

SLEEPER

GLOBAL HOTEL DESIGN

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Public

Ian Schrager returns to New York with his first independent hotel concept in a decade

The Ritz-Carlton

A rainforest resort honouring Malaysian traditions lands in Langkawi

Bulgari

Antonio Citterio Patricia Viel Architects bring a slice of Italy to Dubai



Above: Villas benefit from private pools, sun decks and outdoor living spaces topped with lounge furniture by Janus et Cie

consoles, stools, side tables and oak-framed mirrors, all finished in materials selected to represent the location as well as withstand the island elements.

The authentic touches continue in the F&B venues, where vibrant batik pieces crafted using age-old techniques decorate the spaces, along with environmentally-friendly textiles woven from pandanus trees in another display of artisanal craftsmanship. The four restaurants, designed by Strickland, cater to all manner of tastes serving up Malay, Chinese and Indian cuisine as well as western favourites. The adults-only Horizon perches above natural rock formations and is the ideal setting for sundowners, while Langkawi Kitchen, with four live cooking stations, is modelled on the traditional longhouses of Borneo, its long, narrow footprint allowing for a higher proportion of window seats.

Completing the line-up, Hai Yen – a Mandarin phrase meaning banquet by the sea – is an authentic Chinese restaurant on the water's edge illuminated with 500 lanterns, while the alfresco Beach Grill, constructed from natural stone and wood, sits at the far end of the site for uninterrupted views of the Andaman.

The resort also has a sizeable kids club – housed in two giant 'toadstools' – as well as a programme of events curated to foster a connection between the guest and their surroundings. Batik painting, traditional folk dancing and rainforest treks are amongst the experiences on offer, along with the more conventional leisure facilities such as a fully-equipped gym, tennis court, infinity pool, and outdoor yoga studio.

It is the Ritz-Carlton's spa however, that's the real crowd-pleaser thanks to its Instagrammable form. Home to five cocoon-shaped pavilions that appear to float above the sea, the spa is designed to resemble Malay Bubus – the intricately woven fish traps that have been used by local fishermen for centuries. Connected by over-water walkways, each pavilion is surrounded by a circular platform with panoramic ocean views.

In line with the rest of the resort, treatments have been inspired by the indigenous healing and beauty ceremonies practiced by local shamans on the island. It is this connection to the locale that will undoubtedly create the authentic guest experience that so many travellers crave, and ultimately set the resort apart.

EXPRESS CHECK-OUT: 114 guestrooms | 4 restaurants | 2 bars | Ballroom | Spa, gym, outdoor swimming pool | www.ritzcarlton.com
Operator: The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company | **Architecture:** Tropical Area | **Interior Design:** Tropical Area; Strickland (F&B)