

# hotel update

COMPILED BY HELEN HAYES

## Vanuatu vistas

The Havannah, Vanuatu is an intimate, boutique resort located absolute beachfront at spectacular Samoa Point - about 30 minutes' drive from Port Vila. The property has a range of accommodation catering for just 34 guests, with the ultimate being two new Deluxe Waterfront Villas. The stunning villas are beautifully appointed with an inside and outside bathroom, a nakamal (gazebo) housing a day bed, a dining nakamal complete with BBQ - a chef can cook for you - an infinity lap pool, a private sun deck and private access down to the beach. Snorkel off the pristine beach in front of the restaurant to discover friendly clown fish, take a kayak for a leisurely exploration of the coast, enjoy a sunset cruise with a glass of champagne, or indulge at the spa. [thehavannah.com](http://thehavannah.com)



## Ayana's little luxuries

The Villas at AYANA Resort, the divine cliff-top sanctuary perched above Jimbaran Bay on Bali's sunset coast, are now offering even more complimentary benefits. Stay at the Villas and receive 24-hour butler service, guaranteed reservations for sunset at Rock Bar, a choice of 30-minute Balinese massage or sunrise yoga, romantic table set-up with any in-villa dinner order, buggy service and a Personal Assistant service to prepare for your stay. You need never leave the sanctuary of your villa where you enjoy maximum privacy and thoughtful service from internationally-certified butlers. Each spacious pool villa faces towards the ocean and features luxurious bed linens, Balinese artworks, separate living areas, and oversized marble bathrooms with large soaking tubs and L'Occitane amenities. [ayanaresort.com](http://ayanaresort.com)



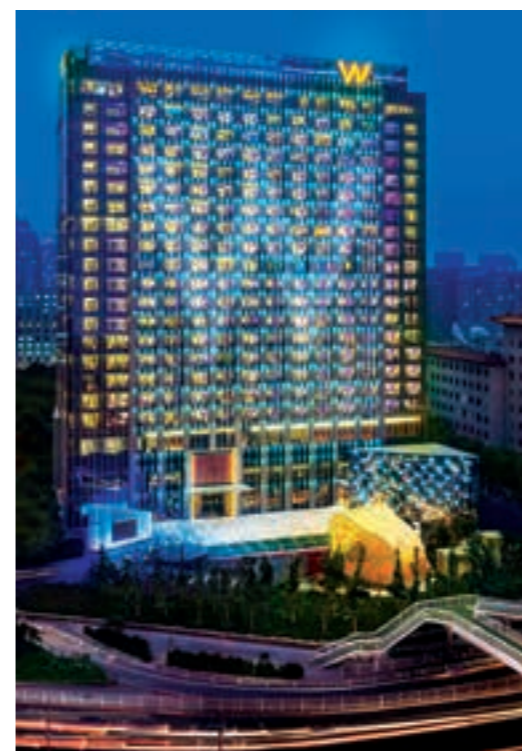
## Hong Kong's Big Plate

Fresh from its ambitious makeover Hong Kong's 400-room Gateway Hotel is fast becoming one of the territory's hottest culinary destinations thanks to Three On Canton, a lavish 20,000 square foot space devoted to dining, wine appreciation and networking. The hotel has also unveiled an al fresco dining area known as Be On Canton. "Three On Canton is the ultimate gourmet destination," explains general manager of the Gateway Hotel Fritz Sommerau. "Its layout comprises a hip restaurant with action cooking stations and a stylish al fresco dining terrace." Other innovations include a redesigned Continental Club lounge and lobby. Renovated rooms and suites now include flat screen televisions, Nespresso coffee machines, rain showers and new marble bathrooms. Guests enjoy free Wi-Fi service throughout the hotel. [marcopolohotels.com](http://marcopolohotels.com)



## Framed on the Murray

South Australia's Riverland has a new luxury property, The Frames, which offers three ultra-luxurious villas unlike anything else along the mighty Murray. The three private residences are on the cliff top overlooking the river, each tailored for luxury and romance. Designed by architect Paul Pruszinski, the residences are spacious with many luxury inclusions such as infra-red saunas, heated private pools, smart televisions, fully-equipped gourmet kitchens, electric blinds, one-touch gas fires, coffee machines, outdoor kitchens and state of the art barbecues, positioned on the decks for guests to feast on the beautiful views over one of our most historic rivers. If you can bear to leave the property, the sunset river cruise is well worth it. [theframes.com.au](http://theframes.com.au)



## Beijing beauty opens

Beijing has a new star with the opening on November 6 of the W Beijing - Chang'an. The property is situated on Chang'an Avenue, a major thoroughfare that houses many of Beijing's most important monuments and buildings, including Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City and is close to the National Museum of China, National Centre for the Performing Arts, Silk Market and Beijing Concert Hall. The property has 349 stylish and spacious guestrooms and suites, featuring state-of-the-art fittings such as a digital tablet that manipulates the room's lighting and mood, 48" LED TV, and Bluetooth sound system. Additionally, all guestrooms include the signature W bed; sumptuous Bliss® bath amenities; well-equipped Mix Bar (the W brand's reinterpretation of the staid mini bar); and a round bathtub in king bed rooms and suites. W Beijing - Chang'an is the latest addition to Starwood's growing portfolio of nearly 140 operating hotels in Greater China, with a strong pipeline of more than 130 hotels to come. W is on track to open seven W Hotels within the next five years in China, across major cities, including Changsha, Chengdu, Shanghai, Suzhou, Sanya, and Shenyang. [whotels.com/Beijing](http://whotels.com/Beijing)



## Hello Kitty turns 40

Hello Kitty hits the big 4-0 recently, and the Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo, a member of Preferred Hotel Group, is celebrating. In partnership with Sanrio Company, Limited and in conjunction with Hello Kitty's 40th birthday in November, the hotel opened the doors on two Hello Kitty-themed rooms, decked out from floor to ceiling with furnishings and amenities of this much loved character. The Kitty Town room features a fun pop-art feel, depicting Hello Kitty on holiday through images of the character at an amusement park and shopping with friends. The Princess Kitty room is every little girl's dream come true – with specially curated Hello Kitty furniture and pink motifs. To add the icing on an already sweet cake, guests staying in the Hello Kitty rooms get to take home exclusive merchandise and amenities. Guests who stay at Keio Plaza Hotel Tokyo are eligible to enrol in Preferred Hotel Group's iPrefer guest loyalty program, which extends points redeemable for cash-value Reward Certificates, elite status, and special benefits such as complimentary Internet to members upon every stay at more than 500 participating Preferred Hotel Group hotel locations worldwide. [preferredhotelgroup.com](http://preferredhotelgroup.com)



## Rainforest delights at Silky Oaks

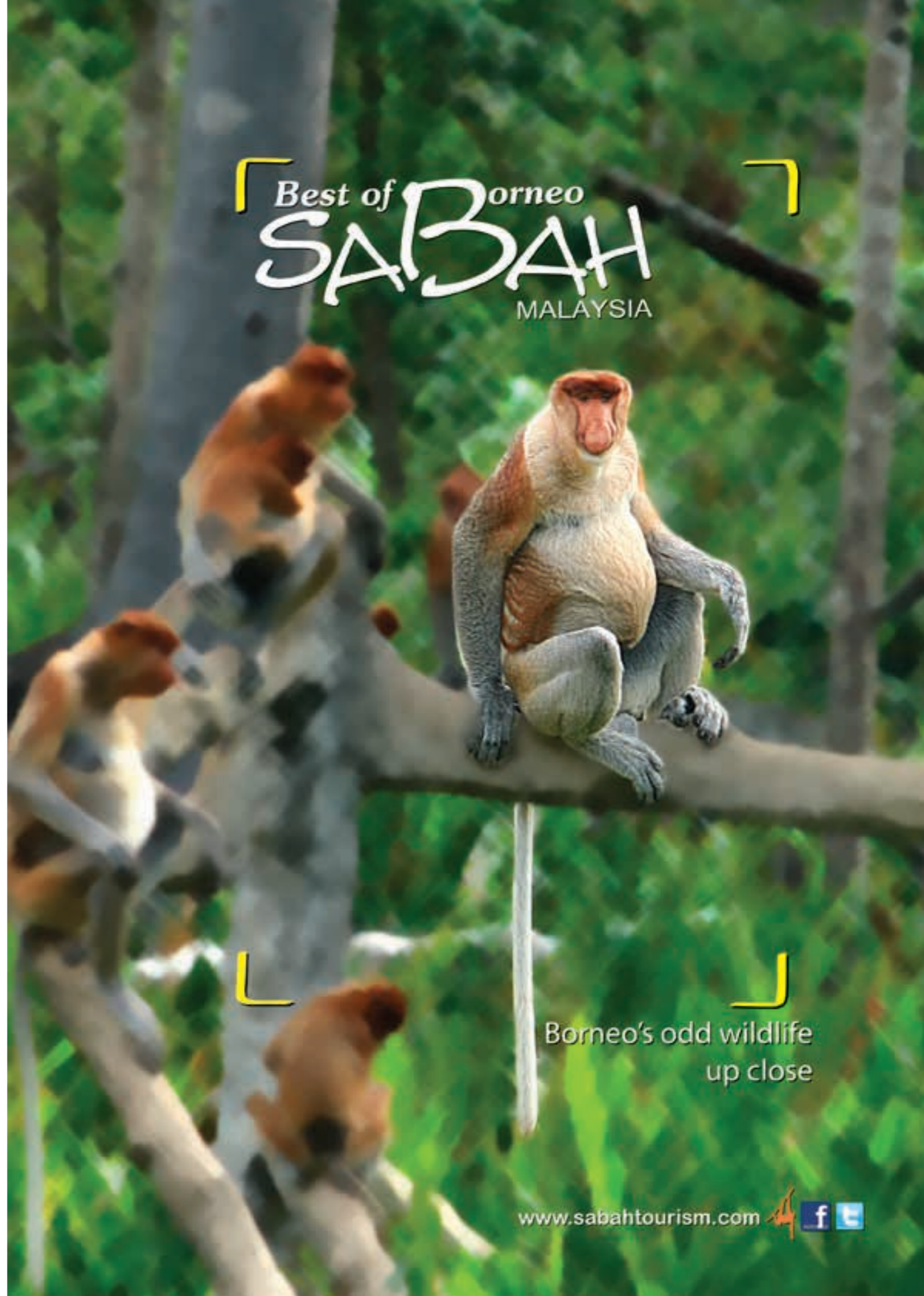
The drive into Silky Oaks Lodge, long recognised as Australia's premier rainforest lodge experience, is like driving into the Jurassic age – minus dinosaurs, but the lush rainforest is so ancient, who knows what secrets it holds. The property adjoins the World Heritage Listed Daintree National Park, and by the side of the Mossman River, with 50 luxurious stand-alone treehouses in three different styles – each with large balconies, hammocks and spa baths. The open sided Treehouse Restaurant, presents the sounds of the forest in perfect harmony to the gurgling of the river below. As for the cuisine, it is spectacular. The property also has the Healing Waters Spa, offering plenty of pampering in the already peaceful setting. [silkyoakslodge.com.au](http://silkyoakslodge.com.au)

### in brief

Lizard Island is slated to re-open on 1 March, 2015 after 12 months of extensive refurbishment and rebuilding following the impact of Cyclone Ita. When it re-opens, guests can enjoy a new stand-alone two-bedroom suite – The Villa, The Pavilion will be expanded and Sunset Point Villas will have plunge pools. [lizardisland.com.au](http://lizardisland.com.au)

The new refreshingly contemporary and simple AVANI Atrium Bangkok is the first upscale hotel under the AVANI brand to open in Thailand. The hotel has 568 guest rooms and blends contemporary style, an upbeat vibe, Thai hospitality and professional and welcoming services. [avanihotels.com](http://avanihotels.com)

## Best of Borneo SABAH MALAYSIA



Borneo's odd wildlife  
up close



## A Beacon in New York

Ask anyone where to stay in New York and many will say, without missing a beat, and with great fervour, that you should stay at The Beacon. There is something really welcoming about the property – it doesn't have the grand lobby, bejewelled ladies and sun-sized chandeliers, but it has soul.

Located next to the Beacon Theatre on Broadway on the Upper West Side, the Hotel Beacon is really well positioned. We are a very short walk to Central Park, can stroll to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and are not far from the many shows lighting up Broadway. It has 260 rooms and suites with marble bathrooms, fully-equipped kitchenettes and free WiFi.

Our one-bedroom suite is spacious and comfortable, with the separate living area allowing us to spread out. Another big plus is that there is an excellent laundry downstairs – perfect if you have been travelling for a while or you have kids. The Beacon Bar is an excellent place for a pre-show drink or light meal but be warned, it is so convivial and the food so good that you might find an extra hour or two slipping by without noticing.

Staying here feels like you are living amongst New Yorkers and you really are. There is a wonderful supermarket across the road full of locals doing their shopping, and Viand Café next door, which is excellent, is the pick for many eclectic locals living in the area. [beaconhotel.com](http://beaconhotel.com)

By Helen Hayes



## So Sofitel Singapore

Singapore has a new star with the birth of the Sofitel So Singapore in the Singapore CBD. In keeping with Sofitel's French background, the historic heritage property, built in 1927 in Robinson Road, was designed by Singapore's only French design house, MIAJA Design Group and has many architectural and design highlights including a beautiful light installation called L'Hexagone, dazzling guests in the lobby, a bedtable in the restaurant and Karl Lagerfeld touches throughout the hotel. The front-of-house-ambassadors wear garde-robe from the Lagerfeld collection.

The property has 134 rooms in two wings – the So Hip and So Heritage wings – and every room has high ceilings, iPad minis that control all room functions and iPhone to call for room service, housekeeping or other hotel calls.

We are in one of nine Lofty Suites, which feature regal balconies flanked by regal columns, and overlook the busy business district. Suite guests also enjoy a complimentary one-way transfer from the airport, a daily Champagne breakfast and a late check-out.

There is a lot to love about So Sofitel Singapore, with La BibiloteK, with its collection of books, Xperience Restaurant and Bar and the exclusive rooftop bar, HI-SO, which has 360-degree views of Singapore's skyline, a golden tiled swimming pool and cabanas to relax in. [sofitel.com](http://sofitel.com)

By Anthony Gallagher

## Hotel Fort Canning, Singapore

Singapore never fails to surprise, and when it comes to high-end hotels, visitors to this island are spoilt for choice. Should you like a dash of history with your luxury property, the Hotel Fort Canning is a great choice. It was originally built in 1926 as the Administration building of the British Far East Command, was occupied by the Japanese in the war and was taken back by the British. Now it is a five-star, 86-room hotel with one of the best addresses in Singapore.

Surrounded by verdant greenery, the Hotel Fort Canning sits alongside the Orchard Road shopping precinct, Clarke Quay and the CBD. The Deluxe Rooms are impeccably furnished and quite unique, with highlights being the superb pieces by award winning furniture designer Poltrona Frau. Kick back and relax with complimentary broadband and WiFi, a Nespresso machine for coffee fiends and a wonderful monsoon rain shower. Next time, we might spoil ourselves and stay in either the Majapahit Suite or the Governor's Suite.

After a day of meetings, it was pleasurable to come back to the Fort Canning, winding down by one of the two full-sized swimming pools before delighting over dinner at the Glass House Restaurant, with its Asian Fusion cuisine with a modern twist. The Thai-style Prawn Bolognaise Pizza sounded different but the Singapore Laksa won me over. So did the views over the beautiful 90-year old trees in the park next door – it felt like we were in a real urban oasis. [hfc.com.sg](http://hfc.com.sg)

By Anthony Gallagher





## Castaway Island Fiji

We are greeted by a dozen staff singing a traditional welcome song in perfect harmony followed by a loud Fijian greeting of ‘BULA’ as we step off our boat and onto the white sands of Castaway Island.

This festive greeting, ideal sparkling blue ocean and palm fringed white sand beach sets the tone for our stay. I’m instantly in love with this place and can see why it is one of the longest running resorts in the Pacific.

The resort takes up only ten per cent of the 70 pristine hectares of the island allowing guests to discover the island’s natural beauty. Accommodation here is bures style with only 66 freestanding air-conditioned units strategically placed around the island and along the beaches all providing idyllic private settings.

Before being checked in we are introduced to one of Fiji’s award winning celebrity Executive Chef Lance Seeto, who gives us an insight into Fijian culinary history.

Chef Seeto has been on Castaway now for five years and his love of Fijian cuisine culture shines through. He explains that the Indian culture that exists in Fiji has had a huge influence on the local cuisine.

While engaging us Seeto’s chefs prepare a delicious six-course introductory meal. The dishes combine a fusion of Indian and Fijian spices and include a Dhal vegetable soup and a mixture of local curries such as mango and lime duck curry, assamese fish curry, rogan josh lamb curry and a massal chicken curry. I’d come back just for the food!

A short boat ride away is the uninhabited Modriki Island where the movie *Castaway* starring Tom Hanks was filmed. We spent an afternoon there exploring and snorkelling nearby on a reef named the Seven Sisters. The marine life combined with the bright coloured corals and sponges were a spectacular sight to behold.

Castaway Island is one of the most beautiful and serene resorts I’ve had the pleasure of staying at and look forward to coming back one day soon. Bula Vinaka. [castawayfiji.com](http://castawayfiji.com)

by Daniel Resnik

## Leura Rose

On a steep rise along a quiet narrow street in the eucalypt-dominated Blue Mountains west of Sydney is a lovingly refurbished, decorated and furnished three-bedroom timber cottage which lives up to its name Leura Rose.

With a fresh coat of blue paint, this 100-year-old Federation-style home-away-from-home truly blossoms among the gum trees, rekindling the bygone days when it was built as a country retreat for a wealthy Sydney merchant – only with a few extra luxurious mod cons for today’s guests.

What made this cottage significant to one couple from the Central Coast is summed up in the guest book: “The little things make the biggest difference.”

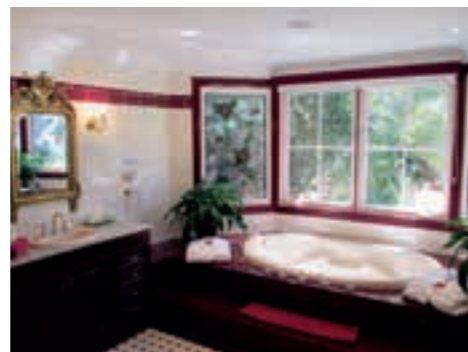
It’s that attention to detail by owner Lorraine Allanson which makes a stay special, from the radio/CD player and the music channelled to other rooms to the chocolates on the gowns in the bathroom and the decanter of port for the after dinner night cap.

The cottage’s large and open country-style kitchen is as inviting to gourmets as the elegantly furnished bedrooms with their four poster beds, the cosy lounge, the central heating and air conditioning, and the impressive spa bathroom with its own gas log fireplace are appealing to the guests.

Leura Rose is one of four elegant self-contained Mountain Whisper properties in the Blue Mountains, others being The Gatsby, Varenna and Strawberry Patch.

Like the guests before us, we signed off by writing, “we will be back.” [mountainwhispers.com.au](http://mountainwhispers.com.au)

By Mike Smith



## Ametis Villa Bali, Canggu

Canggu, a sleepy little village on the coast is quite a refreshing change from the full-on buzz around Kuta, Legian and Seminyak. A prestigious country club and a handful of trendy dining venues have introduced a touch of luxury to the area, but Canggu still manages to retain a timeless ambience that is steeped in Balinese tradition. The nearby beach is a popular spot for surfers – even Kelly Slater has surfed here – and anyone who appreciates a day of sun and sea topped off by a vibrant sunset. Ametis Villa Bali is the perfect place to stay in Canggu, a contemporary resort with 14 private villas located in 7500 square metres of villa area set in a large tropically landscaped compound. From customised furnishings to personalised amenities, including a personal butler, no detail has been overlooked and nothing is too much trouble. In the privacy of our villa, we could have participated in a private cooking lessons or had a poolside candlelight dinner – the romantic dinner won. No Balinese holiday is complete with some pampering, and Ametis Villas have Ruby Spa, which has several treatment rooms for relaxing massages. [ametisvilla.com](http://ametisvilla.com)

By Ali French

## Outrigger on the Lagoon, Fiji

Located only 80 kms from Nadi airport, The Outrigger on the Lagoon Fiji is set amongst 16 beautifully landscaped hectares, with 207 rooms and 47 strategically-placed bures creating a tranquil village setting.

Dining is a huge part of any holiday and the Outrigger ensures you will leave with lasting memories. Resident award-winning executive chef Shalesh Naidu is the only Fijian-born chef at a five-star resort and under his influence, the Outrigger has won several culinary awards.

To try and recreate his magical dishes, we participated in the Outrigger’s cooking course and had a fabulous time preparing, cooking and eating our creations.

The Outrigger has the largest resort pool in the South Pacific, and the renowned Bebe Spa is highly recommended. The spa menu is extensive and I can highly recommend the Drua massage that is performed by two therapists and can be best described as pure bliss.

There are also activities to explore away from the Resort such as a visit to a traditional local village via a jet boat ride (Sigatoka River Safari) where you get to see how local Fijians live. This was an enlightening and cultural experience. [outriggerfiji.com](http://outriggerfiji.com)

By Daniel Resnik



## Nanuku Resort & Spa

Nanuku, on the Pacific Coast of Viti Levu, is the first boutique resort on the main island to consist of all villas. And not just your standard villas; these residences are luxury all the way. There are five stunning Beachfront Residences – on the shore of Beqa Lagoon – and then there is the spectacular Vunikau (Treehouse) Residence, which sits atop a rocky outcrop overlooking the lagoon. The Residence consists of four suites – one being the Penthouse Suite – and guests can book all four, which would sleep up to ten, or book them individually.

All the residences are beautiful, with private yoga bures, plunge pools, media rooms, huge decks with outdoor living rooms and daybeds that are hard to resist.

What sets Nanuku apart is its emphasis on service. Guests are so well looked after, with personal butlers, chefs and private nannies on call – kids are very welcome at Nanuku and are treated like VIPs. It's not just the service that is out of this world, the fine dining experience is incredible. You can choose to dine at Kanavata Bar & Restaurant, the resort's Club House, in a pretty spot around the resort's private island or in your villa.

The Lomana Spa has the full spa menu of pampering delights, a good call after a yoga session or a workout with a personal trainer. Working out wasn't on our agenda – swimming in the sea, lazing in the daybed with a good book, and indulging in a cocktail at sunset, along with a fine wine over dinner, was more our speed.

[nanukufiji.com](http://nanukufiji.com)

By Anthony Gallagher



## Rancho La Puerta, Health Resort & Spa

Rancho La Puerta is one of the most famous and longest running health resorts and spa destinations in the world. Only 3.3kms from the United States border, it's snuggled into the hills of Tecate, Baja California, Mexico. Over the years some of the high profile guests who have experienced the privacy and serenity of this hidden oasis have included Sophia Loren, Barbara Streisand, Kim Novak, Robert Redford, Jane Fonda, Kate Winslet, Oprah and Madonna.

The number of repeat guests is impressive and what keeps them coming back is a journey that is life-changing with an abundance of activities to stimulate mind, body and spirit all centered in the resort's beautiful 1200 hectares.

Activities are available on the hour every hour and include early morning mountain hiking, walks, yoga, pilates, water shiatsu (Watsu), meditation, aquatic fitness, tennis, spin classes, gym/circuit training or cardio boxing. For the more creative, there are dance, sculpting and art classes. There is also a 2.5-hectare organic farm and an international cooking school, where you can learn to cook with celebrity chefs.

Delightful accommodation is spread out at numerous locations around the property and various budgets are catered for. All are beautifully decorated with hand-carved furniture and local crafts and look out onto the gardens, meadows or mountains. All the villas have sun decks to take advantage of the 325 plus days of sunshine.

The holistic health and beauty treatments are a memorable part of the stay. These include various types of massages, facials, wraps, body and therapeutic services. As relaxing and recuperative as they were, the only problem is that they seemed to end too quickly.

Breakfast and lunch at the ranch is buffet-style and dinner a sit-down affair. Shared tables are available as well as romantic settings for two. There are also peaceful secluded areas and settings available. The good news is that with such a healthy cuisine, added to all the resort activities, means you can eat like a sumo wrestler without putting on weight. Now where are those scales? [rancholapuerta.com](http://rancholapuerta.com)

By Daniel Resnik

## Andaz Tokyo Toranomon Hills

While it's almost impossible to imagine that there is any space left in Tokyo to build a new high rise building, Japan has once again proved that anything is possible, with the opening of the striking Toranomon Hills complex. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has specially redeveloped this area in readiness for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Billed as the 'Tokyo of Tomorrow', Toranomon Hills now boasts the city's second-tallest building.

Located on levels 47-52 of the Mori Tower, the 164-room boutique Andaz Tokyo Toranomon Hills, Hyatt Hotels' first Andaz hotel in Japan, opened last June, with bragging rights to some of most spacious rooms and best views of the Tokyo

skyline to be found in the city. Andaz is Hindi for 'personal style', which aptly describes the service and sophistication of this hotel. Complimentary WiFi, local calls, snacks, and non-alcoholic drinks from the mini-bar for all guests are a nice touch.

While each bathroom has deep tubs inspired by Japanese bath culture, the AO Spa on the 37th floor, as well as custom-designed wellness treatments, has a spectacular pool overlooking the Imperial Palace. The rooftop bar, lounge and Andaz Tavern are perfect for gazing out over Tokyo city as it changes from day to night.

Literally 'Tiger's Gate', Toranomon was the name of the Edo Castle gate, so along with easy access to Ginza shopping and the entertainment areas of Shinbashi, Akasaka, and Roppongi, there are also many old temples and shrines to explore. It's also close to the Marunouchi financial district and the government buildings in Kasumigaseki, making this hotel ideal for both business and leisure. [tokyo.andaz.hyatt.com](http://tokyo.andaz.hyatt.com)

By Kris Madden

