

That Butterfly Effect in Samui

When the butterfly finally lands on a flower, you see with new eyes the luminosity of its petals – its closeness to the butterfly brings out its sing-out-loud hues. Outside, you look calm. Inside, you are trembled and slightly shaken.





Butterflies are creatures of surprise. They flit and flutter and your eyes can never rest because you think about how colourful their wings might be – or not. And when one takes pause on a stalk or leaf, its coloured patterns are so vividly dark or bright they will not let you go. Until it folds its wings in slow firm motion and off it goes again – in a dizzy, and lands on a corner of the

breakfast table – and stares with that piercing eye – that is actually a black round spot on the underside of its wing.

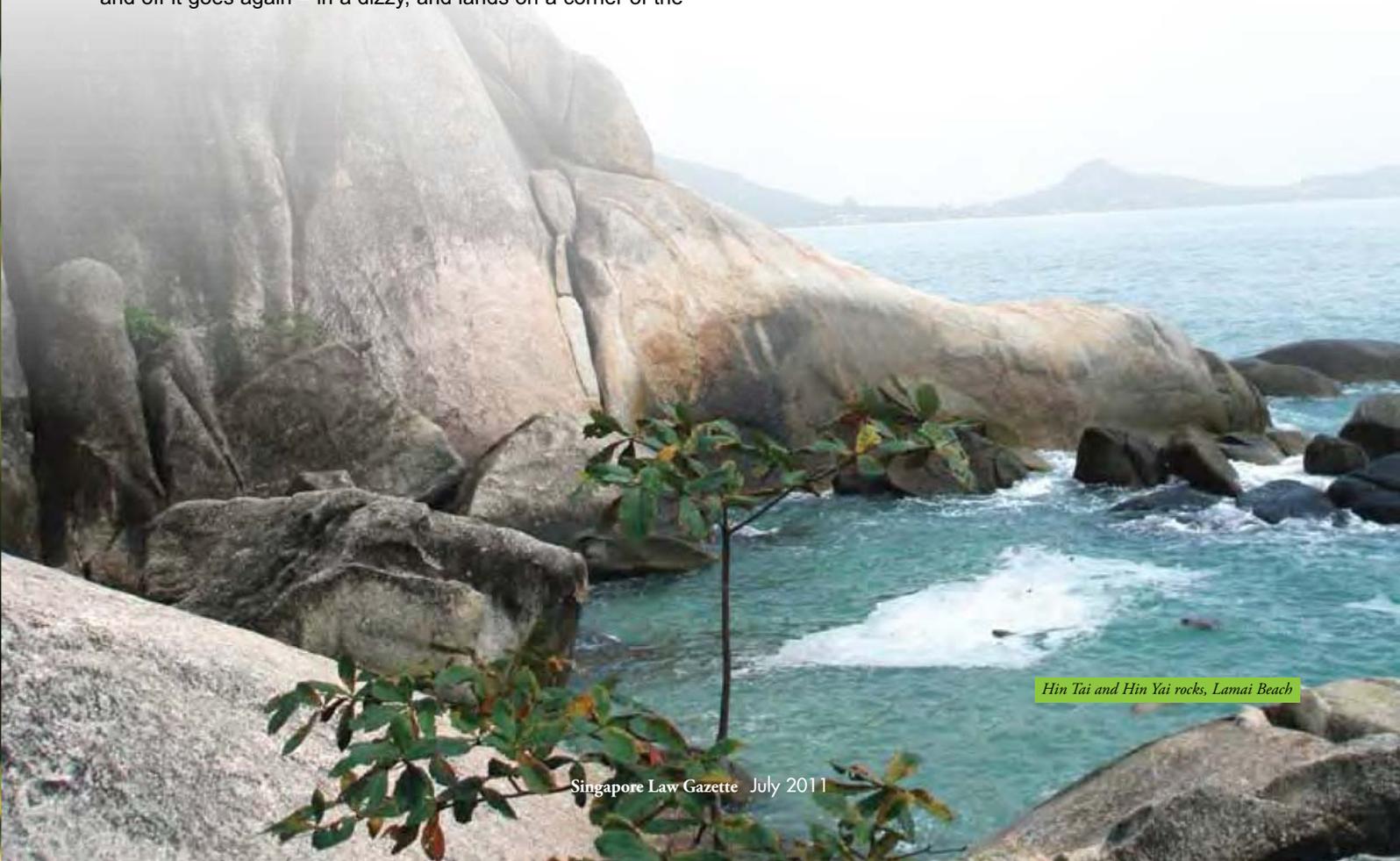
It stares you out of ease, but into a deeper discovery of its beauty than the first time round.

Between the buffet trays, it stops; then it goes – repeatedly – against the glass pane of the restaurant's French windows because it does not understand what is keeping it back from the outdoors.

You notice then – how could you not – details you never saw before. The wood grain of the restaurant table, the gold-speckled black marble of the wall, the spacious comfort of H-Bistro at Hansar Samui resort. You are surprised by the art-deco curves of the Le Creuset food covers. You see the invisible glass pane too, and tap on it gingerly to make sure it is really there, and has been all this time.

When the butterfly finally lands on a flower, you see with new eyes the luminosity of its petals – its closeness to the butterfly brings out its sing-out-loud hues. Outside, you look calm. Inside, you are trembled and slightly shaken by this loveliness you realise was always there.

All this and more, from simply following a butterfly trail.



Hin Tai and Hin Yai rocks, Lamai Beach



Free standing bath in Seaview XL room, Hansar Samui

Hansar Samui – The Romantic Get-away

This 74-room property by Bophut Bay is an independent luxury hotel that is brimful of romantic possibilities.

There is the free-standing bathtub plonked in the middle of the Seaview XL room – no doors, no partition – with a sprinkling of rose petals on the water. Open concept is taken to the edge here. There is no separate bathroom either, just components of it semi-enclosed by glass. The shower room delivers a rainforest drenching from a massive showerhead – just don't expect to close any door on yourself because there isn't any. Beyond the four-poster bed is the oversized balcony looking over the swimming pool and the sea.

This borderless romance continues at breakfast at H-Bistro, the resort restaurant, where the French windows are flung open to the terrace outside, and the servings are from a buffet spread. If one reads the daily curated newsletter placed at the breakfast table, one will see the offer of a private table on the beach for dinner. One needs to quickly grab this offer by signaling to the waiter, as there is only a solitary table set up each night by the lapping waters. There are no extra charges for this.



Potpurri of spices and herbs, Luksa Spa

Pre-dinner drinks are a must at the Chill Lounge (one of the Really Review™ hotspots of this year), if only for the cool divan beds that perch over the beach below. What is delicious are the margaritas that re-calibrate the inner compass in the head, with tequila and a salted rim that sears with delight.

One then sails downstairs with a head lighter than air, for dinner. It is a curious meal by the sea, watching *khom loi* (floating lanterns) ascend the night skies, and chasing oysters (Fines de Claire, Kumamoto, Tatamagouche) down with champagne (Blanc de blanc). It is that taste of icy brine with tones of copper and iron that merges so perfectly with the bubbly dryness of the drink. Order a dozen of the French oysters which are the best of the three. The end notes of the oyster tasting are a sweetness that fights with the citrus bite of the champagne. Neither prevails; both enmesh their complexities for an exquisite finish.

After dinner, a dip in the infinity pool by the moonlight is an experience that reboots any relationship. The salt water pool simulates the sensation of swimming in the sea. The water



Private Dining on Bophut Beach, Hansar Samui

washes away disagreements and unhappiness, even as it tingles and disquiets (because the sea always disquiets).

To complete the night, the resort's Luxsa Spa is the stop for many treatments based on Thai herbs and the concept of the four elements of earth, water, air and fire. The romance factor is heightened with the couples' treatment rooms that ensure a cocooned privacy. A private whirlpool allows couples to relax.

The resort offers understated elegance and plenty of unhurried opportunities. If you were overwhelmed by your activities the day before, and slept past the hour for the buffet breakfast, the kitchen will oblige you with room service breakfast at any time for two that is already covered under your rates.

And if all this cuddling from before is still not enough, perhaps breakfast in the bath will fill the gap.

Hansar Samui
101/28 Moo1
Bophut, Koh Samui
Surathani, Thailand 84320

Three types of rooms, Beachfront, Seaview and Seaview XL, are available. All are sea-facing.

Fisherman Village, Bophut Beach



Fisherman Village

At night, the stretch of shops and houses next to the resort comes alive. Known as Fisherman Village, this is really tourist land comprising almost wholly restaurants and pubs when once it was traditional wooden shophouses for fishermen. What saves this place is the preservation of architectural details and structures and the absence of garish signage

and adult bars. Pushcarts selling traditional foods add to the ambience. One side of the street overlooks the beach, and the restaurants there have charming views. There is a Mediterranean allure here especially every Friday, where the narrow road is closed to traffic, and becomes a walking street.



The bar on the tar (Fisherman Village)



Chill Lounge, Hansar Samui



Beach Bar, Hansar Samui

The Really Review Hotspot – Chill Lounge

Some places are hyped-up and other places are quiet. The Chill Lounge at Hansar Samui is one low-key spot that one discovers with secret satisfaction. With only seven divine divans that overlook the sea, this is an extremely stylish spot to chat the night away. It is a small place that teaches the still of the night as well as aspects of beauty of the human voice speaking against the backdrop of darkness. The perfect place to down a malt whiskey or sake, to light the fire of the belly.

► **The Really Review**
by Jeffrey Lee

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Water in action, Lamai Beach

Hansar Samui, Bophut Bay

