's highest peak. It was also a rare opportunity to spend time with famed naturalist Irshad Mobarak. His profound knowledge and effusive style brought the resort's varied forest habitats and its curious inhabitants to vivid life.

Chapter 3's festivities reached a crescendo with a lavish fundraising gala. The evening unfolded at The Beach Club, overlooking the glistening white sands of Datai Bay in a magical night of feasting, music and philanthropy. As the last rays of the sun kissed the horizon, guests were invited to wander among the items that would go under the gavel during the charity

Malaysia's wildlife, such as tigers and dolphins, are in good hands thanks to organisations such as Save Wild Tigers, The Habitat Foundation, Rimau, and MareCet.



auction. While canapés were served, cocktail glasses were clinked and the tunes of local music ensemble Mix N Match filled the air. The gala's *raison d'être* was a poignant one: the plight of the Malayan tiger. Although there are no tigers on Langkawi, fewer than 150 remain in the wild on Malaysia's mainland. Thus, the evening's auction promised hope, with proceeds going to global tiger conservation charity Save Wild Tigers, which channelled these

funds to the local chapters of Rimau and The Habitat Foundation. Both organisations are driving initiatives to promote the recovery of wild Malayan tigers in their respective Malaysian states of Perak and Pahang.

Malaysia was also a stop for Save Wild Tigers' Eye On The Tiger exhibition, following its successful showing at London's Albert Hall. Selected images from the world's largest wild tiger photography exhibition, including



Helping to bring the resort's varied forest habitats and its curious inhabitants to vivid life are this photograph of a wild tiger (left), which was one of the auction items, and famed naturalist Irshad Mobarak (below).



Sanjitpaal Singh's evocative Malayan tiger, were on display and available for purchase.

Underneath a marquee decorated in a lush tropical jungle theme, Chapter 3's gastronomic journey was overseen by celebrity Chef Lewis Barker of one-Michelin-starred restaurant Sommer in Singapore. His six-course degustation menu was a culinary ode to the island's produce and a showcase of his team's flair for contemporary European cuisine. Among the standout dishes were the Aged Hamachi with Fennel Consommé, Shiso and Ikura, and Madai with Young Ginger and Yuzu Chilli Beurre Blanc. Emceed by former Miss Universe Malaysia Elaine Daly, the evening also featured local crooner Sean Ghazi and songstress Ida Mariana, both of whom dazzled guests with their sultry jazz performances.

Arnaud Girodon encapsulated the spirit of the night when he urged guests to mirror nature's generosity. The auction saw patrons vie for extraordinary experiences and *objets d'art*. The promise of a three-night retreat in a luxurious Rainforest Villa at The Datai Langkawi, an odyssey aboard the Belmond Eastern & Oriental Express, a bespoke Krug champagne dinner for 10 curated by Chef James Won, and a sequined Roberto Cavalli cocktail dress were but a few of the donated items waiting to be snapped up. However, the most furious bidding was reserved for the artworks. Among them were British contemporary artist Piers Bourke's impressive three-dimensional photographic print, paint and ink rework of a 1901 Federated Malay State postal stamp, and Penang-based Sharon SS Kow's detailed realist tiger in colour pencils.

In his speech, Simon Clinton, founder of Save Wild Tigers, underscored the ecological impact that the loss of a single species like the Malayan tiger could precipitate. “When you lose tigers or they go extinct, the protection for tiger habitats quickly disappears,” he said. “When you take into consideration issues such as climate change, the problem is an immense one.”

As Chapter 3 of The Datai Langkawi's anniversary celebrations concluded, Chapter 4 loomed on the horizon. The finale was set to cap off a wondrous year of celebration and conservation, reaffirming the resort's commitment to luxury with a conscience. 🐾

The Grand Finale

A year-long celebration hailing everything the resort stands for – community, arts and crafts, nature and The Datai Langkawi DNA – came to a deserving climax with a gala dinner of Michelin-starred food, fine wine and stellar entertainment.

It is impossible to encapsulate 30 years of splendour in one evening, or even one week, of celebrations. That is why The Datai Langkawi stretched its milestone 30th-anniversary celebrations across the span of one year and four chapters, the last of which came to a splendid close on the weekend of 15-17 December 2023.

Each quarterly chapter paid homage to one core value of the resort. Where Chapter One celebrated the community that makes The Datai Langkawi, from the staff members and non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners to local representatives that lend the resort its rich tapestry of culture, Chapter Two feted local arts and crafts by spotlighting artists, designers and photographers that inspire storytelling around The Datai Langkawi. Chapter Three commemorated the nature from which the resort was birthed, bringing urgent attention to its unique natural setting in the heart of Langkawi's 10-million-year-old rainforest and the importance of conserving it. The last and final chapter came to a close with a gala night on the evening of 16 December 2023, honouring 30 years of The Datai Langkawi and everything it encompasses.

The celebration kicked off on 15 December at the resort lobby with an artisanal bazaar offering hotel guests and invited personalities authentic flavours of Langkawi. Local food, arts and crafts lined the hallways, peddled from traditional stalls reminiscing the *kampung* spirit of the island. Setting the beat to the merrymaking were local dance troupes, who brought to life elaborate traditional performances of Malay *zapin* and *kuda kepang* as well as Bornean *ngajat* and the *magunatip* bamboo-beat prance. Guests were then ushered to dinner at The Gulai House, where a sumptuous spread brought more flavours of Langkawi and Malaysia, served through the country's signature curries, *laksa* and *rendang* – a grand introduction to what Malaysia is all about, palate-wise.

On 16 December, the best of dining, hospitality and entertainment came together for a star-studded night under a starlit sky. Emcees Daphne Iking and Harith Iskander guided guests through the night, and the evening commenced with the gracing of guests of honour, Sultan of Kedah Al-Aminul Karim Sultan Sallehuddin ibni Almarhum Sultan Badlishah and Sultanah Maliha binti Almarhum Tengku Ariff.

To them and the carefully curated guest list of the night, Arnaud Girodon, Chief Executive Officer of Datai Hotels and Resorts, reiterated the resort team's focus on its core values. "We are blessed with a workforce that loves their job, that delights in providing unforgettable moments for our guests, and who have – just like our guests – found a second home here with us. I would like to extend my personal, heartfelt gratitude and recognition to all of our team members, and especially those who have stayed with us for more than 20 years," he said, as he welcomed these long-serving team members to the stage to sustained applause. "Thank you to all of you for your dedication and passion – for the small and larger gestures you add to each guest's stay to ensure they leave us with precious memories that will



Each quarterly chapter paid homage to one core value of the resort.





last forever. The Datai Langkawi would not be what it is today without each and every one of you!"

French celebrity chef Sébastien Bras, holder of a combined five Michelin stars (together with his father Michel Bras) at Bras and Le Suquet in Laguiole, France, was flown in to orchestrate the proceedings on the food front. The evening marked his return following his first appearance during the reopening of The Datai Langkawi after its extensive refurbishment in 2017 and 2018. In a seven-course symphony of French signature classics, Bras told the story of his home with ingredients including chestnut, foie gras, turbot, Wagyu and Aubrac tea-flavoured ice cream. Paired with it were the finest wines from the resort's Wine Cellar, ranging from French cuvees and German Rieslings to Mediterranean Port and more.

Entertainment saw a mix of local and international sights and sounds, shining in both classical and contemporary flair. Classical pianist Mei Lin Hii took to the stage with four pieces, warming the night with her virtuoso

This page, clockwise from above: Arnaud Girodon and long-service staff; René Roseburg; Stringfever.

Facing page, from above: Jaclyn Victor; Mei Lin Hii.



skills. Then, René Roseburg lent his impressive opera-trained vocals with a selection of arias. Taking things up a fun notch was StringFever, a family of musicians all playing various stringed instruments, who took guests on a nostalgic trip down memory lane with movie soundtracks and a game of 'guess the title' of original Disney classics.

For the closing, local songstress, Asia's Divette and the inaugural winner of the first *Asian Idol*, Jaclyn Victor stunned guests with her vocals. From a glass stage moored to the centre of the pool, she sang to the beauty of the resort's nature, the richness in diversity of The Datai Langkawi's people and most of all, to 30 years of unrivalled hospitality. She aptly wrapped up the night with her winning song, *Gemilang* (which is Malay for 'glorious').

For the past 30 years, The Datai Langkawi has paid continuous respect to the ancient rainforest that has nurtured it. More than 10 million years old, this forest has been the source of the resort's inspiration and one that it has endeavoured to respect and protect. When The Datai Langkawi opened in 1993, it set out to create a luxurious sanctuary with experiences in nature,



culture, dining and wellness, as peerless as the spectacular natural surroundings that inspired it. Over the years, The Datai Langkawi has successfully done so, deriving its hospitality and authenticity from the generosity of nature and the multicultural harmony of the people of Malaysia.

As The Datai Langkawi enters its fourth decade, there is no doubt it will continue upping the ante on all it has built over the past 30 years to redefine

the term luxury travel. More than just exclusive amenities and money-can't-buy riches, The Datai Langkawi has always shown that real luxury lies in the embrace of nature and all that it can generously provide only when it is, in turn, well taken care of. The Datai Langkawi has proven that it is more than just a luxury resort – it is a sanctuary, a haven, existing in interdependence with nature's most irreplaceable treasures. 🌿



Thirty Years Young

The Datai Langkawi, being one of Malaysia's leading luxury resorts for 30 years and counting, can be traced back in parts to an effort that starts from the very bare bones. Jay Yeunh, lead architect of KC-DMP Interiors, shares exactly what it took to ensure the resort feels contemporary, while retaining its original DNA.

What does it take to become one of Malaysia's leading luxury resorts? More importantly, what does it take to retain the revere and renown after 30 years of creating unforgettable memories for each guest that comes through?

At The Datai Langkawi, one of its many sentinels guarding design in form and function over the years is Malaysian Jay Yeunh, lead architect of KC-DMP Interiors, in Kuala Lumpur. Jay had worked on the original conceptual design 30 years ago alongside interior designer Didier Lefort of DL2A, and the late Australian architect Kerry Hill. Jay's journey came full circle with the return to oversee The Datai Langkawi's refurbishment in 2017-2018, dubbed the most extensive in its entire history.

"When Didier informed me that we were invited to submit a design proposal for the refurbishment of The Datai Langkawi, I was ecstatic as we knew exactly what we had to do," Jay says. "The focus was to have a refreshing, bright and modern approach to the refurbishment, while maintaining The Datai Langkawi's DNA."

It was not going to be an easy feat. The redesign included renovations to the resort's guestrooms, suites and villas; the construction of The Datai Estate Villa and a Nature Centre; additional Spa Pavilions to accommodate demand; a refreshed retail space; a fitness centre by the beach; as well as an overall enhancement of the landscaping. And all of the above had to be done without infringing on the core value of being one with nature, of nature, by nature. "The Datai Langkawi was already a very



Scan this QR code to watch
The Datai Langkawi
- The Making of the New Datai.



well-known unique rainforest resort, and the refurbishment would envisage a ‘rebirth’, attracting many more guests and families from all over the world,” Jay reflects now.

In rejuvenating the space, the team was careful to retain the original purpose of the resort – to juxtapose the natural

beauty of the locale with understated functional modern amenities. The new interiors would ensure the ultimate in comfort and style is combined with the facilities that travellers have come to expect of The Datai Langkawi. “The whole project took slightly more than two years,” Jay remembers.

“The most difficult challenges were the issue of the air-conditioning, electrical, plumbing and other mechanical and electrical services, as the old systems had to be completely replaced.”

Beyond a new look, efforts were also implemented to add to the resort’s offerings. Everything that

The master bedroom in
The Datai Estate Villa;
Jay Yeunh.

The Datai Langkawi has come to be known for – exceptional service, luxurious facilities and deep respect for nature – was set to be heightened with new world-class standards on all forefronts. This came hand in hand with an increased focus on sustainability, underpinned by the construction of a



dedicated Nature Centre. In fact, all of these were materialised while keeping the original architectural elements of the resort intact. “It was easy to preserve The Datai Langkawi’s personality as we were also the original designers 30 years ago, and we knew what elements to maintain and enhance,” Yeunh says. Supported by Lefort himself, who gave input from Paris, the team pulled off the mammoth task to great success.

Other aspects go on to tell the complete story of The Datai Langkawi as it is meant to be, conceptualised by the eyes and materialised by the hands of the very people who first gave it birth. It continues to pay homage to the original vision of Kerry Hill, who set out to build a luxurious hideaway set amidst ancient rainforest backed by the pristine Datai Bay. “For the first-time guest, the anticipation of arrival while driving through the rainforest will be exhilarating,” Jay says. “Upon arrival, the guest will be in awe, wondering how this tropical resort was built in the middle of a 10-million-year-old rainforest. The guest will feel the true Malaysian hospitality in bliss and joy, surrounded by nature at its best.”

And for all those guests who book their second (or third, and so on) visits at The Datai Langkawi, Jay recommends the exclusive The Datai Estate Villa, his personal favourite. “It provides a total sense of privacy without losing the feel of the resort.” 📍



Where Performance Meets Style And Sustainability

The all-new Activewear Collection from Kapten Batik features high-performance fabrics and stunning batik-inspired designs, all made with sustainability at its core.

Kapten Batik – the Malaysian clothing brand that has wowed fans both local and international thanks to its modern clothes that it infuses with elegant batik designs – has launched an all-new Activewear collection. The collection features active clothing that's perfect for golf, tennis, cycling, and more. Their colourful batik-inspired designs pay tribute to the proud Malaysian heritage of batik while also incorporating contemporary style. In addition, every item from the Activewear collection is made with high-performance fabrics that are good for you and for the planet as well.

These garments are lightweight, durable, breathable, stretchable and feature up to UPF 50+ protection. They are made from cutting-edge Repreve fabric, which is manufactured in a process that transforms recycled plastic bottles into certifiable,

traceable, high-performance yarn. In other words, every plastic item you recycle has the capability to become thermo-regulating pants, moisture-wicking apparel, odour control tees, fire-resistant sofas, and water-repellent phone cases – and it's all thanks to the technologies that make Repreve possible.

The entire team at Kapten Batik have put eco-consciousness and long-term sustainability at the forefront of their design and production processes. This is why they've crafted each item in the Activewear collection with the utmost care and dedication, so that every time you put on a Kapten Batik activewear garment, you'll be wearing an item that's both technically excellent and environmentally friendly.

Announce your arrival the moment you step on the golf course, tennis court or cycling track, thanks to the exquisite

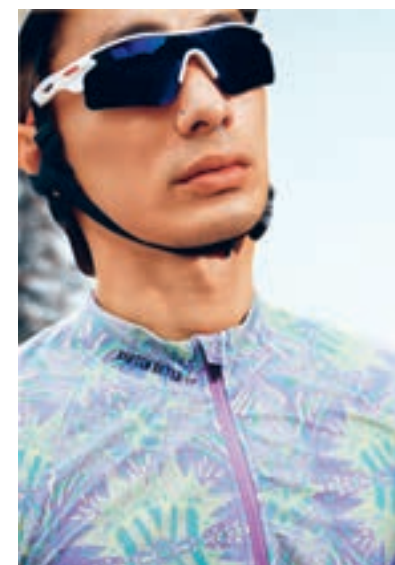


The cutting-edge fabrics and batik-inspired designs of Kapten Batik's all-new Activewear Collection ensure that you'll be at your best on the golf course, tennis courts or while cycling.

batik-inspired designs in the Activewear collection. They are a showcase in intricate patterns, vibrant colours and cultural flair – perfect for elite-level athletes and championship-calibre performances. The latest collection includes cycling jerseys, polo shirts, shorts and long pants.

This all-new Activewear collection from Kapten Batik is everything you need to be your very best: clothes that enhance your performance, protect our planet, and feature vibrant batik-inspired designs. Now, isn't it a wonderful feeling knowing that you're contributing towards a sustainable world while also enjoying your favourite sports activities and living an active lifestyle? 🌱

For more information, please visit www.kaptenbatik.com.my





In Perfect Tandem

The Datai Langkawi's The Chef Series 2023 culminated with Chef Mano Thevar from Singapore and Chef Sebastien Bras from France, with the former wowing with South Indian flavours and the latter amazing with French reverence of localism and naturalism.



Good food, fine wine and great chefs set the agenda for all five guest chef residencies during The Chef Series 2023. From haute cuisine from France and contemporary Indian from Singapore to modern eclectic from the UK and new wave cuisine from Malaysia, each chef shared a slice of their unique culinary flair with guests and diners on their respective nights.

For the second half of the series, two talents of seemingly diverging opposites drew the curtains on the show: Chef Mano Thevar from Singapore and Chef Sebastien Bras from France. Where Chef Mano is the up-and-coming hotshot name to watch in Asia – who serves a unique confluence of Tamil-Indian and Malaysian flavours – Chef Sebastien is a sentinel of classic haute French gastronomy who champions localism and naturalism. New and old, East and West, proved to be the complementary wow factor perfect to close the year's festivities.

Long before the Michelin Guide even entered the Malaysian dining arena, Penang-born and raised Chef Mano was already playing in the Singaporean big leagues with his contemporary Indian restaurant, Thevar. He proudly bears the distinction of being the first Malaysian chef to have two Michelin stars under his belt after winning his first star in 2021 and his second in 2023.

He may have cut his teeth with Michelin-starred Guy Savoy and Waku



Strawberry Chaat (above) and Lamb Inji Puli - Dhal - Sorrel Chutney (below).



Ghin, but the cuisine that won him his renown is that of modern recreations of South Indian flavours with Malaysian touches, heavily influenced by his mother and grandmother while growing up in Penang.

"I grew up in a Chinese community in Penang, so I came from an environment of blended influences – Chinese, Indian and Malay. This mix of flavours defined my palate from a young age," Chef Mano says. "When I started to develop my own cuisine, the idea of Indian fine dining already existed but I wanted to do something different. So, I began experimenting with the Malaysian-influenced South Indian flavours of my heritage and combined them with European and French techniques and high-quality Japanese produce. Thevar is the outcome of this."

Those flavours were apparent with his menu for The Chef Series, which served Japanese eel as a smoked *paniyaram* (small ball-shaped fried dumplings) and Hokkaido scallop paired with an orange *rogan josh* (creamy tomato curry). The clever culture-crossing didn't stop there, as King Crab was teased with a punchy pepper *rasam* (spiced tamarind soup), while lamb was intensified with a Kerala-style *inji puli* (sweet and sour ginger pickle).

Chef Mano provided the perfect warm-up of Asian explosion for guests at the resort, just in time to set the stage for the next chef who was flown in to

cook for the grand finale of The Datai Langkawi's 30th anniversary celebrations.

Elemental, nuanced and featuring the work of years of dedicated evolution – such is the food of Chef Sebastien Bras, holder of a combined five Michelin stars at Bras and Le Suquet in Laguiole, France (together with his father Michel Bras). If his name sounds familiar, the father-and-son duo also honoured the grand re-opening of The Datai Langkawi after the refurbishment of 2017 and 2018 with an exclusive dinner. Together, they have built a reputation as masters of invention.

This motivation for innovation was one of the reasons that piqued the chef's interest in The Datai Langkawi's herb garden. "This morning in the garden, I came across some herbs and flowers, a few of which I was not so familiar with," Chef Sebastien said during his time at the resort. "So, these ingredients will be featured in the dishes tonight, and I hope to take some back to our tropical greenhouse in Aubrac."

His dinner showcased all of his (and his father's) innovations to date. The *gargouillou*, an ode to nature's bounty and emblematic of the naturalist movement that he pioneered, was served alongside more than 40 flowers, herbs and vegetables from The Datai Langkawi's herb garden, laid on a base of beef broth. His famed *le 'niacs'* seasoning, borrowing its richest savouriness from granules of black olives, was pitched against the 'King of the Sea' turbot, teasing its delicate sweetness. Dessert could only be his *coulant*, but it was a reinterpretation of the original, which was conceived in 1981. Intended to capture the nostalgic childhood delight of drinking hot chocolate on a cold winter's day, it was served as a soft and crunchy chocolate biscuit exterior encasing an interior cavity filled with the unexpected delight of butternut cream, finished off with cardamom ice cream.

When playing on a field of such high-calibre individuals, it is arduous to stand out, let alone leave a lasting impression. However, both Chef Mano Thevar and Chef Sebastien Bras certainly managed to do so with their own personal brand of gastronomy that speaks of their respective personalities, characters and, most importantly, cooking philosophies. They impersonate the very essence of the signature Chef Series by The Datai Langkawi, representing some of the best talents the culinary world has to offer today. 🍴

"This morning in the garden, I came across some herbs and flowers, a few of which I was not so familiar with," Chef Sebastien said during his time at the resort.



Clockwise from above: Chef Sebastien Bras; Aujourd'hui Classique - Gargouillou; Comme en Aubrac - A5 Wagyu; Sur une Interprétation du Coulant Originel de 81.



Chef Chai Chun Boon's culinary style can be described as a combination of contemporary European haute cuisine with cross-cultural techniques and the sensibilities of the Asian palate.

Crafting Culinary Magic Amid Nature's Embrace

Discover how Chef Chai Chun Boon's culinary expertise and his love for locally sourced ingredients have transformed The Dining Room at The Datai Langkawi into a haven of delectable dishes inspired by the Andaman Sea's terroir.

Nestled amid a breathtaking panorama of ancient rainforests and the distant azure sea, The Dining Room at The Datai Langkawi is not only a vantage point for savouring panoramic views but also for relishing the extraordinary culinary creations of its Senior Chef de Cuisine, Chai Chun Boon, who has been entrusted with elevating the restaurant's dining experience since January 2022.

Chef Chai's illustrious culinary journey has seen him working alongside renowned chefs such as Sergio Herman, Xavier Pellicer and Jason Atherton. He has also learnt in the kitchens of esteemed establishments, including the two-Michelin-starred ABaC restaurant in Barcelona, the three-Michelin-starred Oud Sluis in the Netherlands, and the three-Michelin-starred Santi in Singapore. For Malaysian food enthusiasts, Chef Chai is a familiar name, as he has garnered acclaim for his modern European restaurant, Copper, in Kuala Lumpur.

Now, the Sarawak-born chef has brought his wealth of experience to a place that resonates deeply with him: the embrace of nature. And what better locale than The Datai Langkawi to continually serve as his muse for his culinary philosophy? "The mascot of Sarawak is the hornbill. I remember the first time I arrived at The Datai Langkawi, there were three majestic hornbills perched on the veranda," Chef Chai remembers. "That, to me, was a clear sign that I belonged here."

In The Dining Room, Chef Chai has found his creative platform, where he can freely design a culinary experience that celebrates the milieu and draws inspiration from the essence of the Andaman Sea's terroir. Enriched by locally sourced herbs and spices, his aim is to craft a symphony of flavours that captivates and tantalises the palate. The amiable Chef Chai goes about this by engaging with guests and their preferences, often making rounds from table to table to ensure that guests depart with both a satiated soul and a contented stomach.

"I draw inspiration from our guests, who come from as far as South America, and from our fellow Asians in Japan and Singapore," Chef Chai says. "I want to craft dishes that not only offer comfort but also introduce them to new local flavours." To achieve this, he balances the infusion of approximately 70 per cent Asian and 30 per cent Western



The Dining Room is surrounded by the sounds and scents of the rainforest.

flavour profiles into most of his dishes. For example, Chef Chai masterfully employs local pumpkin with citrus and pairs them with a *foie gras* dumpling, creating a visually captivating and uniquely flavourful creation.

With a culinary ethos deeply anchored in the use of premium, locally sourced ingredients from dedicated producers, Chef Chai passionately champions the farm-to-table concept,

"I draw inspiration from our guests, who come from as far as South America, and from our fellow Asians."

ensuring his unwavering commitment, as well as the resort's, to unparalleled natural freshness and taste sensations. This dedication has led him to craft a special nine-course Degustation Menu – available for booking during dinner at The Dining Room only – that beautifully showcases the island's bounties through a fusion of European and Asian techniques. "The Blue Lobster, Flavours of Andaman, Floral Meadow dish on the degustation menu is a stunning crustacean creation that is naturally sweet, fresh and evokes beautiful local flavours," he says.

Besides working with his team to introduce new additions each season, Chef Chai is equally fervent about The Datai Langkawi's sustainability efforts. In the kitchen, everyone is diligently instructed to separate their waste into designated stations for recyclable plastic, glass and materials for composting. The fact that the kitchen's efforts are reported as part of The Datai Pledge's annual sustainability report leaves Chef Chai with a profound sense of fulfilment. "I find that I appreciate being here more and more each day, not only because I get to work with wonderful hospitality professionals, but also because I am part of a superb 'machine' that creates a green legacy, rather than more carbon footprint and pollution," he enthuses. 🌱



A5 Wagyu Picanha.



Journey Through Far East - Preserves.

Dynamic Duo

Have you always wondered who creates the unforgettable cuisine at The Beach Club or the amazing breakfast offerings at The Dining Room? Then allow us to introduce to you Executive Chef Azman Azali and Executive Pastry Chef Said Hazar, and the dishes they've cooked up that keep guests coming back for seconds (and even thirds).

Chef Azman Azali

With 16 years of dedicated service at The Datai Langkawi, it's no surprise that Chef Azman Azali considers this resort his home. As the Executive Chef, he enjoys nurturing all restaurants at the resort, but in particular what he fondly calls "his baby" – The Beach Club. Here, his culinary creativity is fuelled by the endless inspiration provided by the Andaman Sea, resulting in a continuous stream of innovative additions to the Asian-meets-Western menu.

The heart of Chef Azman's vision lies in embracing the sea and the bounty it provides. The Beach Club boasts an open grill where the aroma of searing seafood mingles with the salty ocean breeze. To further enhance the experience, the menu offers an array of live seafood options, sourced directly from the pristine waters surrounding Langkawi island. Chef Azman's aim is to transform these local treasures into culinary masterpieces infused with exceptional local flavours.

One of his signature creations is the Butterflied Jumbo Tiger Prawns, tantalisingly bathed in a sweet and spicy chilli sauce. The dish features succulent prawns of impressive size, a rarity on the Malaysian peninsula. This delectable offering showcases Chef Azman's culinary artistry and his dedication to delighting guests with unique and extraordinary flavours.

Another culinary gem on the menu is the Live Andaman Lobster, served in its shell. The lobster's vibrant flavours and freshness demonstrate Chef Azman's commitment to elevating the seafood experience at The Beach Club.

Reflecting on his journey, Chef Azman – hailing from the state of Negeri Sembilan – says his culinary aspirations were first ignited by watching local celebrity restaurateur Chef Wan on television. Today, Chef Azman is living his dream. He cherishes the opportunity to consider The Datai Langkawi his playground,



One of Chef Azman Azali's signature creations is the Live Andaman Lobster.

where he has access to a limitless abundance of marine delicacies straight from the sea. Chef Azman's gastronomic creations are a testament to his passion and creativity, which have come to life in this beautiful and inspiring corner of the world.

Chef Said has been delighting guests at The Datai Langkawi with his exquisite creations for nearly five years now.



Chef Said Hazar

If the quality and variety of pastries at a resort's breakfast counter are any indication of the culinary delights guests can anticipate during their stay at The Datai Langkawi, then Executive Pastry Chef Said Hazar consistently exceeds expectations.

Early-risers, initially seeking a light breakfast at The Dining Room's buffet, often find themselves returning for seconds when faced with Chef Said's renowned signature pastries, including croissants adorned with sea salt, almonds and chocolate – which could rival even the finest artisanal pastries from the streets of Paris. His vegan-friendly *kaya* jam (coconut jam) and curry focaccia also stand out as popular creations, showcasing his talent for elevating local flavours to cater to even the most discerning of palates.

With an impressive career that has taken him to exotic destinations worldwide, such as Antigua and Barbuda, Danang in Vietnam, and the Maldives, along with a stint working with three-Michelin-starred Chef Yannick Alleno, Chef Said has been delighting guests at The Datai Langkawi with his exquisite creations for nearly five years now. He collaborates with a 10-person pastry team, baking in small batches as early as 5am during four shifts to ensure that the freshest possible pastries are continuously available throughout the morning. Chef Said's commitment to culinary creativity using local ingredients makes breakfast at The Datai Langkawi not only a delectable adventure for gastronomes, but also extends to scrumptious desserts served at The Dining Room and The Beach Club – such as the Madagascar Vanilla Crème Brûlée with lemongrass pineapple compote and yogurt lemon sorbet, which is a favourite among guests. 🍷

Chef Said Hazar's Madagascar Vanilla Crème Brûlée is available for dinner at The Beach Club.





Chefs' Choice

There is such a wide variety of delectable cuisines to savour at The Datai Langkawi that guests may feel overwhelmed at first. So, we asked the in-house chefs themselves what their favourite culinary creations are, and what they recommend for guests to try.

At The Datai Langkawi, an enchanting world of gastronomic wonders awaits, where a symphony of flavours inspired by Malaysian and global culinary traditions dances on your taste buds. Each dining experience unfolds in a tapestry of unique settings, graced with awe-inspiring vistas that amplify the serenity of the pristine natural surroundings. We ask the five talented head chefs responsible for the mouthwatering delicacies at The Datai Langkawi to name their top dishes that are a must-try for all guests.

Above: Blue Lobster with Flavours of Andaman and Floral Meadow at The Dining Room.

Facing page, from above: Sup Ketam Wangian Serai Titik (crab soup with lemongrass) at The Gulai House; Amra Malaysian Plum at The Dining Room.

THE DINING ROOM Chef Chai Chun Boon

Chef Chai is the Senior Chef de Cuisine at The Dining Room, and his culinary ethos is firmly rooted in the use of premium, locally sourced ingredients from conscientious producers. He champions the farm-to-table concept to ensure a commitment to unrivalled natural freshness and flavours. Chef Chai's favourite dishes are from his nine-course Degustation Dinner, which represents a gastronomic journey of cross-cultural techniques. The main courses are a delicious medley of seafood and meat: Blue Lobster with Flavours of Andaman and Floral Meadow (a stunning lobster dish that is naturally sweet and fresh); and A5 Wagyu with Sweet Onion, Red Beet Ash and Sauce Épicée Exotique – for the savoury quality of the beef and the curation of flavours that come together in a beautiful hearty medley.

THE GULAI HOUSE

Chef Jais Hussain

Preserving the authenticity and integrity of Malay cuisine is no easy task, yet Chef Jais is determined to have guests experience the best local dishes via his iteration and mastery of the cuisine. He recommends guests to savour his mouth-wateringly tender Rendang Tulang Rusuk (dry slow-cooked beef short ribs with coconut milk, chilli, turmeric root and lemongrass), as well as the flavourful Sup Ketam Wangian Serai Titik (freshly dressed crab in lemongrass-scented soup); two dishes that are native to Kedah – the state that is home to both the island of Langkawi and Chef Jais.

THE DINING ROOM AND THE BEACH CLUB

Chef Said Hazar

Breakfast and dessert times are always important occasions at The Datai Langkawi, and Executive Pastry Chef Said, who leads a 10-person pastry team, is up for the challenge. One of his many passions is spoiling guests with a variety of breads, pastries and desserts that incorporate local and international flavours. At The Beach Club, Chef Said's Madagascar Vanilla Crème Brûlée, with lemongrass pineapple compote and yogurt lemon sorbet, is a favourite. While at The Dining Room, he recommends Amra Malaysian Plum, which is a fresh pomelo and amra jelly with *kedondong* palm sugar sorbet. Don't miss out on sampling his delicious croissants, pains au chocolat and other pastries at breakfast, many of which are blended with local flavours such as lemongrass, pandan and pineapple.





THE PAVILION

Chef Somkeat Lok

The award-winning Pavilion restaurant is helmed by Thai Head Chef Somkeat and serves traditional Southern-style Thai cuisine in an open-air setting. Aiming to trigger as many sensorial aspects for his diners as possible, Chef Somkeat's Neong Manao (steamed grouper) with chilli, garlic and lime juice does just that. His other favourite is Grilled Fresh Water Prawns with pomelo and crushed peanuts for its unique medley of flavours and textures.

THE BEACH CLUB

Chef Azman Azali

Chef Azman is the main man behind the grill at The Beach Club, which features an outdoor show kitchen. With a menu largely determined by the fresh catch of the day, the Executive Chef's favourite dishes are Jumbo Tiger Prawns cooked in his signature sweet and spicy chilli sauce, and Live Andaman Lobster served in its shell. Chef Azman believes it is the quality and freshness of the catch that make his star dishes truly exceptional. 🍴

Left: Neong Manao, or steamed grouper with chilli, garlic and lime juice.

Below: Jumbo Tiger Prawns in signature sweet and spicy chilli sauce.



Making Wine Accessible To All

Available from the Wine Cellar at The Datai Langkawi, Maison Moillard and Domaine de la Rouvière both offer a wide variety of wonderful wines that can be enjoyed by the glass.



The Wine Cellar at The Datai Langkawi boasts an ever-growing, extensive wine list that delights patrons from all over the world. One of these is Maison Moillard, which comes from the French communes of Nuits Saint-Georges and Meursault. Maison Moillard is a venerable winemaking institution established in the year 1860. The winemaker produces a wide variety of contemporarily delightful Burgundy, featuring highlights such as Chablis, Mâcon and Beaujolais, among many. One of its many objectives is to offer the finest wines from the greater Burgundy region available to all.



From top: Domaine de La Rouvière Prestige Côtes de Provence; Moillard Saint-Bris.

“We have adopted a more attentive approach to the terroirs and our vines, resulting in wines that represent the finest and purest expression of our terroirs and climates,” says Baptiste Corrot, Maison Moillard oenologist. He and his fellow oenologists from Maison Moillard travel all over the Bourgogne region with the singular goal of selecting the most perfect grapes from the best plots, so that all Maison Moillard wines are able to comprehensively express the full diversity of the Bourgogne terroirs.

Maison Moillard strongly advocates for committed viticulture and being respectful of not only its natural resources and terroirs but also of the passionate men and women who work for the house. In fact, its entire estate is HVE certified (“Haute Valeur Environnementale” is a French agricultural certification that recognises high levels of commitment to protecting and enriching the environment by various agricultural operations, including vineyards), and they have set their sights on the future, with plans such as launching a range of organic wines and Crémants de Bourgogne.

Meanwhile, over in Provence, France, lies Domaine de la Rouvière, another exquisite wine available from the Wine Cellar at The Datai Langkawi. With approximately 50 hectares of vineyards in its estate, Domaine de la Rouvière offers wines with body, character and beautifully expressive fruits. When savoured, one may taste a fresh and structured bouquet of gooseberry, lime, and grapefruit, together with notes of citrus and candid white fruits.

This rich, complex flavour profile can be attributed to the terroir where Domaine de la Rouvière has chosen to grow its grapes – the red-tinted sandy-clay soils of Pierrefeu du Var, which are composed of limestone pebbles. This gives the wines an intricate aromatic palette. The grape varieties are typically Provençal, dominated by Grenache Noir, Syrah and Cinsault. 🍷

The Datai Langkawi's Master Wine List features a wide selection of delightful wines that can be served by the glass. Among these are:

- Moillard Saint-Bris
- Domaine de La Rouvière Prestige Côtes de Provence
- Villiera Jasmine Stellenbosch
- Sauvion Les Bosquets Vouvray

Haven of Malaysian Artistry and Craftsmanship

The Boutique at The Datai Langkawi is a curated retail oasis for locally produced artisanal products and one-of-a-kind pieces by remarkable talent across Malaysia.

Nestled on the lobby level of the main building, The Boutique caters to Langkawi's discerning guests, offering an extraordinary shopping experience. This retail haven houses an extensive collection of exquisite merchandise, featuring inspired creations crafted by skilled artisans and designers, sourced locally and regionally.

Within the 100-square-metre space, guests will find uniquely designed items by local designers and ateliers. Brands such as Ash Majid, Fugeelah, Ilham Ceramic, Ran & Nong, RAAQUU and plenty more besides, are all part of what is offered at The Boutique, where select pieces are crafted solely for The Datai Langkawi.

Recently, local contemporary batik brand Kapten Batik unveiled a line of resort wear inspired by the flora of The Datai Langkawi. The Kapten Batik x The Datai Langkawi collection features timeless Malaysian-style batik block-printed garments that are made from GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard)-certified organic cotton that supports sustainability in the cotton industry, as well as REPREEVE, a fabric made from recycled plastic bottles. During the resort's Anniversary Finale celebrations, Kapten Batik unveiled an exclusive Kapten Batik x The Datai Langkawi capsule collection, created in honour of the property's 30-year milestone.

Other past collaborations at The Boutique include an exclusive capsule collection within renowned Malaysian fashion designer Alia Bastamam's Oasis resort-wear line, an ethereal collection with pieces inspired by The Datai Langkawi's natural surroundings, the Andaman Sea, the Butterfly Walk, and the serene lily pond by The Lobby Lounge.

Earlier in 2023, The Datai Langkawi presented a chic fashion show featuring two local designers: Khoon Hooi and FERN in collaboration with Dia Guild (a conscious fashion and artisan curation platform for Southeast Asian



creators). The event, held in conjunction with Chapter 2 of the 30th Anniversary celebrations, commenced with a sophisticated cocktail reception, and culminated in a silent auction of exclusive artisanal creations, with proceeds dedicated to supporting various initiatives aligned with The Datai Pledge.

Norhayanti Jamil, the upbeat Retail Manager of The Boutique, expresses

Above: The Boutique stocks an extensive collection of high-quality merchandise, including some that are exclusive to The Datai Langkawi.

Facing page, from top: An artisan workshop in The Lab, led by Dia Guild.

Fern Chua, Khoon Hooi, and Dia Guild founders Kylie Francis, Alia Farouk and Aisha Hassan at Chapter 2 of the anniversary celebrations, together with Arnaud Girodon, CEO of Datai Hotels and Resorts.



delight in her work, stating, "It's wonderful to feature largely locally made products, where 80 per cent of the items are by local craftspeople, and the remaining 20 per cent is sourced regionally from places such as Bali, Thailand and Cambodia."

To Yanti, as she's affectionately known around the resort, The Boutique's emphasis on supporting local craftsmen and artisans is pivotal, contributing to the preservation of Malaysia's rich heritage while recognising the distinctive artistry of batik designs, *songket* weavings and

wood carving. Her dedication ensures a revolving display of finery, with fresh discoveries every three to four months. She also works with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to bring the crafts of low-income and indigenous communities to The Datai Langkawi.

"We engage Women of Will, a grassroots NGO that upskills low-income women within the Kuala Lumpur area with entrepreneurial development programmes and local craftsmanship. The products the women make are then sent to The Datai Langkawi for retail,"

Yanti says. "We also work with social enterprises like the fair trade-certified Earth Heir, which sources and works with *orang asli* (indigenous people) communities, Gaia, a social enterprise dedicated to wildlife conservation in Malaysia, and MareCet, a local NGO dedicated to marine mammal conservation."

Through her work with the NGOs, Yanti has found a new connection with the rural Semai community in the state of Pahang, which is creating woven baskets for The Datai Langkawi. Moving forward, the resort will play a more active role in working with rural communities and purchase directly from them, thus setting up The Boutique's fair trade practice. "It's important that The Datai Langkawi forms this direct bridge to local communities. Besides paying them fairly, we will also empower and encourage the younger generation to learn the craft and carry on the legacy of their ancestors," Yanti enthuses.

Complementing The Boutique's offerings, The Datai Langkawi will continue its Artist-in-Residence programme in 2024, inviting creative artisans and craftspeople to display their works and to conduct workshops for guests. These ventures align with The Datai Pledge, a private trust dedicated to environmental well-being, wildlife support and community development, demonstrating the resort's unwavering commitment to local talent and entrepreneurship. 🌿

The Heartbeat of Hospitality

The Datai Langkawi honours its longest-serving team members with a special award and recognition to reward their loyalty and dedication throughout the years in delivering the exceptional service that forms the heart and soul of the resort.

The proud recipients of
The Datai Langkawi's
Long Service Award.

The Datai Langkawi is renowned not only for its breathtaking natural surroundings but also for its exceptional staff, who are the true heart of the resort and guest experience. In fact, team members regularly go above and beyond the call of duty to make every guest's stay an unforgettable experience.

One of the key reasons for The Datai Langkawi's outstanding service is the meticulous hiring and training process, according to Johan Abdullah, the Director of Human Resources at The Datai Langkawi (pictured below). The resort seeks individuals who not only possess the necessary skills but also share a passion for hospitality and a commitment to creating magical moments for guests. This results in a team of dedicated professionals who are not only employees but also ambassadors of warm hospitality. "We have more than 500 team members. Our guests don't get to meet all of them as many are also responsible for the inner workings behind the scenes – in the kitchen, housekeeping, contractors, administration, finance and more – to ensure that everything flows harmoniously," Johan says.

He adds that the team takes pride in embodying the essence of Malaysian hospitality, known for its warmth and friendliness. From the moment guests arrive, they are greeted with genuine smiles and a welcoming spirit that sets the tone for their stay. The staff's care for the well-being and comfort of guests creates a sense of belonging, turning a stay at The Datai Langkawi into a personalised and cherished experience that makes them feel at home amid breathtaking natural surrounds.

Furthermore, the resort places a strong emphasis on training and development programmes for its employees. This ensures that the team remains at the forefront of industry

trends and is well-equipped to handle the diverse needs of a global clientele. The dedication to ongoing education not only enhances the team's professional skills but also fosters a culture of innovation and adaptability. To recognise the efforts of each team member, The Datai Langkawi has introduced two awards to show the management's appreciation for the passion, dedication and commitment of the team.

"One of these awards is the Long Service Award to recognise those who have been with us anywhere from five to 30 years," Johan explains. "Can you imagine that? We have team members today who have been with us ever since The Datai Langkawi opened!" Johan himself has been with the resort for more than 10 years and has no plans to leave his second home, as he calls it.

The other award falls under the umbrella of Best Employee of the Month and is divided into three categories: the front of the house, the heart of the house (behind-the-scenes) and supervisors eligible for recognition, with 36 awards given out annually. Towards the end of each year, an additional three winners are awarded Best Employee of the Year from each category. "The nomination that is done in-house is already a great recognition of the staff's capabilities and hard work," Johan says. "To be singled out from among the hundreds of employees by their peers is a great feat that should be celebrated." He adds that the awards are important in paving a path for diligent team members to be eligible for promotions and further career growth, which might eventually see them nominated as a departmental trainer or for other leadership roles.

This also motivates staff to go above and beyond their professional duties to connect with guests on a personal level.

**"Can you imagine that?
We have team members today
who have been with us ever since
The Datai Langkawi opened!"**

This might involve sharing local insights, recommending hidden gems on the island or simply engaging in conversations that create lasting memories. These personal touches contribute to creating a warm and familial atmosphere that sets The Datai Langkawi apart from other luxury resorts.

For Azhari bin Mohd Salleh, the Food and Beverage (F&B) Manager of The Datai Langkawi, who has been with the resort from the very beginning, working anywhere else is unimaginable. He says that he has stayed on for as long as he has because of how well the resort's management takes care of him and all of his colleagues, and also provides them with ample room for growth. Being able to celebrate 30 years of service along with The Datai Langkawi's 30th anniversary is very special, Azhari says. For him, The Datai Langkawi is home.

Zulyazan bin Md Yusoff, the Credit Manager of the resort, echoes the same sentiments. Everyone he has worked with



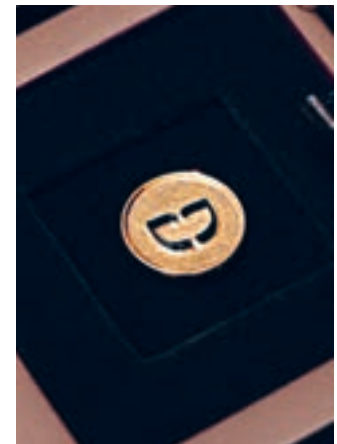
The ceremony celebrating recipients of the Long Service Awards and Best Employee awards was a fun, familial gathering for all.

over the past 29 years has become family, he feels. "Is there a better resort than The Datai Langkawi, not only in Langkawi but also in Malaysia?" he asks. "I think not."

Having worked in the hospitality industry for 35 years, Johan has seen it all. He has dealt with all types of personalities but The Datai Langkawi is on a different level altogether. He proudly exclaims that he has never seen guests rate their stay with an average of 96 per cent anywhere else, which is what The Datai Langkawi has consistently achieved via their guest survey feedback. He says that this great accomplishment can be attributed to how well the staff are attuned to catering for the guests and providing exceptional service.

On his own experience spending 10 years with The Datai Langkawi, Johan says it is also his love for the island that has kept him here. "When I first came here, I could not adjust that quickly because I come from the city. But then, when I returned to Kuala Lumpur for a while, I realised that something was greatly amiss. The hustle and bustle of the city was just too much to take," he says. "The amazing property, tranquillity of the environment, and the warmth of my fellow colleagues has given me a lot of peace."

The resort staff at The Datai Langkawi are not merely employees but the heartbeat of the entire operation. Their unwavering dedication to excellence, genuine warmth and commitment to creating unforgettable experiences elevate the resort to a realm of luxury that transcends the physical beauty of its surroundings. It is through the exceptional service and genuine hospitality of its team members that The Datai Langkawi becomes not just a destination, but also a cherished home away from home for every guest and member of staff. 📍



Long Service Award Recipients

1. Azhari bin Mohd Salleh, F&B Manager
30 years of service
2. Zulyazan bin Md Yusoff, Credit Manager
29 years of service
3. Aziana binti Saud, Senior Laundry Officer
29 years of service
4. Anizam bin Ramli,
Assistant Human Resource Manager
28 years of service
5. Mahazer bin Abdul Malik, Assistant Chief Steward
28 years of service
6. Norzi bin Kamis, Chef de Partie
23 years of service



Celebrating Good Times at The Datai Langkawi

Aside from the main festivities of the year, The Datai Langkawi also makes it a point to ensure other significant occasions are special for their guests.

Malaysia is a shining example of multicultural harmony, where unity thrives as Malays, Chinese, Indians and indigenous groups, among many others, wholeheartedly embrace each other's cultural festivities. At The Datai Langkawi, this spirit of inclusivity and respect for one another's beliefs is deeply ingrained, creating a vibrant celebration that brings all guests together in a harmonious cultural mosaic.

While Malaysians revel in the beauty of celebrating the main festivals such as Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Chinese New Year, Deepavali and plenty more, The Datai Langkawi aims to ensure that every significant occasion is an unforgettable experience for guests who choose to spend their time at the resort.

VALENTINE'S DAY

This is a day that is cherished by people all over the world to celebrate their love.



Couples gather to express their feelings and affection for one another through the exchange of heartfelt cards, romantic gestures, flowers and gifts. While some opt for lavish dinners and grand gestures, others may choose simpler and

more personal ways to symbolise their devotion to their partner.

At The Datai Langkawi, let the tranquillity and beauty of the rainforest and sea surround you and your loved one for a romantic escape. Guests



around the world observe a dawn-to-sunset fast, refraining from food, drink and other physical needs as an act of devotion and self-discipline. Ramadan holds deep religious significance as it commemorates the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad, and culminates in the joyous celebration of Hari Raya Aidilfitri (Eid al-Fitr), a festive occasion marking the end of the fasting period.

For guests who will be spending Ramadan at The Datai Langkawi, they can choose from the wide variety of

Whether you're on a romantic Valentine's Day date, observing the holy month of Ramadan or celebrating Easter or the Mid-Autumn Festival, The Datai Langkawi makes each occasion an extra special one.



can choose to experience a delectable Valentine's buffet dinner at The Beach Club and sample the best Andaman lobster and tiger prawns the island has to offer, or opt for an exquisite fine-dining experience at The Dining Room where they are serenaded by musicians who complement the beauty of nature surrounding them with soft and melodious tunes.

RAMADAN

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and a sacred time of fasting and spiritual reflection for Muslims. During this month, Muslims

options available through In-Room Dining for their suhoor meals (eaten before the fast begins daily), while set menus are available for their iftar meals (eaten after the fast ends).

EASTER

Easter has developed into a major family holiday, where extended families gather to enjoy a lavish feast together and spend time with their loved ones. It is celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox, which places it between March 22 and April 25 each year. The holiday is marked by various customs and traditions, some of them adopted from traditional pagan festivals celebrating the renewal of life, fertility and rebirth, and include the decoration of Easter eggs, which symbolise new life, as well as the Easter bunny, which brings treats and gifts to children.

While an assortment of fun Easter activities are planned for kids during the day, The Beach Club at The Datai Langkawi hosts a special Easter buffet dinner to celebrate the occasion – featuring an assortment of grilled meats, fresh seafood and a variety of desserts, including local delicacies, as guests enjoy the cool breeze and the lapping waves of the Andaman Sea.

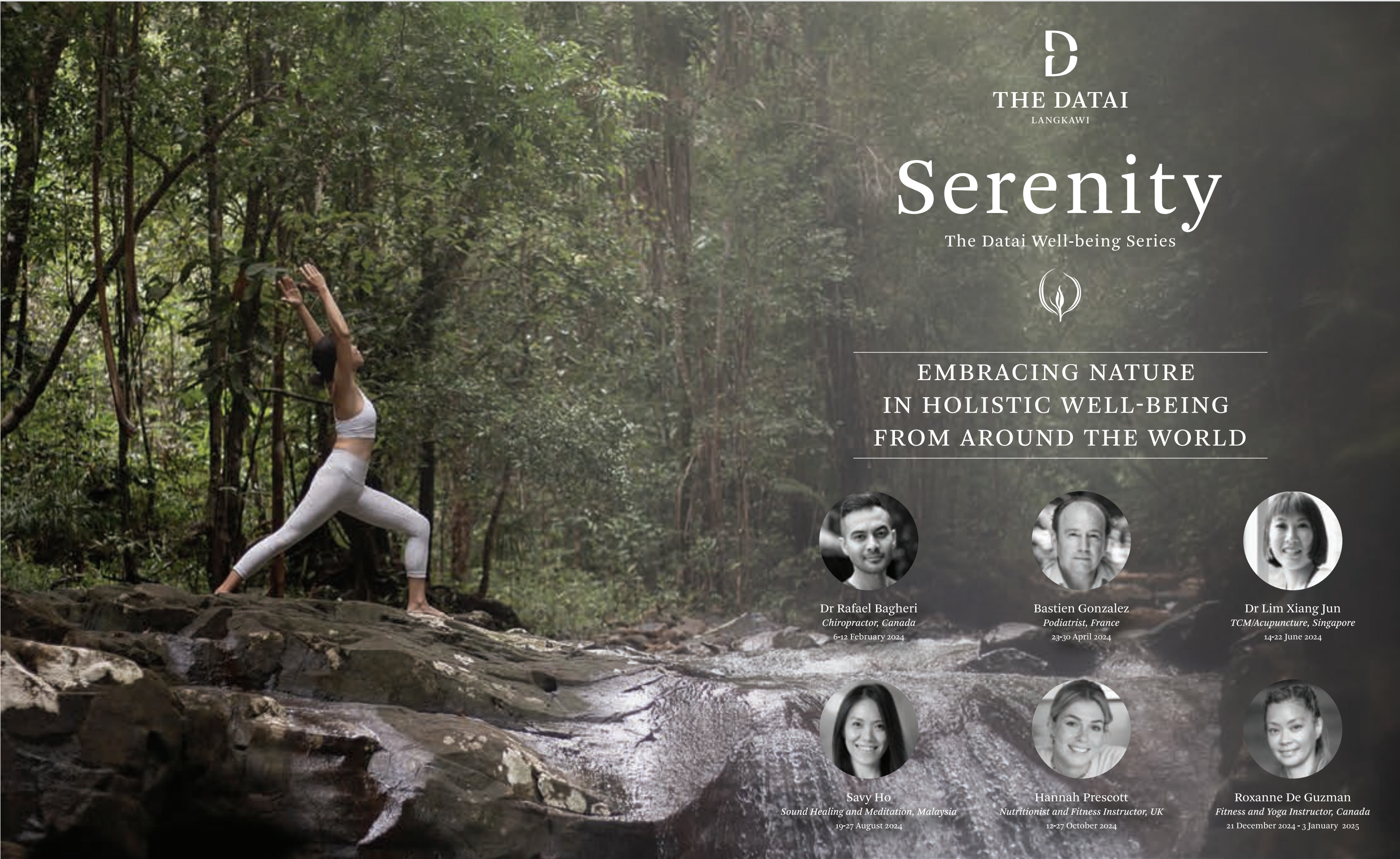


MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL

The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Mooncake Festival or Zhongqiu Festival, is a significant harvest celebration in many Asian cultures. Typically falling on the 15th day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar, it marks the full moon's appearance during the autumn equinox. Families and friends gather to appreciate the bright, round moon, sharing traditional mooncakes as a symbol of unity and togetherness. Lanterns of various shapes and sizes light up the night, and traditional folklore and legends related to the moon are told. It is a time for reunions, cultural traditions, and a deep appreciation of the moon's beauty and significance.

Families who spend their time at The Datai Langkawi during this period can expect to witness a beautiful full moon on a night of clear skies and to savour specially made traditional Chinese pastries like mooncakes (a rich pastry typically filled with sweet-bean, egg yolk and lotus-seed paste) during breakfast at The Dining Room. 🌕





THE DATAI
LANGKAWI

Serenity

The Datai Well-being Series



EMBRACING NATURE
IN HOLISTIC WELL-BEING
FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Dr Rafael Bagheri
Chiropractor, Canada
6-12 February 2024



Bastien Gonzalez
Podiatrist, France
23-30 April 2024



Dr Lim Xiang Jun
TCM/Acupuncture, Singapore
14-22 June 2024



Savy Ho
Sound Healing and Meditation, Malaysia
19-27 August 2024



Hannah Prescott
Nutritionist and Fitness Instructor, UK
12-27 October 2024



Roxanne De Guzman
Fitness and Yoga Instructor, Canada
21 December 2024 - 3 January 2025



Return to Serenity


Serenity – The Datai Well-Being Series makes a return for its second year with a curated line-up of some of the very best holistic practitioners from the region and abroad.



Complete healing from the inside and out, across a myriad of disciplines, awaits guests for the second year running at The Datai Langkawi with the return of its Serenity – The Datai Well-being Series. After a successful inauguration year in 2023, the resort is pleased to announce the 2024 line-up of its signature wellness programme that brings the very best holistic practitioners from near and far to the heart of the Malaysian rainforest to host a series of residencies.

Physical, spiritual and mental wellness are all accounted for in the selection of the visiting practitioners. In 2024, six renowned masters in their

respective fields will lend their expertise on holistic approaches for a diverse platform of specialties. Consultations, one-on-one sessions and group workshops will offer a wide array of expert services, including acupuncture, nutritional advice, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), singing bowl sound healing therapy, methods to increase flexibility and fitness performance, as well as alternative medical practices such as chiropody and podiatry. Learn more about the practitioners hosting residencies at The Datai Langkawi in 2024 at the official website: www.thedatai.com/events-and-occasions/serenity-the-datai-well-being-series ⓘ



Scan this QR code to watch how Dr Rafael Bagheri helps The Datai Langkawi's guests with their chiropractic needs.

SERENITY GUEST PRACTITIONERS



Dr Rafael Bagheri
6 – 12 February 2024

Following a successful residency to inaugurate the Serenity Series in December 2022, Dr Bagheri returns to offer his chiropractic services to guests of the resort. Equipped with a Bachelor's degree in Health Science and a Doctor of Chiropractic degree, together with more than 16 years of experience in the field, he is proficient in diverse treatment approaches for neuro-muscular disorders.



Bastien Gonzalez
22 – 28 April 2024

Partner of The Datai Langkawi with his Pedi:Mani:Cure Studio by Bastien Gonzalez located within The Spa grounds, Bastien returns to the resort for guests to have another opportunity to have hands and feet treated by the master himself. Guests can look forward to taking advantage of the knowledge and expertise of Bastien, who is renowned for his distinctive approach to foot treatments.



Dr Lim Xiang Jun
14 – 22 June 2024

Dr Lim is a Singaporean Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioner and acupuncturist with a Doctorate in Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine. She boasts an impressive 18-year journey in the field, where she seamlessly integrates Western medicine, TCM and ancient energy practices for a unique blend of services ranging from acupuncture and cupping, to tension release therapy and yoga.



Savy Ho
19 – 27 August 2024

A certified sound healer, yoga instructor and meditation guru from Malaysia. Savy is renowned for her transformative, heart-centred approach to yoga, meditation, sound healing and tea ceremony sessions. She is trained in the Light Energy Weave healing modality, Cranial Sacral Therapy, bodywork and sound healing, allowing her to help individuals restore their inner alignment and balance.



Hannah Prescott
12 – 27 October 2024

A nutritionist and fitness instructor from the United Kingdom, as well as a dedicated Registered Nutritionist by AfN (Association for Nutrition, UK), Hannah believes that nutrition should be seamlessly integrated into one's lifestyle, catering to individual tastes and preferences for enduring results. She is committed to helping clients achieve optimal well-being through healthy eating habits.



Roxanne De Guzman
21 December 2024 – 3 January 2025

Roxanne returns to the shores of the Andaman Sea due to popular demand, having treated guests to her unique personalised approach to fitness, yoga and meditation in August and December 2023 as part of the inaugural Serenity Series. A fitness professional and yoga instructor from Canada, she brings over 25 years of expertise and tailors her approach to her clients' unique goals.



One With Nature And Self

Nestled amidst a landscape that has endured for millions of years, The Datai Langkawi's in-house experts are dedicated to guiding guests on a voyage of discovery, allowing them to unearth not only the serenity of the environment but also a deeper understanding of themselves.

"The heart of Langkawi beats within its rainforest," says Tan Chin Wen, one of the Resident Naturalists at The Datai Langkawi. Her warmth and the earnest gleam in her eyes convey a deep love and reverence for Mother Nature. She leads the forest bathing ritual, which is one of the resort's many immersive nature experiences. It is a must for those in search of restoration far from the clamour of the urban jungle. Just a 10-minute journey from the resort, the experience commences by unveiling the therapeutic qualities of the Malay wellness tradition known as Mandi Embun. Picture yourself beneath the canopy of centuries-old trees as the first light of dawn breaks, bestowing upon you a refreshing cascade of dewdrops imbued with phyto-healing properties.

Chin Wen, who has invested substantial time in exploring the combination of ancient Malay traditions and science underpinning this timeless practice, offers profound insights into its significance. "Our ancestors embraced this daily ritual for a reason," she affirms. Her comprehensive research extends well beyond local customs as The Datai Langkawi sent her to Japan to learn more about the centuries-old custom of *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing. "Forest bathing nurtures the development of self-generated defensive cells, activating the body's innate immunity, and ultimately bolsters one's resilience to illness," Chin Wen adds.

Guests are then guided on a trek through the lush rainforest, where they may chance upon the delightful denizens of this verdant realm. Among the commonly sighted species are the gentle Dusky Langurs. With luck, they might even spot the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, a magnificent avian creature adorned in shades of deep blue, boasting a distinctive two-tailed appearance. After a short walk and some gentle stretching, the melodious murmur of a meandering stream beckons guests to descend a gentle slope, where they are rewarded with the inviting embrace of Crystal



Creek. Its cool, clear turquoise waters provide respite from the tropical heat and humidity. Reinvigorated by the dip, guests can then leisurely stroll back along the forest trail to the designated rendezvous point, where a car awaits to whisk them back to The Datai Langkawi.

If guests want to go even further in their exploration of Malay rituals, they can book the full Malay Wellness Journey that includes a walk into the same rainforest at first light, Senaman Tua by Fariz Abdul Rahim, a dip in Crystal Creek, Urut Melayu massage back at The Spa and a nutritional lunch.

Fariz Abdul Rahim is not your average Spa Therapist. As a young Silat practitioner from the southern state of Johor, his passion wasn't only Malay martial arts, but also the preservation of its profound teachings. "Unlike modern Silat, the old form of Silat teaching includes Senaman Petua or Senaman Tua for injury prevention and recovery, and some Malay medicine," Fariz says. These practices, deeply rooted in generations-old Malay traditions, form the essence of The Datai Langkawi's transformative Malay Wellness Journey.

Fariz will lead you on a meditative early morning walk through the lush dew-kissed foliage at the edge of The Datai Langkawi. Senaman Tua – a symphony of movements designed to increase suppleness and to promote healthy blood circulation – follows, after which you're invited to take a restorative

cold-water plunge in Crystal Creek. "Believed to have rejuvenating qualities, these practices are rooted in science," Fariz states. Exposure to sunlight provides vital Vitamin D and stimulates the release of happy hormones like serotonin and endorphins. The flowing water releases beneficial negative ions



Scan this QR code to follow The Datai Langkawi's former Chief Naturalist Irshad Mobarak as he conducts a traditional Mandi Embun (Forest Bathing) ritual.

Tan Chin Wen (above) marries Malay traditions with modern science to help guests relax in the midst of nature, while Fariz Abdul Rahim (facing page and right), believes that keeping Malaysia's traditional healing practices of Silat and *ramuan* alive is an all-important task.



enhancing cognitive performance, and the tranquil connection with nature promotes mental health.

Silat laid the groundwork for Fariz's life's mission – aiding others on their journey of healing and recovery – but he further honed his therapeutic techniques assisting in the recovery of stroke patients and sports injury victims.

He is also a master of *ramuan*, the art of creating traditional remedies from various botanical ingredients. "I can make oils to treat joint pain, broken bones and skin conditions. Certain plants can also be added to bathwater to assist postpartum care and treat fatigue, pain and stroke," he explains. It's a skill passed down from his mentor, the late Dr Ghani Hussain, who was a medical doctor-turned-respected-herbalist in Langkawi. "This is Malaysia's cultural legacy and should be shared to preserve its benefits," Fariz emphasises.

For those seeking this transcendent journey of mindfulness and Malay massage, advance booking is essential. It's an experience that promises more than relaxation. It offers a glimpse into Malaysia's rich cultural tapestry and a chance to be guided by a guardian of its traditions. 📌



Mind, Body and Spirit

The Datai Langkawi invites guests into a world where wellness, tradition and tranquillity intertwine.

With a radiant disposition that rivals the sun, it's fitting that Pilates instructor Ann Victor's vivacious energy should find its home at the Holistic Pavilion. Here, she imparts the benefits of the modern exercise regime that was sculpted in the early 20th century by Joseph Pilates. It emphasises muscle strength, posture, mobility and stability through low-impact, deliberate movements. Rather than acting as a substitute, Pilates complements various routines, whether they be intense HIIT (High Intensity Interval

Training) sessions or tranquil hikes. "It's also great for people recovering from injuries, those tethered to desks or individuals grappling with bad posture," Ann says.

Over her 30 years in the fitness industry, Ann has worked with clientele of varying ages and physical abilities – including scoliosis sufferers and stroke victims. As a result, she has created an inclusive space for all and tailors each session to participants' needs. Daunting reformer machines are conspicuously absent; instead, a curated repertoire,

enhanced with equipment such as balance balls, guides all participants. "You'll get a workout, but not too much," she asserts with a hearty laugh. Aware of the sanctuary The Datai Langkawi offers its guests, she crafts her sessions to be rejuvenating. "I don't want to exhaust you; after all, tomorrow you'll still want to laugh and walk." Classes, available three to four times a week during the hotel's peak season, offer an intimate setting with a maximum of eight guests. One-on-one sessions remain an option for a personalised touch.



With views stretching towards the Thai island of Tarutao as the gentle ocean breeze envelops you, each session promises transcendence. "Muscles cannot lengthen," Ann elucidates. "What Pilates does is teach the body how to create more space between your vertebrae and joints." After a thorough workout, you'll leave Ann's Pilates class feeling elated and elevated.

At the resort's Holistic Pavilion, participate in a Pilates class with Ann Victor (above) or in a yoga session with Nurul Hamizah Mohamad (Mooza).

The Datai Langkawi's beach-side Holistic Pavilion elicits a unique sense of serenity. The mind succumbs to tranquillity, guided by the soothing cadence of lapping waves, while the soul harmonises with the gentle hum of rainforest insects. This sanctuary is the ideal place for unwinding, and it



is also where guests have the pleasure of meeting Nurul Hamizah Mohamad, who is affectionately known as Mooza. The Wellness Manager of the resort and a certified yoga instructor, Mooza has returned to her homeland after a stint abroad guiding guests through wellness practices in the Maldives islands, bringing with her 12 years of dedication to the art of movement and inner peace.

"Yoga signifies union – it's the journey back to one's authentic self," Mooza explains. "When people come to our Holistic Pavilion, they are seeking harmony between themselves and their surroundings. What better place to achieve that than here?"

The Datai Langkawi offers an array of well-being experiences, including a variety of yoga classes such as Kundalini Yoga and Hatha Yoga, as well as Pilates, Sound Healing and other exercises that focus on movement and mindful breathing, all aimed at fostering a profound sense of well-being.

Mooza is planning to create a synergy between movement practices and nature. By incorporating Ayurvedic principles, she hopes to provide guests with a holistic and well-rounded wellness package to elevate their stay.

Brimming with vitality and enthusiasm, she remains committed to ensuring that guests leave The Datai Langkawi with a renewed connection to nature and a lifelong commitment to wellness integration. "One need not abandon their day job to infuse balance and harmony into their being," Mooza emphasises. "We can harness the wellness tools at our disposal and make them an integral part of our personal philosophy, contributing to the enhancement of our lives." 🧘



Conservation Through Craft

Founded to showcase Malaysia's heritage arts and crafts to the world, The Boutique at The Datai Langkawi also looks outside of Langkawi for regional artistry to be shared with all.

Jonathan Yun's remarkable jewellery designs are inspired by the breathtaking beauty of nature that thrives abundantly on Langkawi island.



Dia Guild's unique fashion and artisanal objects are available at The Boutique.

Although history can be preserved in museums, heritage is a trickier thing to keep alive and celebrate on a daily basis. That seemingly impossible feat is precisely what The Boutique at The Datai Langkawi is trying to achieve, with its treasure trove of extraordinary arts and crafts of Malaysia, by Malaysians, for Malaysians and the world.

Handprinted textiles, painted ceramics, and leather goods sit side by side with handwoven rattan baskets, kiln-worked glass and natural beauty products galore, each telling the passion, sweat and efforts of the local artisans, designers and craftspeople who make them. In their vivid colours and vibrant shapes, they invite visitors to acquaint, engage and connect with a slice of local culture, ultimately conserving their legacy through fashion and function.

“We are committed to showcasing the best of Malaysian arts and crafts.”

“We are committed to showcasing the best of Malaysian arts and crafts,” shares Norhayanti Jamil (Yanti), Retail Manager of The Boutique. “Through the selection of the products on display, we aim to promote an understanding and appreciation of Malaysia’s culture and heritage, our tradition of arts and crafts, as well as support the local community of artisans, designers and craft makers.”

Within the 100 square metre space, local designs and creations comprise 80 per cent of the products stocked, while the remaining 20 per cent are handiwork sourced regionally. When it comes to local creations, The Boutique is the proud home to a good mix of works by creators from Langkawi itself and beyond the island. This diversity is essential to paint the complete picture of Malaysia, from the peninsula to Borneo.

Sustainable Fashion Way Forward: Dia Guild

From the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, Dia Guild brings a capsule of sustainable luxury fashion to The Boutique. The multi-brand retailer conscientiously chooses a wide range of partner brands, whose values also align with The Datai Langkawi in terms of luxury, sustainability and supporting local makers, to headline its collaboration with the resort. Batik and *tenun* (artful technique of making fabric by weaving threads of different colours) from Pink Jambu brings intricacy, while handwoven handbags from Zacarias 1925 showcase skill and technique. There are also pieces with stories as seen in ALT Jewellery, as well as flair and beauty from local designers such as Suria Artisan Batik, FERN and Neil Felipp.

“This collaboration with The Datai Langkawi is the epitome of a purposeful partnership,” says Aisha Hassan, co-founder of Dia Guild. “As a young and small business, it felt rare and special that we had the chance to partner with such an iconic brand, and The Datai Langkawi was



Ceramic art brand RAAQUU was founded in 2020 by Malaysian expert ceramic artist Adil Abdul Ghani.

deeply generous in helping us to share Dia’s mission. Partnering with such a world-renowned resort meant that Dia Guild could champion Malaysian and Southeast Asian artisans to an even bigger audience on a scale that we’d never have been able to achieve alone.”

Natural Ceramic Beauty: RAAQUU
From the scenic pastures of Terengganu comes the *raku* pottery

of RAAQUU. Fired up by ceramic artist Adil Abdul Ghani, his signature ceramics are the product of the *raku* firing technique, where clay pieces that are ‘bisque’ fired are coated with copper glazes and then heated further in a *raku* kiln. The result is pottery that shimmers with an iridescent rainbow patina, teasing with metallic effects from the corner of the eye. Adil feels his inspiration from nature comes full

circle with his products now stocked at The Boutique. In a homecoming of sorts – from nature back to nature – he proudly has his Art Series vases stocked, as well as his most popular small vase design, called Koban.

“The collaboration between RAAQUU and The Datai Langkawi is very close to my heart,” Adil says. “It is an amazing representation of the support that artists such as myself require in order to take our work to the next level. This collaboration does not only represent significant commercial value, but also the sentimental value of its connection to my late father. I am honoured that The Datai Langkawi continues to support my work, and I look forward to expanding our collaboration in deeper and meaningful ways.”

Jewellery Glimmering with Life: Jonathan Yun Jewelry

The sunny city-island of Penang is well represented by Jonathan Yun, thanks to his eponymous jewellery label, Jonathan Yun Jewelry. Inspired by island life, a touch of Yun’s Peranakan roots and the abundant nature of Penang, his jewellery features elaborate flora and fauna, which are immortalised in sparkling gemstones and precious metals. Organic curves, dynamic lines and colourful stones make for jewellery that leans into maximalism yet remains timeless in its fluidity, best seen with star collections such as Coral Ocean and The Eden. Marine life, in particular, resonates strongly with the designer, who is an avid diver. At The Boutique, spot Yun’s Seafan Coral piece, designed as his way of shining the spotlight on the fragility of the coral ecosystem in the waters of the Andaman Sea and the importance of conserving it.

His collaboration with The Datai Langkawi is one that runs deep in meaning for Yun, as it’s a homage to nature and in particular, the ocean, from which he draws so much inspiration.

“The Datai Langkawi has always been about nature, calling one of the world’s most luscious rainforests its home,” Yun says. “My pieces and designs being stocked with them is an honour because it means a greater joint effort in raising the awareness of the beauty of Mother Nature, while appreciating her, conserving her and protecting her.” 🌿



View of Datai Bay from Anak Datai Island.



The Future is Bright

The triumphs and aspirations of The Datai Pledge have grown into local, national and even international partnerships. Here, we look back at recent initiatives and take a sneak peak at what Pillar Leaders are working towards in the short- and long-term.

As you go about your vacation, a revolutionary movement is underway. The Datai Langkawi has carved a niche not only as a luxury retreat but, through The Datai Pledge, is also reshaping itself as a vanguard of environmental and social responsibility. Run as a private trust, this pioneering initiative was conceptualised by the resort’s former Chief Naturalist and current Chief Advisor of The Datai Pledge, Irshad Mobarak, in 2019. At the heart of it are four pillars: Pure For The Future, Fish For The Future, Wildlife For The Future and Youth For The Future, each representing a commitment to environmental conservation and community enrichment.

A rigorous approach to data- and science-driven conservation underpins The Datai Pledge’s efforts. Its goals are for the resort to become carbon neutral and to foster a rich biodiversity and thriving local community. To further these aims, carbon emissions are monitored, carbon sequestration

has been measured, and studies documenting forest tree species, marine health and wildlife have been undertaken to inform strategic efforts and ensure that all initiatives are impactful. Fascinating discoveries that have emerged – such as the existence of rare Copper Mahseer in the Datai River or the presence of 22 vulnerable or critically endangered tree species on the resort’s 1,800-acre property – underscore the island’s amazing biodiversity and have directed Wildlife For The Future’s creation of the Native Tree Nursery.

Partnerships with organisations such as Gaia and MareCet amplify efforts. Gaia’s focus on hornbill conservation and MareCet’s research on marine mammals, particularly Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphins, contribute to the broader understanding of Langkawi’s ecosystems and give guests a chance to become part of a scientific observation. From joining dolphin researchers in aquatic expeditions to engaging in



Dev Abdullah, Pillar Leader, Wildlife For The Future



Johan Abdullah, Pillar Leader, Youth For The Future



Mukhris Mahadzir, Pillar Leader, Fish For The Future



Remi Giromella, Pillar Leader, Pure For The Future

sustainable gardening through its Little Gardener programme, planting native trees and learning how to make candles and many other recycled items at The Lab, guests are encouraged to connect with nature in meaningful ways.

Continuous Efforts

In four short years, the programme has already achieved significant milestones. The ceaseless work that Remi Giromella, Pillar Leader for Pure For The Future of The Datai Pledge, and Director of Quality Control and Improvement of The Datai Langkawi, and Agus Rida, Executive Director of Engineering, undertake to achieve net-zero carbon, to strengthen all business operations' energy efficiency initiatives and to run zero-waste initiatives has been gratifying. Testament to their operational and engineering ingenuity, the resort is nearing a remarkable 100 per cent efficiency in zero-waste to the landfill (94 per cent average in 2023).

The removal of ghost nets and the creation of artificial reefs have had a positive effect on fish stocks, including commercial fish such as grouper and snapper, according to Mukhris Mahadzir, Pillar Leader of Fish For The Future. It's good news for fisherfolk and the Pillar's continued promotion of sustainable fishing practices.

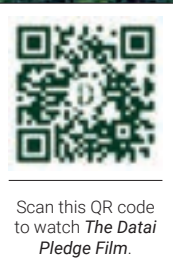
Meanwhile, the Youth For The Future pillar has made remarkable strides in its youth development initiatives, such as the Eco-Schools Programme with partner NGO Green Growth Asia Foundation, where The Datai Pledge sponsors three schools in Langkawi. Pillar leader Johan Abdullah singles out the island's Sekolah Kebangsaan Temonyong for special mention. "They requested a site visit to see how the hotel operates its business responsibly and even volunteered to be the designated school for the visit of the Board of Trustees of The Datai Pledge," Johan says.

These encouraging outcomes are possible with the support of The Datai Langkawi's guests. Contributions to



Above: Chief Advisor of The Datai Pledge Irshad Mobarak conducting a children's activity as part of the resort's commitment to environmental conservation and community enrichment.

Below: The Lab, a hub for research and development, and educational sustainable activities at The Datai Langkawi.



Thanks to resort guests' generous support as well as collaborations with other organisations, plans are underway within the Wildlife For The Future pillar of The Datai Pledge to implement programmes focused on endangered animals, such as the mousedeer.

The Datai Pledge come from private and corporate donors, as well as guests' optional supplementary contributions each night they stay at the resort, which is funnelled straight to the initiatives and NGO partners under The Datai Pledge. Wenzel Weinich, The Datai Pledge General Secretary, whose role as Director of Rooms puts him in daily contact with guests, has been pleasantly surprised by the warm reception to The Datai Pledge. "Guest response has exceeded the resort's expectations, with more than 90 per cent uptake," he says.

Onwards And Upwards

The journey has not been without its challenges, of course. From the trial-and-error processes required to perfect large-scale composting, to the unpredictability of weather and wildlife when working in a natural setting, all have provided valuable learnings. In fact, Remi laughs when recalling the monkeys and squirrel-led raids on the Permaculture Garden. So, the solution was simple: plant fewer fruits and vegetables and more herbaceous plants. Despite the obstacles, the resort's staff, driven by a shared vision, have been instrumental in turning challenges into opportunities for growth and innovation. Remi credits a mindset shift. "The sorting centre is where we separate dry and food waste. It's what you'd describe as dirty work, but some of the staff have been there since the beginning," he shares with pride. "It's not just sorting garbage. It's transforming waste to wealth."

As The Datai Pledge marches into 2024, efforts continue. Pure For The Future's plans include further investments in renewable energy and introducing new guest activities centred around upcycling like glassblowing. From January 2024, social enterprise The Kanshalife Project became the newest pillar partner of The Datai Pledge. Meanwhile, Wildlife For The Future's collaboration with social enterprise Langur Project Penang and NGO Malaysian Primatological Society to construct

an overpass that will facilitate the safe passage of arboreal animals like monkeys and the slow loris could possibly come to fruition. It is part of the Pillar's Corridor For Life project, an ambitious undertaking to reconnect the island's core ecological zones that will include planting 200,000 trees.

"We are also exploring the possibility of working with an external party in Langkawi to implement a breeding programme for the endangered Greater Mousedeer, or Napoh as its known locally," says Muhammad Firdaus Dev Abdullah, Wildlife For The Future Pillar Leader and Nature Centre Manager. Up in the trees, Dr Ravinder Kaur of Pillar Partner Gaia hopes to bring expertise from Sabah to Langkawi to set up more nest boxes for hornbills. "They come from a small kampung in Kinabatangan, and we have successfully set up 30 nest boxes throughout Malaysia to date. This would really value their niche skills and support the livelihood of the expert woodworkers in this village," she says.

Fish For The Future's partnership with MareCet has enabled the realisation of their plans to deploy a groundbreaking acoustic device to monitor marine life. A first test deployment has successfully taken place in the lagoon of Datai Bay in early 2024. This is the first of its kind in Southeast Asia, and the data gathered will help drive the creation of a transboundary marine park. "Tarutao Island in Thailand, just across our bay, is already a marine park," says Pillar Leader Mukhris. "Although it will take years, the research we are doing on behalf of the Department of Fisheries Malaysia will go towards gaining Protected Area status under OECM (Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures) for Datai Bay."

The Datai Pledge is an amazing story of how a resort can transform into a custodian of nature, inspiring guests and setting new standards in sustainable luxury tourism. Its efforts not only enhance guest experience, but will also leave a lasting legacy for Langkawi and the wider world. 🌿

Enchanted Forests

Let the fabulous flora at The Datai Langkawi cast its spell on you.

For an island resort on one of *National Geographic's* 'Top 10 Beaches in The World' lists, The Datai Langkawi remains a glorious jungle escape. Unfurling over a sprawling 750-hectare tropical paradise, the rainforests here were baked into the very DNA of the resort since its conception 30 years ago. Wedged between the azure sea and the rugged silhouette of Machinchang Mountain, the lush setting inspired architect Kerry Hill and designer Didier Lefort and shaped their vision for the resort.

Utilising the natural contours of the hillside, the resort would become an amphitheatre to the drama and theatrics of the forest and sea. It's a decision that continues to play out in every guest's stay: from the bird chorus in the morning and filtered rays of afternoon light to wondrous wildlife sightings, a deep connection with nature is fostered.

Langkawi's serendipitous location at the meeting point between the Indo-Burma and Sundaland hotspots laid the foundation for the resort's rich natural heritage. Three distinct terrestrial forests unfold across the resort's grounds: lowland, mangrove and littoral.

The keen of eye may spot a dozy langur snoozing away a hot Malaysian afternoon on a tree trunk, but high above the villa rooftops, it is the emergent trees like the majestic Meranti and Keruing that provide a launch pad and landing strip for gliding creatures like the flying squirrels, flying dragons and the flying lemurs or colugos. Highly prized timber, these lofty hardwoods tower 40 to 60 metres above the forest floor.

"We have a full inventory of the property's 1,800 acres – the species of

Three distinct
terrestrial forests
unfold across the
resort's grounds:
lowland, mangrove
and littoral.

trees, how many there are, which are the big trees, which are the small trees and the carbon stock for the whole area,” says Dev Abdullah, Nature Centre Manager. Effective conservation must be data-driven because cataloguing species is critical to its conservation, he explains.

Among the myriad flora catalogued is the miraculous fig tree. Malaysia is blessed with more than 100 species of fig or ficus; one particular Strangler Fig takes pride of place at The Datai Langkawi. Located at the end of the Rimba Trail, it can be viewed up close from a treetop skimming canopy walkway. Irshad Mobarak, the Chief Advisor for The Datai Pledge, dates it as older than a century.



Learn more about the usage of local herbs from The Garden's team of experts, including horticulturist and Assistant Manager of Sustainability, Zakwan Zamri.

Beginning life in a crook or crevice high up in its host tree to thrive, a strangler fig seedling sends down roots to the ground that deprive its host of nutrients and grows an umbrella of lush leaves that rob its host of sunlight, eventually killing it. Yet, for its murderous reputation, the forest would collapse in its absence. A fig tree's fruiting pattern, rather than being seasonal, feeds birds, monkeys, squirrels and bats throughout the year.

“If you’re wondering why monkeys are not running around the dining area, it’s because of the abundance of fruiting forest trees,” Dev says. A healthy forest provides a luscious smorgasbord for wildlife to feast on. It also furnishes suitable nesting sites for hornbills like

the Great, Oriental-Pied and Wreathed varieties that make the island their home, and offers respite for insects, butterflies and migratory birds like passing shrikes and wagtails, all of which are an integral part of the circle of life, providing for each other in an infinite closed loop.

Local communities that live within or close to Langkawi’s forest habitats are well acquainted with the countless useful raw materials that can be sourced from them, that even the most hostile environments provide. Littoral forests, such as those found on the nutrient-poor windswept shorelines of Datai Bay, are a veritable hardware store for fisherfolk. The gnarled branches of the pretty sea hibiscus can be fashioned into rope, while its bark is used to plug boats. Hardwood from the Penaga Laut tree is used for boat building, and the strangely angular fruit of the Putat Laut tree provides a renewable source of toxic saponins used to stun fish.

Forage the forest floor with The Nature Centre’s resident naturalists, and you’ll encounter local herbs in use today, like Tongkat Ali, a scientifically proven, potent testosterone booster that has gained favour among bodybuilders and powerlifters. Locally, it’s consumed as an aphrodisiac in the form of tea and coffee. Its female equivalent, Kacip Fatimah, contains oestrogen-like compounds and is a common remedy amongst pre- and post-menopausal women. The Datai Langkawi’s forests are an unheralded pharmacy, and trees like the Indian Ironwood, which produces one of the world’s hardest timbers, have flowers and seeds that contain compounds with antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and antifungal properties. Science has merely scratched the surface.

Mangrove forests, like the one found on the property, are a magical changeable place. Tree species here have developed unique adaptations for tolerating the changes in salinity that accompany tidal changes. Much like coral reefs, the network of prop roots provides shelter for fish nurseries and serves as a barrier against tsunamis. Forests also aid in water catchment, climate regulation and carbon absorption, and shield us from natural and anthropomorphic threats like droughts and floods, ensuring food security. To recognise their immense value is to conserve it, and to this end The Datai Langkawi has catalogued more than 22 species at risk of endangerment.

6 TRAILS TO TRY

Butterfly Walk

Langkawi is home to over 535 species of butterflies, more than half of which flutter along the scenic path that connects the resort’s Grand Staircase with The Beach Club. On the hour-long guided walk, about 30 species can be observed. This walk area is flanked by vibrant plants specially selected to entice these graceful insects from the forest canopy where they shelter when the day is at its hottest.

Rimba Trail

Beginning at the Holistic Pavilion, traverse littoral, mangrove and lowland forests to encounter a variety of life: from the insects that make the forest floor their home to the shy Dusky Langurs seeking sustenance in the treetops. Best explored with one of the resort’s naturalists, the boardwalk over the tidal river and suspended 15-metre high canopy walk are two highlights.

Temurun Falls Trail

The inquisitive and endangered Long-tailed Macaques may be your companions on this meandering paved trail to the dramatic 100-metre vertical drop. The fall is especially captivating in the wetter months of July to November.

Datai Bay Beach Walk

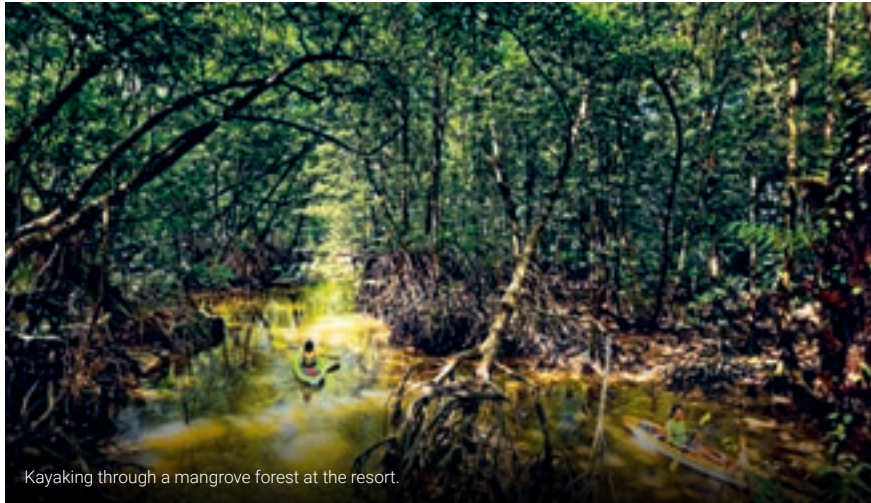
The resort’s naturalists bring this fascinating low tide walk alive. If you look up from the Ghost Crabs and curious molluscs that scuttle at your feet, you might spot a White-bellied Sea Eagle or encounter the resort’s resident family of Smooth-coated Otters.

Crystal Creek Trail

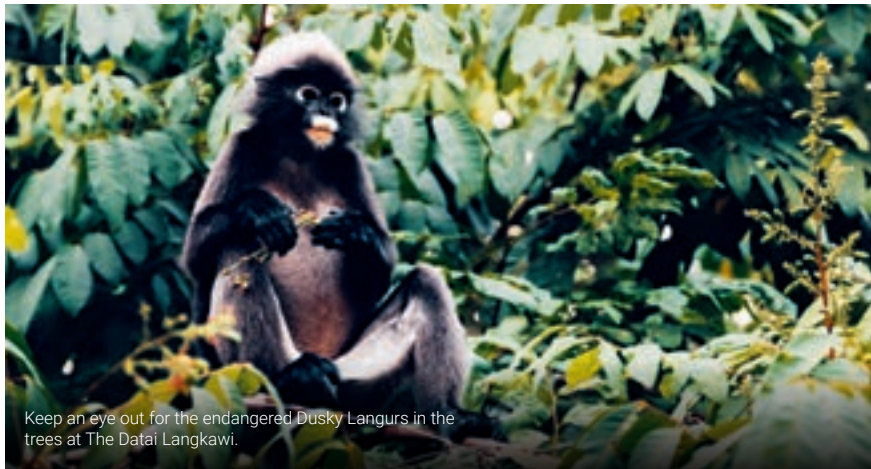
Beyond the fringes of the resort on the edge of The Els Club Teluk Datai golf course lies a hidden trail to a secluded swimming hole surrounded by lush forest. Guests can also spend a morning of mindfulness here as part of The Datai Langkawi’s Malay Wellness guided experience.

Mangrove Kayaking

Give your legs a rest and let your arms do the work. This kayak excursion follows the coastline of Datai Bay into the mangrove forest. Witness the ebb and flow of tidal life and, with luck, encounter its intriguing inhabitants like the industrious Mangrove Lobster and elusive Collared Kingfisher.



Kayaking through a mangrove forest at the resort.



Keep an eye out for the endangered Dusky Langurs in the trees at The Datai Langkawi.

Owing to the unique selective pressures of its geography, Langkawi also has rare plants like the *Lagerstroemia Langkawiensis*, a type of myrtle that can be found near the resort lobby. Endemic to Langkawi and cultivated in Malaysia’s administrative capital of Putrajaya, it’s notable for its pretty pink flowers. The resort’s resident naturalists and observant guests have also paved the way for the discovery of new species – two novel plant species were found here that have yet to be described by science.

However, you needn’t discover a species for your visit to The Datai Langkawi to leave a lasting positive impact, though. The nature team engages in seasonal seed collection activities and has established a Native Tree Nursery as part of its reforestation programme. Planting a native tree ensures you leave an enduring legacy on the island, just as it is hoped the island will leave an indelible mark on you. 🌱



Rangoon Creeper (*combretum indicum*).



Advanced air-conditioning, electricity and water systems ensure guests' comfort while reducing energy consumption and maintenance costs.

Room For Change

Well-considered in-room amenities and innovations are part of The Datai Langkawi's efforts to embrace the positive power of regenerative luxury.

Langkawi is pristine, rich in cultural history and a hotbed for biodiversity. These qualities make this tropical paradise alluring to the wanderlust, but tourism, if unchecked, can place pressure on the island's environmental systems and natural resources. Fortunately, the travel and hospitality industry can be a force for good, and The Datai Langkawi aims to lead by example.

When The Datai Langkawi underwent a transformative refurbishment in 2017 and 2018, its ambition was clear: this was not just a renovation. Through eco-friendly design interventions and conservation-minded additions like the dedicated Nature Centre, upcycling Lab and landscaping that celebrated the surrounding natural features, the resort was reimagined through the lens of sustainability. The Datai Pledge followed in 2019. A declaration of intent, it placed conservation and sustainability initiatives at the beating heart of the resort's operational philosophy.

Small Steps, Substantial Results

Under the guidance of the Director of Quality Control and Improvement (QCI), Remi Giromella, who leads the Pure For The Future pillar of The Datai Pledge, the resort initiated ground-breaking practices to trim the resort's carbon footprint, minimise waste, and kindle community-based sustainable practices. This green philosophy extends to guest rooms and villas as well. "Incorporating sustainability into operations has changed how I approach problems," Remi says enthusiastically.

Single-use plastics were the first thing to be tackled. As a direct result, 91% of dry waste was processed through the banning of single-use plastics, with recycling and upcycling efforts in 2023. At the behest of The Datai Langkawi, the packaging for Ronnefeldt tea and other minibar titbits were redesigned to be biodegradable; locally sourced and custom-made toiletries like the signature Penaga Laut-scented hand soap and body wash eliminated the need for disposable packaging; and amenities such as toothbrushes and combs, usually plastic, were replaced with items made from sustainable materials like wood and bamboo. Innovative

thinking is evident in the unlikeliest of places, too – guest shower caps are made of cornstarch.

As part of the resort's zero-waste aspirations and waste-to-wealth philosophy, discards have been reimagined and, where possible, reintegrated as usable resources. One only needs to look towards the unique jewellery tray in each room, crafted from recycled wood, to appreciate the resort's dedication. Another initiative can be seen through its collaboration with the Kanshalife Project, a Langkawi-based community-driven social enterprise with a focus on waste management. In 2023, the resort achieved an overall 94% of zero-waste to landfill efficiency, which equates to 562,318kg of waste diverted from going to the landfill. In-room slippers found new life in underprivileged communities or were creatively transformed into stool and cushion covers. From coffee pods to cotton sheets and candle wax, no in-room resource is wasted, and no opportunity for upcycling or recycling is missed.

The Datai Langkawi's dedication to seeking sustainable solutions extends to managing energy and finite resources like water. Although hidden from the eye, advanced air-conditioning, electricity and water systems have been reconsidered to save on maintenance costs and to cut down consumption, all while keeping guests' comfort in mind. Villa pools are heated using heat pumps that are CO₂-free, while aerator taps reduce water consumption without affecting water pressure. Agus Rida, Executive Director of Engineering, saves his praise for the Fresh Air Handling Units (FAHUs). In his estimation, it is one of the best investments his department has made. FAHUs supply treated air at a reduced humidity level, which not only makes the indoor environment more tolerable, but also tempers the surprisingly damaging effects high humidity levels have on timber and electronics.

Agus is relentless in his pursuit to optimise the resort's energy efficiency. "I take it as a challenge," he says with a smile. "We are continually refining our processes, conducting preventive maintenance, and then technology develops." It's a sentiment echoed by his partner in innovation, Remi. "Sustainability is all about continuous improvement," he enthuses. As new technologies emerge, the goalposts are



Every room has a Royal Selangor table clock, as well as amenities made with sustainable materials such as wood or bamboo.



moved, and what becomes possible changes. The work is never-ending, but from the twinkle in their eyes, it's evident that Agus and Remi find this perpetual puzzle exciting and heartily embrace its challenges.

With A Little Help From Friends

The ability to consult with The Datai Pledge advisors like Piet Van Zyl, a highly experienced hospitality industry sustainability practitioner, proved instructive. "When we began innovating, we needed guidance on the direction we should take," Remi admits. Consultation and collaboration with thought leaders, innovators and other experts in the field is one of the hallmarks of The Datai Pledge, and a crucial reason why no obstacle is deemed too large to overcome.

This sense of community informs The Datai Langkawi's approach to in-room amenities in other ways. As a member of The Conscious Travel Foundation and Regenerative Travel, The Datai Langkawi strives for every stay to contribute positively to the environment and community. This is evident in its support of local artisans and industries.

For Wenzel Weinich, Director of Rooms of The Datai Langkawi, the benefits of working with local suppliers are manifold: it guarantees uniqueness in offerings, supports the local economy and reduces logistical emissions.

Having spent almost a decade of his professional life in Malaysia, Wenzel believes Malaysian creativity deserves more recognition.

Tangible Efforts Bringing Concrete Results

The inclusion of in-room amenities and embellishments such as the bedside clock by internationally renowned Royal Selangor pewter; the incense bowl designed by well-loved local glassblower Kamarul Faizy of Faizy Crystal; and ornate hand-woven silver- and gold-threaded *songket*



Remi Giromella



Agus Rida



Other in-room sustainability initiatives include an incense bowl designed by Kamarul Faizy and Ronnefeldt tea packaging that is made to be biodegradable.

(traditional brocade fabric) displayed in The Datai Suite are an opportunity for The Datai Langkawi to showcase local craftsmanship and tradition.

The resort also fosters sustainable development. Minibar indulgences such as Chocolate Concierge's single-origin chocolate bars are made from cocoa beans grown and harvested by indigenous Semai in Pahang, positively impacting more than 150 Semai families. Even the in-room library features works by local authors, such as artist Choo Beng Teong's lifelike illustrations in *The Datai Nature Guide*, thus



Piet Van Zyl



Wenzel Weinich

providing guests with a deeper connection to the surrounding culture and biodiversity.

These collective efforts have not gone unnoticed. The staff's overwhelming commitment to sustainability and regeneration has garnered the resort accolades and awards. From 2019 to 2024, The Datai Langkawi is the first and only organisation in the world to be awarded the EarthCheck Silver ECO Certification for terrestrial tourism projects, and it has also gained recognition under the ASEAN Green Hotel Standard Certification (2020-2022 and 2022-2024) and Malaysia Green Hotel Certification (2019-2022 and 2023-2026).

Wenzel credits the successful evolution of the resort's conscious approach to its agility and openness. "The Datai Langkawi is independently managed and owned, so we are able to make decisions fast," he says. "And we have the right people on board to make these decisions, incorporate guest feedback and implement it, with a sustainability mindset at heart."

In a world where global citizens increasingly seek meaningful and responsible experiences, The Datai Langkawi willingly rises to the challenge, redefining the intersection of luxury and ecological responsibility. In doing so, it ensures that its legacy and the island's allure will be as enduring as the enchanting rainforests and rich biodiversity that make it such a compelling destination. 🌿





A Hidden Eden

Many of the natural wonders surrounding The Datai Langkawi occur only on the island, and even near the resort. We asked the resort's experts to elaborate further and explain how guests can experience these miracles of nature.

Facing page: majestic trees such as the Meranti and the Keruing fill the 10-million-year-old rainforest that surrounds the resort.



Nestled in the heart of a primordial rainforest that dates back more than 10 million years, The Datai Langkawi's 750 hectares are a tropical haven that harbours a rich ecosystem teeming with diverse flora and fauna. Wander the hidden trails and pathways that wind across the resort's ample grounds and you'll hear the rustle of skinks in the leaf litter, witness butterflies flitting among

the floral gardens, and experience the chatter of cheeky Long-tailed Macaques. This unique setting presents a tableau of natural phenomena, influenced by the shifting seasons and weather patterns where the fascinating dance of nature unfolds.

From November to March, vivid blue skies and rain-free days set the stage for the season of love for many animal

species. Courtship and mating are timed to take full advantage of the abundance that follows the dry spell, as these conditions trigger a burst of flowering and fruiting to create a veritable feast for the forest's inhabitants, including the newborns to come. Depending on the timing of your visit, you may hear the powerful flap of the resort's resident Oriental-Pied Hornbills overhead as

the male busies himself hunting and foraging for his expanding family while the female is confined to a sealed-up tree hole nest with its fledgling; or you could catch a flash of bright orange fur belonging to that of an infant Dusky Langur.

New beginnings

The production of seeds from tropical rainforest trees like the mighty Meranti and Keruing occurs during this dry phase. Masting, a period when the production is particularly prolific, transpires in cycles of three to 10 years. Scientists believe the masting phenomenon evolved to saturate the habitat with seeds and outwit hungry herbivores. “Squirrels love these seeds. Here at the resort, we have witnessed two waves of seed release,” explains Afiqah Izzati Noh, The Datai Langkawi’s resident botanist. “The first is of non-viable seeds. The second, when the squirrels are fed, is of viable seeds. This is the clever strategy that the trees have developed to increase survivability.”

Dipterocarp seeds are themselves a marvel of evolutionary engineering. Some, like the Meranti Pipit (*Shorea assamica* Dyer), have evolved aerodynamic wings that resemble helicopter rotors to enable it to be carried away from its parent tree to reduce competition and boost survival rates.

When mass seeding occurs, Muhammad Firdaus Dev Abdullah, The Datai Langkawi’s passionate Nature Centre Manager and The Datai Pledge Pillar Leader for Wildlife For The Future, must rustle up a team to gather the seeds for the resort’s Native Tree Nursery. Malaysian oak, Meranti (*Shorea assamica*), Keruing (*Dipterocarpus grandifloras*), Resak (*Vatica umbonate*) and Penaga Lilin (*Mesua ferrea*) are just some of the lowland forest species being propagated as part of The Datai Pledge’s initiative to enhance the ecological health of the surrounding forest and to reconnect vital ecological zones on the island.

Such trees are far from silent sentinels, Dev says. Even when a seed falls and grows close to the parent tree, the parent tree can communicate to the surrounding mycelium network through its root system to orchestrate the life and death of seedlings around it. This subterranean dialogue ensures the best possible outcome and helps to maintain the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

The Dusky Langur (below) is a common sight around the resort, as are many fascinating species of insects (bottom).



The heart of the action

Life at the resort is no less interesting during the wetter months. As the weather transitions, the spike in humidity creates the perfect conditions for termites to emerge, providing a feast for the forest’s enigmatic flying lizards. Grab a pair of binoculars and you might just spot these elusive masters of camouflage pressed against tree trunks as they lie in wait.

More than 200 bird species, both resident and migratory, have been

documented in Langkawi, making the island a paradise for ardent ornithologists. These include three species of hornbill, several kingfisher species, including the endemic Brown-winged Kingfisher, and raptors like the White-bellied Sea Eagle and Brahminy Kite, the island’s winged mascot.

Dev can tell when the seasons are changing simply by observing the arrival of migratory shrikes and wagtails. Strategically positioned on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, Malaysia is part of a route navigated by migratory birds journeying between Southeast Asia, Australia, and their breeding grounds in North and East Asia. This perilously long and arduous flight path is plied twice a year, and the resort’s rainforest provides a restful haven for the avian life passing through.

Such wonders of The Datai Langkawi are not confined to the skies. Offshore, in the azure waters beyond the bay, the world’s largest fish, the whale shark, embarks on its own migratory journey from the Indian Ocean through the Straits of Melaka to Western Australia. This spectacle can be observed in September, according to Ahmad Mukhris Mahadzir, The Datai Langkawi’s Senior Marine

Biologist and The Datai Pledge Pillar Leader for Fish For The Future.

Closer to land, neap tides, which occur twice a month, are a chance to witness the unseen marvels of Datai Bay’s intertidal zone. As the sea waters recede, it exposes scurrying crustaceans and creeping molluscs. During exceptionally low tides, you’ll even experience exposed coral and, if extremely lucky, vibrant nudibranch. Usually hidden in deeper waters, these flamboyant sea slugs are frequently sought out by avid underwater photographers.

Deeply Immersed In Nature

Langkawi’s distinct island geography has created some unique effects on local wildlife – eyewitness accounts suggest that the island’s remaining clouded leopards may be melanistic due to genetic drift – camera traps have been set up in the hopes of confirming this.

Poised at the intersection of the Indo-Burma and Sundaland biodiversity hotspots, the island is the serendipitous benefactor of rare and endemic species. The *Begonia sibthorpioides machinchangensis* plant is found only on Machinchang Mountain. Fortunately, you don’t have to trek far to appreciate

the delicate pink flowers of the endemic *Lagerstroemia langkawiensis* as there’s a tree by the hotel lobby.

The Datai Langkawi’s dedicated Nature Team have meticulously catalogued this plant and animal life, including out at sea. “*Acropora nasuta* is found all over the Indo-Pacific ocean,” Mukhris says of this coral species. “But on the entire West Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, it can only be found in Datai Bay.” Even the shy but charismatic Dusky Langur (*Trachypithecus obscurus carbo*) that makes The Datai Langkawi its home is found only in Langkawi, nearby Dayang Bunting Island and the neighbouring Thai isle of Tarutao.

Such astounding biodiversity makes The Datai Langkawi more than a luxury resort; it’s a living, breathing testament to the wonders of nature, some still to be discovered and understood. From the aerial dance of Dipterocarp seeds to the silent conversations between trees and the quiet growth of rare plants, this resort is one of the best places in Malaysia (and perhaps the world) to witness firsthand the awe-inspiring complexity and beauty of our natural world. Every aspect of this tropical paradise speaks to the soul of the nature lover and luxury traveller alike. 🌿

Guests don’t have to venture far to see beautiful flowers, as plenty such as this *Lagerstroemia langkawiensis* grow in the resort itself.





On Course For Sustainable Golfing

The Els Club Teluk Datai, the award-winning golf course, increases its environmental efforts to conserve the picturesque settings of the surrounding majestic jungle with The Datai Pledge.

Mere minutes away from The Datai Langkawi is a golf course worth a visit on its own – hailed as the ‘World’s Best New Golf Course’ at the inaugural World Golf Awards 2014. The Els Club Teluk Datai is an 18-hole, par 72 championship course that plays to 6,750 yards and has redefined standards in Southeast Asia’s golf offerings since its opening.

The course is nestled within a 10-million-year-old rainforest, with five holes skirting the Andaman Sea, opening up to views of islands from neighbouring Thailand, including

Koh Tarutao, a designated nature reserve. Its Clubhouse has recently been refurbished and includes the Hornbill Café, a flexible meeting space, a lounge and fully serviced male and female locker facilities.

Masterminded by four-time Major Champion Ernie Els, whose success on the golf course is mirrored in his achievements as a course designer with a portfolio including golf clubs in his native South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, China and the United States.

Caring for Nature’s Beauty

Datai Hotels and Resorts (DHR) took over the management of The Els Club Teluk Datai in December 2020, and since then steps have been taken to follow the iconic resort’s lead in prioritising conservation and sustainability where possible. The golf course also aims to preserve the natural biodiversity of the UNESCO Machinchang Cambrian Geoforest Park within which the club is located, including several rare species of flora and fauna the grounds are home to, such as the ever-blossoming bougainvillea, the Oriental-Pied Hornbill and the Brahminy Kite. One of the numerous measures implemented since 2020 is enhanced Freshwater Management, an initiative that requires regular testing of Sungai Lenggara, a small creek that flows from Machinchang Mountain through the golf course.

From August 2023, an optional RM10 contribution has been added to the green fee for visitors; additional donations are welcome, and together, these will be channelled directly to The Datai Pledge to support programmes under its umbrella.

Sustainability and Conservation

For visitors interested in contributing further to The Datai Pledge, merchandise can be purchased at the golf shop, such as items created by a social enterprise in Langkawi, The Kansha Life Project, which aims to create an eco-hub on the island. This includes durable green products such as recycled candles made from wax used at The Datai Langkawi, as well as vanilla-infused virgin coconut oil made from coconuts from the enterprise’s garden. Other wares include home deco items from The Green Factory, using certified dense Balau hardwood from The Green Factory, an award-winning hub for sustainable Malaysian-crafted wood products.

Additionally, environmentally conscious golfers will appreciate the recent launch of eco-friendly toiletries such as wooden cotton buds and combs, which are now available in all changing rooms at the golf course. Another significant undertaking by the club is its objective of achieving ‘Zero Waste to Landfill’ – to divert as much waste as possible through recycling, upcycling and other prevention measures, thus reducing the detrimental toll that landfills take on the environment. As of November 2023, the club has impressively achieved an 81 per cent average prevention of waste going to the landfill each month.

In 2024, solar panels will be installed at The Els Club Teluk Datai to generate at least 40 per cent of overall electricity consumption and to reduce carbon emissions. The Els Club will also apply for the international sustainability certification for golf to display its strong commitment to its environmental programme.

With these efforts, The Els Club Teluk Datai has undoubtedly stayed true to its vision to preserve and enhance the natural environment while creating unique experiences not only for golfers and golf fans but also for nature lovers. 🌿

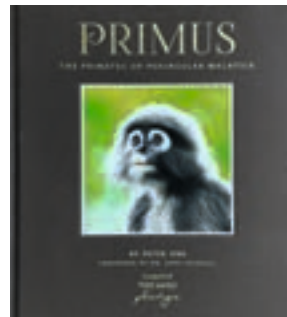
The Datai Pledge Partners' Books Will Change How You Interact With The World Around You

"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."
— Victor Hugo

Grit & Grace: The Grandeur of Monochrome Malaysia invites you into the fascinating stories of the country's indigenous communities.



The limited edition of **PRIMUS** was published exclusively for and in collaboration with The Datai Pledge.



Discovering Langkawi with Irshad Mobarak is the next best thing to a personally guided tour.



The Datai Nature Guide Book with illustrations by Choo Beng Teong is an essential companion during your stay.



The Green Edit: Travel by sustainability expert Juliet Kinsman will help you transform your wanderlust into a force for good.

Curated for your reading pleasure, books published by the advisors and partners of The Datai Pledge will not only fill your languid sun-drenched hours at the resort, but their geographic and sociological placemaking will also inspire discovery.

Take **Discovering Langkawi**. If your plan is to relax poolside, The Datai Pledge Chief Advisor Irshad Mobarak's guide to the archipelago will entice you off your sunbed and beyond the resort grounds. Condensing the celebrated naturalist's lifetime of experience and knowledge, Irshad recommends walks, points out fascinating natural phenomena and shares his unique perspective of the natural world in his inimitable storytelling style, making it the next best thing to a personally guided tour.

It's impossible to miss SC Shekar's arresting black and white photographs in the resort's halls. They are also featured in **Grit & Grace: The Grandeur of Monochrome Malaysia**, which collates breathtaking aerial shots capturing the country's diverse natural landscapes and intimate portraits of its indigenous community, inviting you into their fascinating stories. **The Datai Nature Guide Book** should be an essential companion and the ultimate souvenir of your stay. Illustrated by Penang-born artist Choo Beng Teong, this

indispensable reference will make an eager entomologist and birder out of you. Filled with beautifully illustrated birds, butterflies and other creatures, it's designed with boxes to check off sightings, and blank pages for penning your observations. The Datai Langkawi's resident Dusky Langurs will be among the first creatures you tick off.

For renaissance man and wildlife photographer Peter Ong, documenting the primates of Malaysia is his life's quest. All 12 found on the Malaysian peninsula are detailed in **PRIMUS**, with a limited edition published exclusively for and in collaboration with The Datai Pledge. Legendary primatologist Dr Jane Goodall, who inspired Ong's simian curiosity, provides the foreword. If you didn't arrive at The Datai Langkawi a steward for the planet, you'll leave as one. "Green travel no longer means having to scrimp on comfort or joy," respected travel writer and sustainable luxury expert Juliet Kinsman assures us in **The Green Edit: Travel - Easy Tips For The Eco-Friendly Traveller**. Via her pocket-sized manual, the sustainability advocate, who doubles as Advisor to The Datai Pledge, helps you transform your wanderlust into a force for good. 🌱

The Pavilion, which serves traditional Thai cuisine, sits atop 30-metre stilts, making it seem like it's floating amid the 10-million-year-old rainforest.





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LANGKAWI

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