

Philea Resort &amp; Spa

# Logged In



*Main pix: The swimming pool is fed by a man-made waterfall  
Above (from the top): The monoliths mark your entry to world of log cabins and bespoke service; Philea Resort used Siberian logs for the cabins*

Philea Resort & Spa in Melaka, Malaysia, by some dint of serendipity or happy happenstance, has managed to put together an Executive team whose collective warmth and professional ability, when coupled with the uniqueness of its build-up, makes the new resort a marvelous holiday destination. Just off the Ayer Keroh interchange off the North-South Highway, Philea was two years in the making, with its owners, Majestic Hotels & Resorts Sdn Bhd sparing no expense in ensuring that their flagship property was nothing short of outstanding.

Built in a hollow, the developers worked with the lay of the land, keeping many of the original rubber trees on the 15 acres of plantation land. RM140 million in, Philea Resort & Spa is a welcoming combination of rustic luxury and bespoke pampering, and is Malaysia's largest log resort.

The 180 units of Pavilion Villas are the entry point accommodation, offering verandahs on the lower floors and balconies on the upper stories. The 19 Philea Suites are located in the valley of the enclave, with views of the pool and waterfall. The Suites offer charmingly luxurious bathrooms, with claw-footed tubs and fixtures of aged brass. The two Royal Villas have private salas, plunge pools and offer all-round on-site service, from check-in to in-suite dining.

The resort also offers some of the best dining adventures in Malacca, with its fine-dining Cravo Cravo, poolside Bayu Cabana, Nusantara all-day dining, Chill Out Bar and Tropics Lounge in the lobby, fanned by Straits breezes.

Still, no matter how impressive the hardware, how comfy the beds, or how convenient the wireless Internet access, it is the software that sells Philea Resort. General Manager Ung Beng Huat manages to combine the shrewd business sense of a Penangite with the aplomb of a man who has worked with international properties around the region. As such, his team have all plugged into his style of personalized service and efficient warmth. The resort's Director of Marketing Communications, Connie Chin, knows the challenge of brand building a new property from scratch and she works flawlessly with the management team to present Philea in the best light.

The resort's unsaid USP is the bespoke service. Not only for denizens of the Royal Villas, the resort's culinary team delights in bringing culinary adventures to guests' doorsteps. When notified in advance, the chefs can whip up breakfast on the verandah of the Villas, where guests can watch the morning unfold while enjoying some amazing breakfast items.



*Clockwise (from the top): The same technology which holds up the Penang bridge was utilized for the resort's lobby; Allow yourself to be surprised by the chefs at Cravo Cravo; The spa uses only the finest, hand blended oils; The Kids Club where toddlers can play in safety; The suite life – Philea Suites*

While there is no shortage of things to do around the resort (the Malacca Zoo is a ten-minute ride away, the butterfly park just next door), the best way to enjoy Philea is to stay ensconced on the property. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast, take a dip in the pool, bring the kids to feed the thousands of koi, work a little (if it is your wont) in the privacy of your suite, then wander over to talk to Executive Chef Azmi bin Desa who epitomizes the warmth of Malaccan cuisine, and have a chat with Joseph Kuan, Chef De Cuisine of Cravo Cravo and ask him to surprise you with a meal while Restaurants & Bar Manager Sebastian Ng works his efficient, unobtrusive magic, bustling around, making sure the little touches are just right for the meal.

Later, book a massage or a whole body treatment package at the Rumah Tanjung Spa. The spa boasts fully Malaysian staff, most of them East Malaysian, with amazing hands, wonderful attitudes and perfect spa-etiquette (meaning if you fall asleep during a treatment, they wrap you up snug and let you doze until it's time for a cup of ginger tea). All day packages, like the Tanjung Beauty, begin with a relaxing facial and full body exfoliation and ends with an aromatherapy massage.

There is also a variety of massages, including the warm stone massage, Tanjung Spice, which uses ear candles to balance airstreams in the body and regulate metabolism; Tanjung Fusion which marries candling with facial treatments, foot reflexology and manicures.

The Philea Kids Club offers child minding service and a dedicated playroom for the tots and tykes. The staff are committed and loving with the kids, and have the endless patience to redo puzzles with them. Special meals can also be ordered for the children, so parents can have some time to themselves. Philea Resort & Spa exudes the serenity which can only be had at sacred spaces. It is a sanctuary for the mind and body, and well worth the journey from Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. **ha**

## The Report Card

### Location:

Just off the Ayer Keroh toll, it is a breeze to get to, and a relief not to fight the historic city's traffic in order to get there! The resort is close to the more nature-based attractions, which includes the butterfly farm next door (buggies can be arranged to drop guests off), the zoo, crocodile farm and fun parks.

### Accommodation:

Philea Suites come with a king-sized bed and can accommodate another single bed. Rooms are all equipped with wireless Internet access, flat-screen LCD TVs, safes and fridges. We love the three sets of slippers in three different sizes, to use around the pool and to take home. The bathrooms are lovely, with brass fittings and enormous bath tubs for long soaks or water play with the kids.

### Food:

Executive Chef Azmi runs his ship well, and entrusts Chef De Cuisine Joseph with the creating of interesting menus at Cravo Cravo, the resort's fine dining restaurant. Breakfast is buffet style when there are large groups, otherwise a special breakfast menu can be arranged. The weekend dinner buffet features roasts and carvery, as well as seafood straight from the day's catch. The chefs are very open to experimentation and happy to oblige food preferences and dietary restrictions.

### Spa:

Rumah Tanjung Spa is your ticket to physical bliss. Enjoy a whole list of body treatments, and make a specific note to make more time than you think you need, since the treatments are languor inducing. They are also addictive, so one treatment may not be enough.

### Activities/Other Facilities:

Philea Resort has a Kids Club for children, with minders who will take care of the little ones and keep them amused with puzzles, blocks and board games while parents sneak off for some me time. There is also a gym should the need to work out overcome the desire to laze about.

Travel Report is aimed at retrieving constructive feedback from travellers. The reviewers for this section have been selected to match the target profile of the reviewed property. The reviewers of Philea Resort & Spa were the Editor-in-Chief of Hospitality Asia, Karen-Michaela Tan, who came out of review retirement in order to focus on child-friendly resorts; her photographer husband Chin Kit Sen; and the most discerning reviewer of all – their two-and-a-half year old toddler Erin, who knows nothing about hospitality strategies, but is an expert judge of people and bespoke cuisine.