

HATS OFF TO HANSAR!

Hansar Samui, in Fisherman's Village, has put together the ultimate romantic escape for two.

There's romantic and there's kitsch and sometimes it's a fine line separating the two. With the romantic lure of an island paradise, Samui offers many 'unique' couples packages some of which border on just plain corny and tasteless. Hansar Samui on the other hand, has aced it. They've come up with a sensual spa package followed by a romantic beachside dinner that's classy and sophisticated and special enough to create one of those remember-for-ever days.

Here's how 'The Romantic Elements Balancing & Dinner Under the Stars' goes. You'll arrive as a couple at Hansar's Luxsa Spa for a three-hour pampering session. What's unique about Luxsa is that the treatments are customised for each client based on info given on a pre-treatment form. According to Thai medicine and healing, the four body elements of earth, water, air and fire need to be balanced throughout life. Spa Manager, Khun Jern, works out which is your element, based on birth date, as well as other factors and this will determine which herbs, spices and other products are used in order to benefit the most from the treatments.

The 'Elements Balancing Package' starts with a floral footbath using essential oils, followed by half an hour in a herbal steam room. When you're all hot and steamy, sink into the deep, aromatic bath with floating petals and sip on pots of herbal tea to rehydrate and cleanse from the inside. Now as tempting as it is to make patterns with the floating flowers and pretend the red rose petals are your painted toenails, rather close your eyes, lie back and let the herbs and balmy water do their job of opening up your pores and preparing your body and mind for the treatments to follow.

Next you'll be scrubbed and polished with the 'Four Elements Scrub', removing dull surface skin cells, rejuvenating the skin, increasing your blood circulation, leaving you soft and tingling all over, and heightening your senses. Now that you're basted you're wrapped up to brew and simmer as the ingredients do their trick of drawing out dirt and toxins, softening the skin and fighting water retention – there's nothing romantic about swollen ankles...





Now it's time to rinse off in the shower, before you lie back and relax for a sensual oil massage. Mental and physical tension is relieved (nothing kills romance quite like stress), energy and flexibility is restored to the body (no comment), and metabolism is increased – you'll need that for the delicious Chef's Dinner to follow later. The treatment ends with a customised facial. It's so relaxing, don't be surprised if you fall asleep, just try not to snore!

In keeping with the rest of the resort, Luxsa Spa is tastefully decorated with a minimalist look using natural elements and an 'Africa meets Asia' feel. Attention to detail is noticeable, such as fragrant oil burners, iPods with relaxing music next to the deep floral bath and flower arrangements under the face opening of the massage beds, so you're not staring at the therapist's pedicure! For the couple's treatment, herbs for the elements are combined for the stages that are enjoyed together, such as the herbal steam and the floral bath. For scrubs, wraps and massages, the herbs are used according to the individual's elements.

So feeling invigorated yet relaxed, polished and gorgeous, you'll head to the beach where your private dining table has been set up in a flower-adorned and fabric-draped sala at the water's edge, attended by your personal butler for the evening. And with fireworks going off every-so-often from nearby resorts, the water lapping the shore, wish lanterns riding the evening thermals, and a sea breeze cooling you down, you couldn't ask for a more romantic setting.

The meal, of course, is superb. And that's what you'd expect from someone who's been private chef to His Majesty, the King of Jordan. Executive Chef, Stephen Jean Dion is a Canadian who has, aside from this acclaimed position, also worked in Canada and throughout Asia before joining Hansar at its opening in June 2010, heading up H Bistro. So for your evening of culinary indulgence, expect to dine like royalty. And that goes for not only the food, but also the service and the setting.

Although H Bistro offers an a la carte menu, the Chef's Dinner is included in couple's promotion. It's an interesting selection of indulgent dishes, allowing you to sample Chef Stephen's best creations. And with the romantic theme in mind, dishes include ingredients that are known aphrodisiacs, such as truffle, asparagus and chocolate. There's the choice of enjoying wine pairings with each of the five courses too. The wine's just enough to get your giddy, but not too much to kill the mood.

So to get the taste buds going, you'll start with a 'chilled white asparagus soup, with natural yoghurt, black Perigold truffle caviar and topped with a Madagascar prawn'. The paired wine for this course is 'Bouvet Brut Rose Excellence, Bouvet-Ladubay, Loire, France'.



Next, you'll enjoy 'pan-fried Enest Soulard Foie Gras, with sweet corn blinis, red gala apple, green almonds and a white balsamic Calvados reduction'. This rich dish is complemented by a crisp 'Rocky Gully Riesling, Frankland Estate, 2012, Western Australia'.

Still not at the main course, your next dish to savour is a 'seared French spring baby chicken, served with forest mushrooms, Parmesan Reggiano risotto, and porcini mushroom essence'. Sticking with the Italian theme from the risotto, an Italian wine is served with this dish, 'Osteria Pino Grigio, Olearia Vinicola, Abruzzo, 2011, Italy'.

For the main dish, there's a choice of 'slow-cooked skate wing, squash spaghetti, baby fennel, patisson, brown butter and a herb sauce', or 'pan-roasted stockyard Wagyu beef tenderloin, potato puree, leek, caramelised banana shallots, micro carrots, garlic velouté, and a veal jus'. The wine served with this course will depend on the choice of dish.

Ending on a sweet note – what lady doesn't like molten chocolate? Dessert is a 'warm satin dark chocolate and raspberry tart, served with a spearmint flavoured raspberry ice-cream'. And yes, it's as delicious as it sounds. A dessert wine with a strong sultana notes is enjoyed with this course, 'MR Mountain Wine, Telmo Rodriguez, Malaga, 2009, Spain'.

And just when you thought it was over, your butler will offer you Elefin coffee or tea with chocolate pralines. While you're enjoying your after-dinner coffee, set off a wish lantern and watch it rise and ride the thermals until out of sight, then take a leisurely stroll along the beach to work off dinner.

The promotion runs throughout September and October and the package price without the wine-pairing option is 9,999 baht ++ per couple, and with the wine-pairing, 12,499 baht ++. If you enjoyed the products used during your treatment, or are interested in how element balancing works, they now have their own natural spa product range, 'The Shop', for sale at the spa, so pop in and have a look.

So if you're looking for a way to celebrate a special occasion, even if that occasion is just love and life itself, the couple's promotion at Hansar's Luxsa Spa and H Bistro is a sure-fire way to do so. As the wise Dr Seuss said, "You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep, because the reality is finally better than your dreams."

Rosanne Turner

For reservations or further information, telephone 0 7724 5511.
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