

The Majestic Spa, Majestic Hotel KL, offers an extensive spa menu. Call 03-2785 8070 or email [mspa@ytlhotels.com.my](mailto:mspa@ytlhotels.com.my)

will help to cleanse and exfoliate the skin. Your skin will also feel smooth and soft after we do this," replies my therapist confidently, before giving my body and arms a vigorous scrub. I remember wondering how such a slight girl could pack such strong strokes from her small hands.

The next bit of excitement comes in the form of the body masque which contains three essential oils, including lavender, in addition to aloe vera gel. According to my therapist, the masque will help to further moisturise the skin and help soothe it.

"I'll wrap you up now," says the therapist, whose name I wish I'd bothered to store somewhere in my brain. But when your brain has also turned to mush, in part lulled and dulled by all that lavender, it's not

easy. As she hoists my body, turning me every which way, and wrapping me up like last year's Christmas present, I remember silently commanding my body system not to suddenly decide that it needs to go to the "ladies" at any point. Or at least for a good 20 minutes, the duration which I have to lay comatose as I get my face and head massaged with a cleansing milk that promises to nourish, calm and provide oxygen.

A good 10 minutes passes and I congratulate myself for not getting too restless, as I'm wont to do, under normal circumstances. But then a niggling itch starts to build up, from somewhere on my left leg. It must be the salt working its magic and getting rid of all the toxins in my body, I reason to myself, while praying that the discomfort would disappear. To my horror, it doesn't. Instead, it multiplies, and suddenly I find myself squirming like I have ants in my pants. Desperately, I try to contain my movement, in part, out of fear of being reprimanded for not keeping

*It's a pleasant enough setting, classy and playful at the same time with its art nouveau design style, a discreet homage to the great Charles Ronnie Mackintosh's famous Willow Tea Rooms in Glasgow*

still. As I squirm and worm, my therapist continues calmly massaging my face.

"Ok, I can't do this," I finally snap. "Can we wash this off?" I recall asking the startled therapist as my body gives an involuntary shudder. As she attends to my request, I can sense her reluctance as she slowly peels and unrolls the heavy material from my body and proceeds to slough everything off.

After what seems like eons luxuriating in the hot shower washing the remnants off my harmonising body scrub and lavender body masque, I emerge from the cubicle, beaming. My skin feels wonderful and soft, I enthuse to my poor therapist, before apologising profusely for spoiling her fun. She tells me that I had cut short that particular treatment by a good 10 minutes. Opps.

#### TO LA LA LAND

As I settle myself once more into the now-nice and clean bed, a long towel blanketing me from the sudden chills after the warm shower, I close my eyes in anticipation of the highlight of the spa treatment, the Drift Away massage.

With soft music playing in the background, the lights dimmed once again, I surrender to the therapist's intuitive fingers. Lathering generously onto my body the Drift Away Lavender massage oil, a combo of several oils including lavender and clary sage as well as mandarin oil, she proceeds to release all the kinks and knots accumulated from the stresses of daily life through aromatherapy massage. Her strokes are long and flowing, occasionally segueing to circles and pumps techniques to restore the body's balance and make it deeply relaxed.

Stay awake, I remember commanding myself, for how would I remember the details for my write-up if I were to doze off again. But try as I might, I couldn't help but dip in and out of consciousness. And before I know it, I hear the therapist's voice whispering softly in my ear. "Miss, can you sit up, please?"

Has it really been three hours already?

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# TASTE OF NOSTALGIA

Revisiting the cafe in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman brings back lots of memories for **Tan Bee Hong**

**I**T'S new. Yet, there is something about Coliseum Cafe & Grill Room that makes me feel right at home. Is it the crisp white tablecloths or the brown old-fashioned chairs?

Seated next to the picture windows at the cafe's months-old outlet in Sunway Pyramid, I am sipping Gunner A, a ginger ale concoction, and watching the world outside blistering under the hot sun.

This is the fourth outlet for the decades-old cafe; the original outlet in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman opened in 1921.

The menu has seen changes over the years but managing director CH Low says

there are plans to revive the old menu.

On another day, in the original outlet, I am admiring slightly faded pictures of colonial planters in knee-length khaki, Lat cartoons and newspaper cuttings on the wall, especially that of one of the previous owners, Madam Khor Joo Saik and old advertisements.

## DAILY BREAD

Bread is a big deal at Coliseum. Two of my favourites are toast (RM3.70) and garlic toast (RM6). Made from roti Bengali, the two slices of bread are light and fluffy, with crisp edges slightly browned.

Then there are sandwiches, which Coliseum has been well known for: Chicken, turkey ham, egg, cheese, tuna, club.

But of all the sandwiches available, one stands out. As part of its plan to revive the old menu, Coliseum has introduced Colonial Fried Sandwich, a fresh new take on the TA Toast.

It seemed that Thomas Andersen, an employee with Harrison's & Crosfield in Kuala Lumpur, was a regular customer at Coliseum. Toast with mushroom and prawn was his No. 1 favourite snack so he taught the chef at that time to make it for him. The owner put it on the menu and other



Garlic toast (back) and Bengali toast with butter and kaya.

Photos **KHOO SU TING**

customers liked it too, so it was named TA Toast after Andersen.

Instead of prawn, Colonial Fried Sandwich (RM9.90) has a stuffing of chicken sauteed with onion, peas and shitake mushroom. The sandwich is then dipped in egg and pan fried. Very aromatic.

### WESTERN WAYS

In the old days, the Hainanese quickly learnt to make steaks and pies for the colonial masters. But they also learnt to improvise, creating their own recipes.

Hainanese chicken chop (RM23.90) is a typical example, served with a sauce rich in tomato, with onions, peas, mushroom and french fries on the side. Lovely tangy flavour.

Another retro recipe, oriental chicken chop (RM23.90) has chicken thigh, breaded and fried. It is served with a brown sauce cooked with tomato, onions, peas and chunky potato.

When I think of Coliseum, my memories practically sizzle. Yes, customers are known to crave for its sizzling meats such as chateaubriand steak, T-bone, lamb chop, sirloin and chicken.

Tenderloin steak (RM57.90) is nicely seared with a pink centre. Gravy is poured over the meat at the table, resulting in plenty of steam and an appetising sizzle. Don't worry about getting your clothing sprayed; a bib is provided. Customers get a choice of gravies including black pepper, mushroom, garlic or brown sauce. The meats are served with grilled tomato, broccoli, cauliflower and potato wedges.

Non-sizzling, grilled steaks and chops are also served.

### PASTA & PIE

Signature pot pies (beef or chicken) are a customer favourite but each pie is big enough for four and unfortunately, requires placing an advance order.

There are three types of spaghetti,

including Hainanese style (RM16.90) spaghetti, one of the 12 finalists in the KL Signature Dish competition at the recent KL Big Kitchen Festival (judges were tied and no winner was announced). After having heard much about it, I had to have a taste.

What looks like fresh yellow noodles turn out to be spaghetti fried with prawn, fish cake, chicken and choy sum in a light, soya sauce gravy. Delicious when eaten with cut red chillies.

### GO LOCAL

Coliseum is also known for its Malaysian specialties such as fried rice, Hainanese chicken rice balls, fried Hainanese noodles with beef or seafood, and soup noodles. Vegetarian noodles and fried rice are also available.

Spicy fried mee mamak (RM14.90) has a generous portion of prawn, tofu, fishcake and choy sum as well as egg. Just a squeeze of lemon and it's good to the last yellow noodle.

I love the baked crab (RM22.90) though the name is a bit of a misnomer as the stuffed crab is breaded and deep fried, not baked. The filling is chockfull of crab meat with a bit of scallions and onions. Such a fuss-free way to enjoy crab. I like that it's well fried, with no oily residue.

Low says the dish has been called baked crab since 1921, though the chef then decided to deep fry the crab instead of baking it.

### SO SWEET

The dessert menu is ample, with the silky smooth caramel custard pudding (RM6.90) being my favourite. Banana fritters (RM7.90) are drizzled with chocolate and served with vanilla ice cream. If you like chocolate lava (RM10.50), you will not be disappointed as the molten centre oozes with a creamy flow to accompany the fluffy cake.

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Hainanese style spaghetti is a marriage of western pasta with Asian cooking style.



Old tastes in oriental chicken chop.



Retro colonial fried chicken sandwich.



The bar area with settee seating

## OLD COLONIAL CHARM

The year was 1921. There was a buzz in Kuala Lumpur. The Coliseum Cafe and Grill Room had opened. The British colonials were excited. At last, a cosy place where they could gather in the evenings, toss aside their pith helmets and down their setengah (half whisky, half water) in anticipation of a lovely dinner. A creamy mushroom soup to start, followed with, perhaps, a sizzling steak...

That was over 90 years ago when the swing doors opened and closed for tin miners, writers (including W. Somerset Maugham), planters, traders and military personnel. Through the decades and up to present day, royalty, prime ministers and government officers have walked through the door.

The restaurant is still going strong and expanding in the Klang Valley. It opened in Plaza 33 (2013), Mid Valley (in 2014) and the latest in Sunway Pyramid (2015).

Walking through the door of the cafe is like taking a time machine to the past. The old bar with its wood counter polished to a sheen by the arms of thousands of customers leaning against it... ah, if only it could talk, what tales it would tell.

Instead, it is the walls that speak. The many framed pictures hanging tell a tale and paint a picture for today's generation.

There are old newspaper advertisements, pictures of planters dressed in knee-length khaki pants and newspaper cuttings that add to the tale of nostalgia. These take pride of place alongside cartoonist Lat's etchings of the restaurant that is his favourite hang-out in the city.

There used to be a cinema next door and a hotel upstairs. Both have closed.

Over the years, the cafe has seen changes in ownership. But happily, none of its owners have seen fit to turn it into a modern, hip coffee place or fast food outlet. Preserving a slice of heritage was the common goal they shared.

Walk into Coliseum Cafe & Grill Room today, especially the original outlet in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, and you will see the same half-wood panelled walls, the old bar counter and dark wood furniture.

Not that there are no changes. Worn-out sofas have been reupholstered and rickety furniture replaced with sturdier replicas. Air-conditioning too

is necessary today to keep customers comfortable. In the kitchen, the ancient brick charcoal stove has been replaced with gas cookers.

A former NST editor, whose eyes grow a little moist when talking about Coliseum Cafe, recalls how, as a little girl in the late 1960s, she would be all dressed up and excited when her family went for Sunday tiffin at the cafe. That cosy feeling is so strong that today, she continues to dine there, often bringing her own little girl along for meals and memories.

Many of the waiters and kitchen staff are long gone but don't be surprised to find a staff member whose father (and grandfather) had worked there before him. Coliseum Cafe is known for loyal staff members who work way past their retirement, such as Foo Meng Kai. Born in 1937, he has been with Coliseum for close to 30 years.

With a youthful complexion that belies his age and still jet-black hair ("No, I don't dye my hair," he protests), he looks sprightly as he goes about his duties, stopping here and there to greet customers.

**Tan Bee Hong**

### COLISEUM CAFE & GRILL ROOM

#### Where

Main Branch:  
98 Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, KL  
Tel: 03-2692 6270  
PG-02 Plaza 33, Section 13, PJ  
Tel: 03-7932 3228  
The Gardens, Mid Valley MegaMall, KL  
Tel: 03-2202 0588  
Oasis Boulevard, Sunway Pyramid, Bandar Sunway Tel: 03-5611 1921

#### Opening Hours

10am to 10pm

#### What's Cooking

Colonial western and Hainanese cuisine

#### Must Try

Sizzling steaks and local favourites

#### You'll Pay

About RM30 person. Set lunch available

#### Atmosphere

Nostalgic retro

#### The Loo

Clean

#### Service

Deferential

#### Overall Verdict

Must try



# PALATIAL RETREAT

A boutique resort has redefined rustic charm, while elevating the allure and artistry of Terengganu, writes **Khairul Ashraf Kammed**

**I** HAVE been driving all day. Except for the occasional stops it has been a long, solo drive.

Nevertheless, the drive has been smooth and comfortable, even when the journey to Setiu in Terengganu takes me on to the narrower State road after exiting the East Coast Expressway at Kuantan. However, I wish that

this slick Volkswagen Tiguan 1.4TSI 2WD comes equipped with auto-pilot so that I can enjoy the gorgeous Terengganu countryside.

Thankfully the traffic along the coastal road is slow enough to give me the opportunity to steal a few glances to enjoy the charming scenery along the road. The vast South China Sea is on my right side, and along the coast, there are

roadside eateries and stalls selling famous comfort food like *sotong celup tepung* (squid fritters) and *keropok* (fish nuggets or crackers). Quaint fishing villages dot the road.

My final destination is Terrapuri Heritage Village, a one-of-its-kind boutique resort in Kampung Mangkuk, a small fishing village near Penarik Beach, a 45-minute drive from Kuala Terengganu. The scenic drive from the capital only builds up my anticipation to experience Terrapuri or "Land of Palaces".

## LAND OF PALACES

Beyond the main gate - a wooden entrance with intricate carvings - is a cluster of centuries-old Malay houses, nicely laid out to look like a small village of aristocrats.

It resembles 17th century Terengganu palace grounds, with influences from the Langkasuka Kingdom which existed from the second to 16th century. The kingdom is said to span from the east coast of Terengganu up to the Pattani region, north of Kedah, and deemed to be even older than the



The morning sun on one of the houses of Terrapuri.

#### FAST FACTS

**Terrapuri**  
**Kampung Mangkuk, Setiu,**  
**Terengganu.**  
**Tel : 09-624 5020**  
**Fax : 09-622 8093**  
**Email: info@terrapuri.com**  
**website : www.terrapuri.com**

#### How to get there

Driving to Kampung Mangkuk from Kuala Terengganu takes less than an hour by car. From Kuala Lumpur (if you don't intend to enter Kuala Terengganu town, drive along the East Coast Expressway and exit at the Kuala Terengganu (Kampung Gemuroh) Toll Plaza. Drive up to Merang for another 60km. From then on follow signboards to Kampung Penarik then Kampung Mangkuk. Terrapuri provides transfers to and from Kuala Terengganu Airport, Merang Jetty, Kuala Besut Jetty and Kota Baru Airport in Kelantan.

#### Facilities

Meeting room (Berang), reading room and arts and crafts gallery (Pulau Rusa), dining villa (Tanjung), spa (Chukai), and Serengas shop which sells a unique collection of antiques and other collectibles.

#### F&B Outlets

Apart from western cuisine, Terrapuri also provides scrumptious local delicacies like the Ayam Hikayat, Singgang Ikan Aya, Gulai Lemak Tenggiri Seggora and Sira labu. From the Tanjung house, one can enjoy a scenic view of the tranquil resort while digging in.

Malacca Sultanate.

After passing the Sesayap Courtyard and other villas which house some of the main facilities, I see a swimming pool positioned strategically at the heart of the charming 4ha property. The clear blue water entices me.

Water spurts from several traditional stone grinders at one end of the swimming pool and a river flows by the other end of the pool.

Descending a few steps and walking along a narrow path next to nipah palms and a swamp, I reach the main area where several villas stand on a plain.

The stilt dwellings almost encircle a fruit orchard.

Each has its own unique feature. One has several fishing boats underneath, another has spin wheels and another a collection of old-style coconut scrapers on the verandah.

While most of the villas are of the typical Terengganu architectural style called *rumah bujang* (65sqm with six main pillars), there is also a bigger house, *rumah bujang berserambi* (with 12 main pillars).

Possessing some Cambodian and Thai features, the roofs are of terracotta tiles and the rest of the structures of the house are from cengal wood. The houses were built without the use of nails. The wooden panels are fitted together using wooden joints held in place by pasak (wooden pegs) of penaga wood, which means each house can be dismantled and reassembled.

Upon entering the Sesayap courtyard, guests will see these simple yet slightly decorative pools circulating the houses and making them seem like floating in the water from afar.



## THEMED ROOM

My villa, Sungai Mas, has nothing below it and from the ground to the main floor of the house it is high enough for an adult to stand. In the past, houses are raised 2.5m off the ground to avoid floods during the rainy season.

The villa is made up of three sections — the verandah has a bench and a coffee table, the living room contains two single poster-beds and the rear houses a luxurious bathroom with a large mirror, sitting toilet, shower and a wooden bathtub.

There is no ceiling in the room and each window and door is embellished with beautiful intricate carvings. Like the other villas, all the staircases come in odd numbers, reflecting an Islamic tradition that God favours odd numbers.

The theme at my villa is wayang kulit (shadow puppets). There are three colourful leather puppets on the closet and a few other characters framed and hung on the wall.

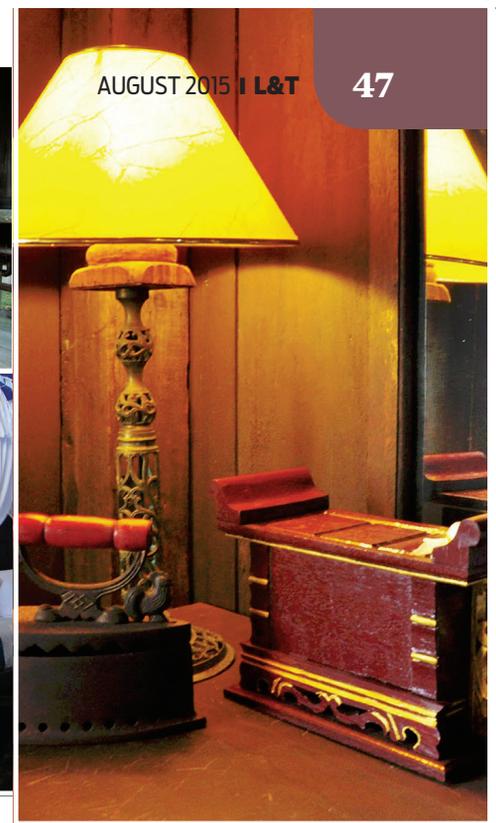
For ultimate comfort, the room is equipped with air-conditioner, ceiling fan, kettle and refrigerator but no television or Internet connection.

So what do I do apart from reading my fantasy novel and playing the dull games on my mobile phone?

Certainly for someone who is in dire need of unwinding after the long drive, the powdery white beach is a draw, where I can enjoy the view of the azure sea and just do nothing.

## PRICELESS COLLECTION

One man's collection is another's luxury. This is what Terrapuri Heritage Village is all about. The collection of 29 traditional houses, aged 100 to 250 years old, is the prized possession of Terrapuri owner Alex Ping who searched for Malay traditional houses all over the State. He bought,



dismantled and reconstructed them at the current site.

Eighteen years and RM10 million later, Alex opened the main gate of his little village. Terrapuri received its first guests in 2011.

"It is said that in the past, the traditional Terengganu Malay house were built to resemble a huge creature with legs. If you look closely at the roofs which are made of Singhora tiles, they look like the scales of a Makara (a sea creature or dragon which is popular in Hindu mythology)," he adds.

When Islam spread in Terengganu, most of the Hindu influences were assimilated, adds the Merang-born entrepreneur who is a fifth generation Terengganu Peranakan.

"If you look closely at the top of every pillar of these houses, you will see that there are multi-coloured cloths attached to it. They are called *bunga halang* (blocking flower) or *bendera pendekar* (warrior's flag).

"Black symbolises the supernatural

world, red for steel-like spirit and white means purity. While in the past the scripts on these cloths were written in Sanskrit, now it reflects some of the holy verses in the Quran. It is to protect the house from being struck by lightning, and also to ward off evil spirits," says Alex.

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## STURDY COMFORT

FOR an SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle), the Tiguan 1.4TSI 2WD offers very good driving, is economical and boasts a strong engine. It has a very practical, roomy and comfortable body.

It appeals as a roomy all-purpose car, suitable for carrying heavy loads and luggage for long trips out of the city. It has all the other advantages of an SUV with a just nice size for city use.

It handles sharp corners

and curves well. The tyres deliver a firm grip on the road during propelling and manoeuvrability is smooth.

In terms of fuel efficiency, the SUV can also be considered to be economical as I spent a mere RM200 for petrol from Kuala Lumpur to Terengganu and return covering 1087km.

The Tiguan also has an auto-hold function which allows the driver to take the foot off the brakes while the car is stationary.

Overall its ABS, EBD, ESC, six airbags and ISOFIX mounts give a certain security on the driving.

Euro NCAP has awarded the VW Tiguan five stars for its crash test results.

Priced at RM178,888.



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