

Luxurious Magazine Goes **GREEN**

By Natasha Godbold

For the latest episode of Luxurious Magazine Travel Show we decided to try something different – luxury with a clear conscience. We looked long and hard, and finally discovered something that struck the chord, a hidden treasure of the Southern region of the Malay Peninsula, the Philea Resort & Spa.

Strategically located within 20 minutes drive from the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Malacca and only 90 minutes from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the resort promised everything we were looking for – luxury, comfort and relaxation in serene setting amongst lush greenery, yet within easy reach of culture, history and entertainment. Add to this a range of awards such as “Best Green Hotel”, “Top 10 Eco-friendly Hotels 2012” and Philea’s entry as the First and Largest Log Resort in Malaysia’s Book of Records, and you have a real contender for our exclusive collection of the best and most memorable luxury destinations.

The innovative concept of the resort is what sets it apart from all the others. It’s an amazingly imaginative project that won an “Excellence Award for Landscape Design and Planning” – 15 acres of beautiful green forest with a magnificent man-made waterfall as a center-piece housing picturesque log-cabins as guest accommodation. No multistory concrete hotel block in sight! Thoughtfully created from scratch – thousands of trees were brought in from various exotic destinations all over Malaysia to form one extraordinary amalgam of foliage, blending in perfectly with the natural environment.

In-line with the eco-friendly theme, Philea used recycled materials and resources made in Malaysia to complete the project. Wandering around the grounds you will notice that fencing and rustic-looking staircases were made from disused railway sleepers, imposing-looking heavy set reception table and chairs manufactured from shipwrecks, and of course the skillfully put together log-cabins employing special nail-free techniques.



Beauty and tranquility of Philea is mesmerizing. Guests can unwind and recover from stresses of everyday life breathing in fresh air, enjoying the murmur of leafy trees and soothing sounds of the water-fall.



The main entrance to Philea Resort and Spa

The Philea Resort provides a chance to realize a fantasy of staying in a cozy wooden cottage surrounded by forest. All of the guest accommodation comprises of pine log cabins. There are Pavilion Rooms, occupying the top or ground level of two-storey villas, Philea Suites – generously proportioned detached cabins – and, if you want the crème de la crème, the two spectacular Royal Villas.

The interior décor continues the theme, once inside your cabin, you can be mistaken for thinking you are at some Scandinavian ski resort thousands miles away. Chunky wooden beds with intricately carved enormous headboards, comfy plush sofas and chairs, sturdy writing desks are all in-keeping with the high-quality fixtures and fittings, creating a restful and stylish atmosphere.

Most of the artwork used for decoration of the lobby and other areas is unique and was specially commissioned by the owners. Though striving to be green, Philea does not deprive guests of modern-day comforts and essentials like LCD TV, mini-bar and wireless internet access. And before I forget, the wonderful bathrooms deserve a special mention.



Philea Suite Bathroom

The sheer size of them is impressive; the discovery of a free-standing bath tub in Philea Suites as well as a separate rain-shower and a flat-screen TV on the wall, comes as a welcome surprise.

Occasionally hosting royalty, celebrity, the country's most senior politicians and, of course, the Luxurious Magazine team, The Royal Villas are literally fit for a king. As spacious and charming as all the other cabins of the resort undoubtedly are, the Royal Villas are simply on another level. Each one is a two-storey detached pine-log property surrounded by lush foliage to provide a degree of privacy. Through the double gates you'll find a private landscaped garden complete with your own swimming pool and a covered gazebo furnished with two chaise longue.

Inside, on the ground floor, you'll be greeted by an opulent reception room furnished with sofa suite and a huge flat screen TV, a functional dining room with a kitchenette and a second bedroom complete with an extravagant en-suite bathroom. Upstairs there is a cozy day-bed/office space and the one and only grand master suite featuring two giant beds, enormous LCD TV, large private balcony and, of course, en-suite bathroom with a huge Jacuzzi tub, separate power shower and a state of the art fully computerized toilet facilities.

There is plenty of storage to bring half of your wardrobe with you on holiday should you wish to and plenty of space to stay for a family.

The Royal Villas are literally like home from home. You'll have everything you need inside your secure mini-estate, which you don't have to leave unless you want to. All your meals as well as Spa treatments can be delivered to your royal quarters on request, and efficient and friendly staff will cater for all your needs making sure your holiday goes without a hitch.



The Royal Villas



The master bedroom in the Royal Villa

When it comes to dining, we were surprised by the excellent value for money you get at the resort. There are four different venues ranging from casual bars serving light snacks and refreshing beverages by the river like Bayu Cabana to more formal indoor restaurants like Cravo-Cravo. The food is good, remarkably unpretentious yet delicious, beautifully presented and reasonably priced. You can have yourself an Asian feast or a choice of International dishes without paying astronomical prices just for unnecessarily fancy delivery.





The main swimming pool

Have a casual meal at the Chill-out Bar while watching sports on multiple TV screens and listen to up-beat stimulating music or have a private romantic candle-lit dinner on the veranda taking in the sounds of the surrounding forest and the wild life, the choice is yours.

While staying at the resort during the hot sunny days, besides lounging by the waterfall surrounded pool, you can keep fit at the gym or have a relaxing massage at Tanjung Wellness Spa that offers traditional therapeutic treatments in rustic purpose-built wooden cabins, set in the midst of foliage. We tried the Tanjung Signature Treatment and a session of ear-candling that left us feel thoroughly relaxed, pampered and floating on cloud nine. Throughout the treatments we kept dozing off, melting away with the background sounds of rushing water and chirping of the birds outside, accompanied by relaxing music and experienced skillful hands attending to our bodies. Apart from the truly impressive accommodation, the Spa was one of our favourite experiences.

Should you visit Philea, treat yourself to a little extra indulgence, have a session at the Spa, it's too good to be missed. Should you want to venture out for a day, there are almost too many options to choose from. There's Malacca Butterfly & Reptile Sanctuary almost adjacent to the resort, which we visited on many occasions having hours of fun and thoroughly good time.

Melaka Zoo & Night Safari is also just a few minutes' drive away. For sports-enthusiasts, there are three 27 holes Golf Courses in the vicinity and Melaka International Bowling Center just 10-15 minutes away. If you are in the mood for a cultural expedition or a bit of sightseeing and retail therapy, visit historic Melaka - a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Should you feel the need to expend your horizons even further, take a trip to the Capital city of Kuala Lumpur, where you can certainly find everything your heart desires and more.

If you are planning a holiday in Malaysia and feel a little bored of beach vacations, have a change of scenery and find your inner eco-friendly spirit by entering a welcoming embrace of lush green sanctuary of the forest at Philea. Be lulled by comforting hum of the waterfall and feel close to nature in your very own pine-log cabin.



www.phileahotel.com

Tanjung Wellness Spa