



Lost in the Woods

It's the kind of being lost that you crave, and if there ever was a place that offers a reprieve from it all, Philea Resort and Spa would be it.

I'm not sure if it's tradition or just a need masked with an excuse that my cousin was getting married. Either way, the search for a perfect retreat was on. My criteria: relaxing getaway, not too far from KL, able to accommodate six people and surrounded by possible activities. Lo and behold Agoda.com came to the rescue.

Philea Resort and Spa was pretty much love at first sight (or the gallery pictures at least). The true tipping point was its look and feel. The wooden exterior and the natural setting screamed retreat. Destination picked!

THE GREEN CHOICE

Navigating our way to the hotel was a breeze; we didn't even get to use our smart GPS-equipped gadgets. Our collective jaws dropped in awe when we drove up to the lobby. This five-star and award-winning resort was built with natural Malaysian resources (pine logs and marble from Perak) and designed to resemble an alpine village. Taking it a step further, the 15-acre resort used 8,000 pieces of reclaimed railway sleepers as fencing

and staircase, with its stately furniture and decorations created from shipwreck pieces and old railway cars. With all that effort put in to minimise the resort's environmental impact, it's apt that the Philea Resort and Spa is ranked amongst the top 10 eco friendly hotels from Agoda.com's international network. Plus, having slept in the beds and showered in the baths, I can tell you that the experience is no less swanky than other resorts. In fact, this getaway felt extra special because we knew we were contributing to greater cause.

TAKING IT ALL IN

After checking in, we were down to the serious business of fun. While I didn't get a chance to play Goldilocks and visit all 201 rooms (two Royal Villas, one of which, we were told, once housed Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan), the room we were in had the best view in the resort looking out to a landscaped pool and a waterfall.

There was no way we were visiting a resort and spa without enjoying a luxury spa treatment. We managed to squeeze in a 90-minute session and it was nothing short of heavenly. The Tanjung Wellness Spa didn't

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disappoint at all, even going as far as providing umbrellas so the drizzle that had just started didn't take anything away from the thoroughly relaxing experience.

There are trips you plan that you in as

much as you can into the itinerary. Not so with this resort. Here, only two things should be on your to-do list: rest and fun. If you're up for this, Philea Resort and Spa may very well fit your bill.



TOP ECO-FRIENDLY STAYS

APART FROM PHILEA, THESE ARE SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE GREEN PICKS THAT MADE AGODA'S TOP 10 LIST.



1/ BORNEO HIGHLANDS RESORT, KUCHING, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

Borneo is known for its incredible and ancient rainforests, extensive cave systems and varieties of wildlife, much of which are exotic, endangered and rare. The hotel is located 1,000 meters above sea level where the air is cool and moist. It also uses organic farms for its meals and even provides a trained horticulturist to educate guests on their menu. The number of guests is limited to 60 a day to reduce the overall impact on the surrounding area. The hotel's highlights also include walking trails, waterfalls, bird watching and, of course, clean mountain air.

2/ CASA CAMPER, BARCELONA, SPAIN

Minimalism can be beautiful, and Casa Camper sets out to prove this while at the same time leading the way in several important eco-initiatives. The message extended throughout



the hotel is one of simplicity. The hotel is located 1,000 meters above sea level where the air is cool and moist. It also uses organic farms for its meals and even provides a trained horticulturist to educate guests on their menu. The number of guests is limited to 60 a day to reduce the overall impact on the surrounding area. The hotel's highlights also include walking trails, waterfalls, bird watching and, of course, clean mountain air.

3/ SIX SENSES NINH VAN BAY, VIETNAM

Perched on limestone cliffs with a dramatic view of Vietnam's southeast coast, this hotel is a secluded five-star luxury in one great package. Built with renewable and recycled materials and designed in a way that allows refreshing sea breeze to cool the premises, the hotel also recycles wastewater for its gardens, collects rainwater for use throughout the hotel and allows guests to take part in environmental reclamation projects such as tree planting. ■

FIND IT ON...

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