



## French Flair

**B**angkok overflows with restaurants but most fine dining is restricted to the narrow precincts of hotel kitchens. One of the dissenters from these ranks is the newly relocated **Le Vendome**, where Michelin-restaurant veteran Chef Nicolas Joanny serves up traditional French food with a contemporary twist.

Now in a two-storey house complete with lush courtyard garden and pool, the atmosphere at Le Vendome is more relaxed and homey than its previous bistro-chic incarnation - the dining room holds a maximum of 30 guests, with a petite bar tucked into the corner, but the food is still impeccable.

Clean, fresh flavours; excellent ingredients, and meticulous presentation are key - the Langoustine bisque is topped with a light cappuccino-like froth, balancing its buttery dense flavour, and is accompanied by a crispy prawn pastilla. The seafood is a delight, as is the Tasmanian rack of lamb, served with eggplant 'caviar' and thyme-infused just.

Service is discreetly attentive and the wine list, while understandably focused on European grapes, is well chosen and surprisingly reasonably priced.

267/2 Sukhumvit Soi 31, Klong Toey, Bangkok  
Tel: + 66 (0) 2662 0530, [levendomerestaurant.com](http://levendomerestaurant.com)

## ON LINE

### Eco-warriors get their own channel

Concerned with Climate Change? No matter where you are in the world a new web-based video channel at [bigpicture.tv](http://bigpicture.tv) will give you the full picture on the environment, with hundreds of free, thought-provoking videos of global experts in sustainability.

Big Picture launched in February and features diverse contributors like Annie Lennox, Nobel Laureate Nelson Mandela and eco-activist Vandana Shiva. London-based founder Marcus Morrell says, "The big picture is about pragmatic solutions, recognising that the crises we face bring with them opportunities to rethink, innovate and progress."

### NEW ZILD NEWS

#### New Maori experience in Abel Tasman

Known as the Abel Tasman Maori Uncut, this kayaking and guided walking trip provides travellers with a special insight into Maoridom, including stories behind the famous Split Apple Rock and medicinal gifts that Tane Mahuta (Lord



of the Forest) provided for ailments. The tour is designed to be interactive, showing traditional activities and how Maori traditions are woven into the contemporary world. Full day land and sea trip, and half-day land-only trip are available for kayakers and walkers. [Maria.bernstone@aquataxis.co.nz](mailto:Maria.bernstone@aquataxis.co.nz)

#### Kiwi Extreme Adventures

Kiwi Extreme ([kiwiextreme.com](http://kiwiextreme.com)) is a new white-water adventure company, offering river bugging and river sledging trips. The company runs trips along the Wairoa and Kaituna rivers and passengers can be transported door to door.

## SUMMER HOLIDAY STAYS



### China Beach Luxe

Vietnam's most lavish beach resort is a hot destination for summer

Adrian Zecha, of Aman resorts fame, has a new project in Vietnam. **The Nam Hai** ([thenamhai.com](http://thenamhai.com)) is managed by Zecha's GHM and occupies 35 hectares of landscaped tropical gardens overlooking the South China Sea, this is an all-villa resort with one-bedroom- and pool villas.

Just 15 minutes away is picturesque Hoi An, a quaint blend of indigenous Vietnamese, Chinese and French colonial architecture preserved as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

### Off the Beaten Track

Summer Escapes to the Ancient 'Heritage Kingdoms' of Cambodia and Vietnam

**Victoria Hotels & Resorts** ([victoriahotels-asia.com](http://victoriahotels-asia.com)) is offering discounted summer packages at its spa resorts in the historic 'Heritage Kingdoms' of Angkor in Cambodia and Hoi An in Vietnam.

The 'Heritage Kingdoms' promotion features two nights at the Victoria Angkor Resort & Spa, just 10 minutes from the Angkor Wat temple complex, and three nights at the Victoria Hoi An Beach Resort & Spa.

On offer from May 2nd to Sept 30th, the package is priced at USD 275 and includes an hour-long massage at both resorts and various other benefits. Alternatively, a 'Summer Escape' to the Victoria Hoi An Beach Resort & Spa is priced at USD 147 per person.

### NEW TABLES

Hong Kong-based Wang Workshop Group runs a unique dim-sum tea-house amidst antique Chinese scrolls.

"Shu Zhai is a Chinese teahouse and traditional Dim Sum and "Dan Jia" restaurant - and a library of sorts," says founder Calvin Yeung. "We selected scholastic titles and Chinese legends for the library. It is, in my mind, a lifestyle idea, a unique concept for Hong Kong that focuses on expressing art in various forms - especially in my food creations."

**Shu Zhai**, a two-level traditional Chinese restaurant and teahouse, is situated in a tranquil, tree-shaded lane just off Stanley Main Street. According to Yeung, the food at Shu Zhai is a combination of Dim Sum and true "Dan Jia" - which means the fishing village recipes of local boat people of Hong Kong. Shu Zhai itself is an old-fashioned word for "library" in Chinese and is also one of only a handful of dining venues in Hong Kong that allows dogs in the premises, providing they stay outside.



London's hottest hangout, ZUMA, opens in Hong Kong this Spring

**Zuma** (Tel: +852 3657 6388), London's award winning Japanese restaurant and bar concept is opening its doors to Hong Kong this spring. Located in the heart of Central at The Landmark, the 10,000 sq-ft split-level space will serve the vibrant and contemporary Japanese cuisine from award winning chef and co-founder Rainer Becker.

A place to see and be seen, Zuma's lounge and bar on level six is the ideal venue for pre-dinner champagne and cocktails.



## BA Back in Business in BKK

BA & Qantas have invested USD 4m to build joint First and Business lounges at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok. Ms Julianne Rogers, Manager Thailand for Qantas/BA informed this magazine that the lounge has been specially designed with the business traveller in mind, with integrated technology to facilitate communication. The design is similar to the airlines' lounge in Singapore.

Bangkok's Business Lounge has been operational since March, whilst the First Lounge is completed in May. Transitters will find an innovatively designed space and luxurious furniture from some of the world's most renowned furniture makers: Thai Ping woven wool carpets; Florence Broadhurst-designed wall coverings; and Jim Thompson silk window treatments.

There's more space, more seats, more showers, better business facilities (wireless internet access and high-speed internet PC's.). Seating zones comprise bar/dining options in the buffet area; more private lounge zones for reading and snoozing; and more open areas conducive to conversation.

"Business travellers want to arrive in a destination ready for business", Ms Rogers explained. "We make that a reality through our top-end lounges, lie-flat seats, timely schedules, connectivity, punctuality, and functional online check-in system on *ba.com* which gives our passengers total control." - Peter Myers

## Hotel Head-Ups

### Lonely No More

**Westin** (*westin.com*) invites guests to sample local cultures and flavours with their new nightly social events.

Having discovered that some 34% of their guests reported feeling lonely when away from home from a Westin survey, the hotel group have been introducing their 'Unwind...A Westin Evening Ritual' nightly parties featuring the tastes, sights and sounds of each destination. From lessons on mixing a Bellini in Venice, to learning about fine Scottish Whisky in Turnberry, to whipping up a spicy batch of guacamole in Tucson, each of the Westin brand's 129 hotels worldwide have carefully curated social experiences which are rolling out in hotels over the next month.

### Oriental Mandarins

#### The Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong unveils the Lichfield Suite

A regular visitor to Hong Kong for over 40 years, world-renowned photographer Lord Lichfield (creator of the group's award-winning *He's a fan/She's a fan* campaign) always stayed at **The Mandarin Oriental** (*mandarinoriental.com*), considering it his Asian home.



Furnished in black, white, silver and red, the suite is reminiscent of the 1960s and 70s, with stylistic details that evoke a photographic studio. The glass-topped coffee table contains Lichfield memorabilia, including contact sheets, keepsakes and even some of the miniature Tabasco bottles that he always carried with him. Some never previously shown shots of Hong Kong are hung on the walls as well as portraits of Joanna Lumley and Chaplin and Brando, alongside informal photographs of the British Royal family.

### Clear Weather for Phang Nga Cruising

Located in one of the most pristine tropical islands in Asia, **Banyan Tree Phuket** (*banyantree.com*) presents guests with an added dimension to luxurious holidays in the sun.

The resort offers all-day nautical cruising on its recently refurbished classic Grand Banks yachts, the *Sea Gypsy* and *Pi Marn*. The private cruise traverses Phang Nga Bay, a stunning natural destination with limestone islands, assortment of local wildlife and unspoiled beaches, complemented by the best Banyan Tree service. The resort group recently unveiled its Stay and Sail packages, with accommodation in their all-new Double Pool villas and the all-day cruise.

### Mixing Business with Pleasure at The Oriental Singapore

Business travel tends to be restricted to office blocks and hotels. Adding an extra 'personal' day on to your itinerary is a good way to resolve this, but how do you ensure you're getting the most from your days exploring? **The Oriental Singapore** (*mandarinoriental.com/singapore*) has come up with the perfect solution for your work/life balance.

Priced at USD 655 per night, for a well-appointed Premier Harbour or Ocean Room, the Oriental Explorer Package allows guests to pick from several trip 'menus' covering day and night, modern and cultural. Think Singapore Zoo or a Heritage Tour by day, China Town or a show by night. Kick back and let the hotel

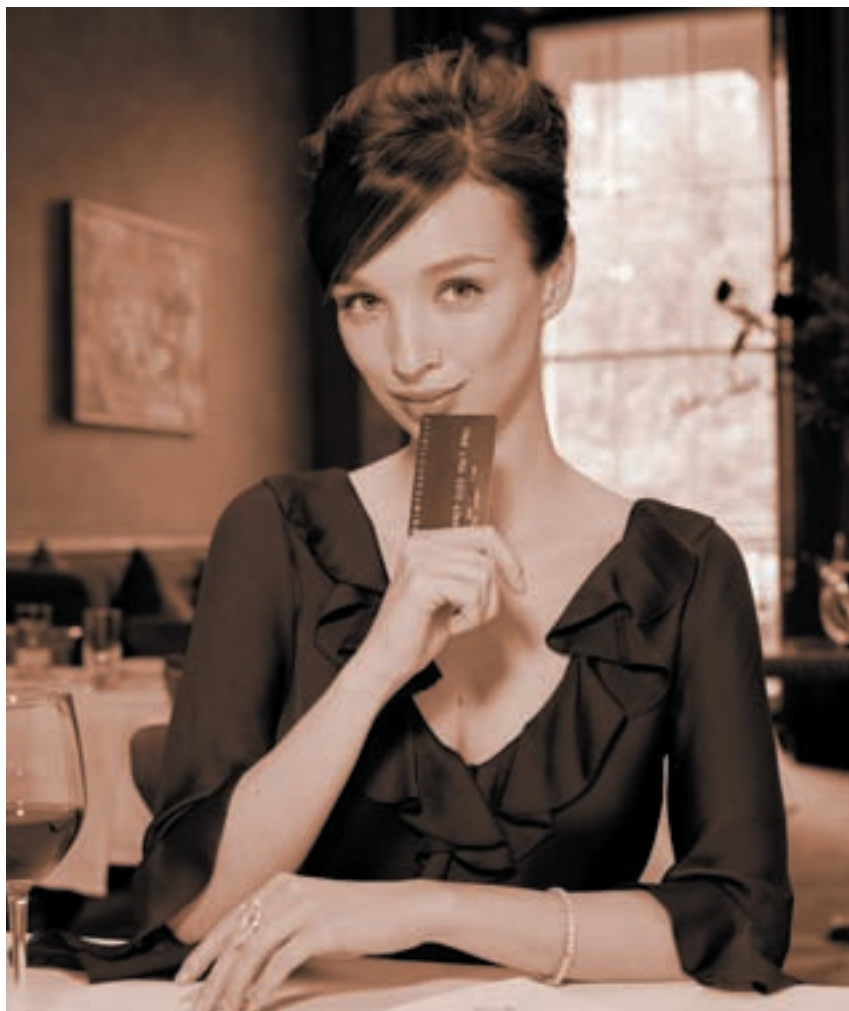


organise you a chauffeur-driven trip with a personal guide. You'll also enjoy a 6pm late check out and 20% off spa treatments at The Oriental Spa.

Review by Peter Myers

## The 'Ask Us Anything' Company

You need two albino llamas delivered to Hawaii - tomorrow. You want to be on the guest-list of the hottest London club - tonight. Who do you call? Quintessentially are the go-to guys for the want-it-yesterday traveller.



A global private members club and luxury concierge service **Quintessentially** (Q) is becoming one of the world's hottest 'lifestyle management' companies. London-based, Q has Asian offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Dubai (plus the other big Gulf states), and now Bangkok.

Managing one's lifestyle can be time-consuming business (and make no mistake, the world is divided between those with a life, and those with a 'lifestyle'), best arranged by those with

connections - i.e., the clued-up staff of Q.

Q is all about providing the best things in life to those who can afford it. As Aaron Simpson, the company's CEO told me over dinner at Phuket's Amanpuri, the stupidest thing you can do is die rich. We were there to witness the kind of wow-factor, personalised extras which Q can provide to members during their travels. Individually chauffeured from home to airport, and airport to hotel, we arrived to find our guestrooms filled with our preferred lotions and

potions, our favourite music playing on the stereo system. Dinner that night featured Wagyu beef and two cocktail mixologists.

Simpson, 35, an ex-film producer for Scala then Elton John's Rocket Pictures, was an insightful host. His time with Elton John made him realise the potential for taking care of demanding, discerning clients. Over the years, Q have managed to book the Egyptian pyramids for a Saudi prince's marriage proposal (luckily his wife-to-be said yes, or it would have been a waste of USD 200 million); sending a dog from Asia to America by private jet with 48 hours notice; and delivering a metal detector to a member who had lost her keys in a field.

Jet-setters tend to be spontaneous. It's not unusual for a member to call a day before a trip to London and demand a table in the hardest-to-book restaurants. Trading on its connections, Q can almost certainly oblige; The Ivy's of this world call Q whenever they receive a last-minute cancellation.

But what about PAs, one asks. Isn't that what they're for? No, says Q. Many execs don't want their staff to know about their private life, and anyway, what PA would be able to swing entry to the hardest-to-enter clubs across the planet on a couple of day's notice?

In several American cities, Q isn't selling any more memberships, having reached their quota - any more would risk a slip in service standards. They now have 800 staff in 28 countries - not bad for a seven-year-old start-up.

They say money can't buy you happiness, but Q's all out to change that, for a price.

*Q's Bangkok office is scheduled to open officially in June. Visit [quintessentially.com](http://quintessentially.com).*

Review by Jeerawan Duangnam



*Family-friendly, facility-rich seclusion at Ban Kao on Koh Samui*

## Villa Seclusion

**Coconut trees, old wooden houses, lazy dogs and lazier days await at Ban Kao Tropical Boutique Hotel, off Samui's beaten-by-too-many-tourists track.**

Like a romantic poet pining for a golden age, modern visitors to Samui may be forgiven for holding up a picture postcard to the reality of Chaweng Beach, Samui's main strip, and wondering what the hell happened. Chaweng and neighbouring Lamai form a bustling, vibrant, often chaotic village. It's a great place for a night out - karaoke bars, English pubs and lantern-lit beach bars vie with world-class clubs like Mint and Q Bar for your patronage - but those looking for a more tranquil vacation often use Samui as a jumping-off point to more isolated islands in their search for peace and tranquillity.

**Ban Kao Tropical Boutique Hotel** offers a compromise for those who don't want to completely abandon the bright lights of the strip for the silence of an island retreat. Head to the

southern tip of the island, and like a snake shedding its skin, Samui shrugs off the glitzy tourist development, and coconut trees, old wooden houses, lazy dogs and lazier days await. Ban Kao is a cluster of villas owned as holiday houses and run by a management company. The pay off for visitors? All the benefits of staying in a house, with all the conveniences of a resort.

The houses have been built for European tastes as holiday homes, so they are well designed, solidly constructed with excellent amenities and well spaced from each other.

The atmosphere may be Swiss-Family-Robinson, but all the mod cons are laid on; gym, Spa, satellite broadband connection and a bar that serves the best margaritas on the island. And the best part - you're far enough away from

Chaweng to feel secluded, but close enough to pop in should the craving for hedonism, and cocktails served in a bucket the size of your head, hit.

Try to book the Akha Villa if you can; named after the Akha hill tribe and thoughtfully decorated, it's a favourite thanks to its lofty ceilings and breeze-attracting floor plan. The villas come fully stocked, so no need for pesky supermarket runs, and with fully functional kitchens they make an excellent option for family vacations. Otherwise book a table at the beachside Asiate Restaurant and get romantic in the flickering candlelight.



**Ban Kao Tropical Boutique Hotel, Residence & Spa**  
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