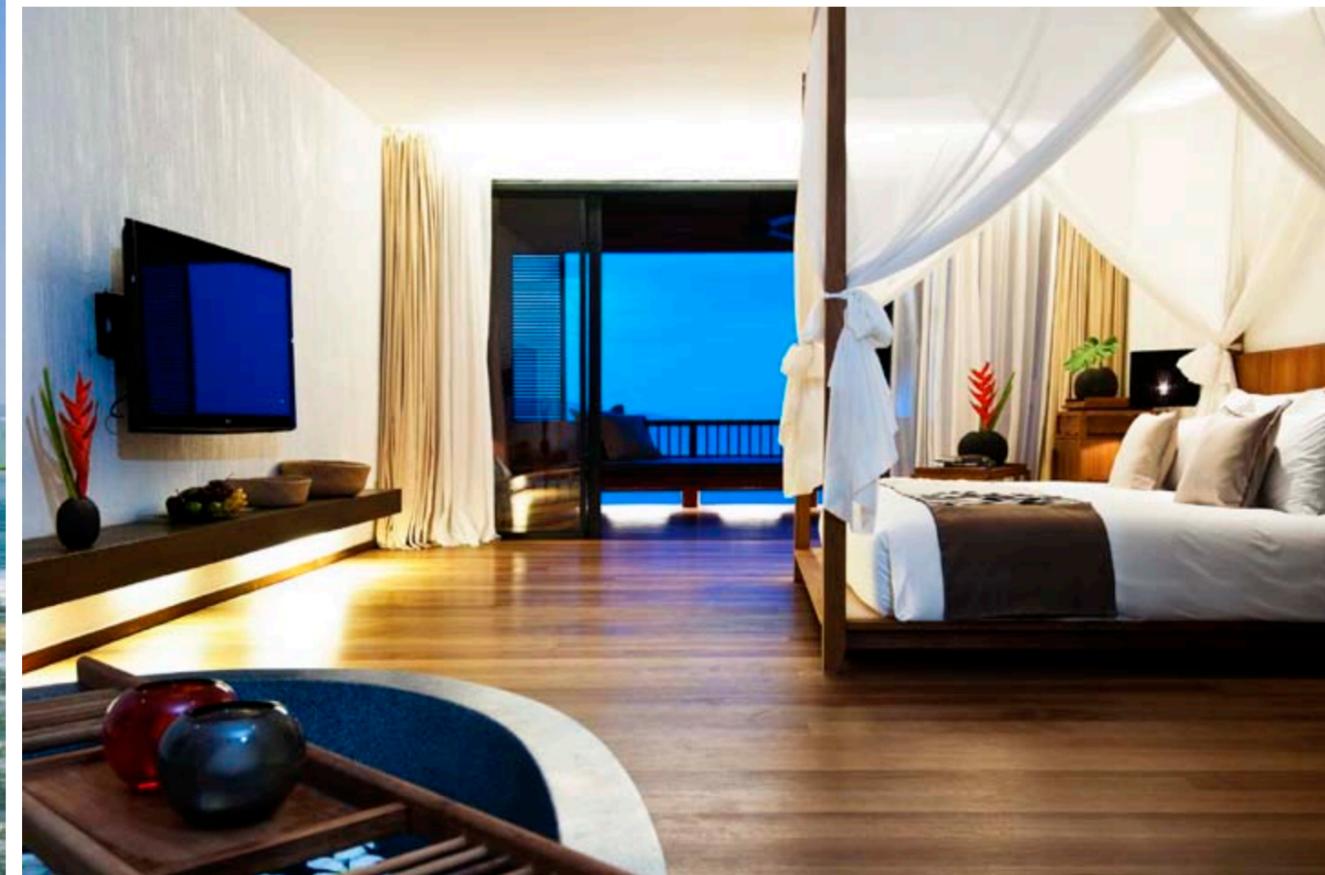


# Hansar Samui

*where memories are made...*

Is there anything better than a beautiful view to set the tone for the day? Wake up, draw back the curtains and sit in the balcony rocking chair with your excellent cup of freshly brewed tea or coffee and simply absorb the sparkling turquoise sea dotted with islands right in front of your eyes.



## **Memories**

I recently had a relaxing long weekend on the beautiful Thai resort island of Koh Samui, which is less than 2 hours north of Singapore by air. It's hard to be sure, but looking back I think my favourite memory of the luxurious Hansar Samui resort must be savouring a Tom Yum martini on the beach listening to laid back tunes and watching the sun lazily set. Or maybe it was unwinding from daily life reading my book whilst gazing out across the gorgeous infinity pool to the turquoise

sea, or perhaps the awesome spa treatment, or even the incredible food? In fact, my stay at Hansar Samui was a joy from beginning to end. Careful thought has clearly been put into the resort and the guest experience as a whole, with attention paid to even the smallest details, like the international plug sockets throughout, high quality ground coffee and whole-tip teas in the rooms and the cool towels and chilled water in their tour cars and airport pick-up vehicles, all of which contributed up to a memorable stay.

## **Ambience**

Is there anything better than a beautiful view to set the tone for the day? Wake up, draw back the curtains and sit in the balcony's rocking chair and sip your excellent cup of freshly brewed tea or coffee and simply absorb the sparkling turquoise sea dotted with islands that has opened before your eyes. While the infinity pool, also overlooking the sea, was tempting, the sheer bliss of having nothing to do on a gorgeous morning kept me where I was until a late breakfast. Of

course, exchanging a few photos of the view over social media to make friends envious is de rigueur!

Wherever you are in the resort there is something special that seems to evoke relaxation. It could be that it is so calm and peaceful, or the earthy designs - wood, slate, textures and natural colours, or the gorgeous view, or maybe there's just something in the air! Whatever it is, the resort is an ideal place for an R&R break and has been the

scene for many a marriage proposal over the years. In fact engagement rings have on many occasions been brought out at the appropriate moment during a specially crafted romantic meal by the beach. Once, I was told, to create an unforgettable moment, the hopeful young man asked for an elephant to set the scene, which the helpful staff hid around the corner until the life-changing moment!

## **Dining**

The resort's executive chef, Canadian Stephen Dion, started out his culinary life at Quebec's Les Halles, traversed other fabulous establishments and then spent two years as Private Chef to His Majesty the King of Jordan cooking for the royal family. With credentials like these, it's no wonder Hansar Samui is well known for its fabulous food. Chef Stephen highlights an array of simple textures and flavours using the finest ingredients available, which are sourced

worldwide. From the tasty selection of food at breakfast - from eggs Benedict, to Thai delicacies and everything in between, including gorgeous homemade bread, to the eclectic international lunch menu, dining at H-Bistro is a tasty treat.

The two-storey restaurant has full-length glass windows that open to encourage the delightful breeze, or closed provide a cool sanctuary. Tables are also set along the patio, where the inquisitive birds sometimes try and steal your bread or fruit while you're not looking! Chillout music plays through the day and time truly seems to slow and soothe the soul.

Highly recommended for lunch are the stunning Pla Goong - spicy prawns and

Hokkaido scallops with chilli paste and lemon grass, as well as the open-faced soft rolls with lamb bites, caramelized onions, melted goat cheese, creamed spinach and Pommery mustard.

At sunset, lounge on oversized opium beds in the 2nd floor Chill Lounge sipping a cocktail or glass of boutique wine, champagne or beer and while away the evening hours nibbling on canapés, Thai favourites, charcuterie and imported artisanal cheeses.

Dinners are extraordinary, with wine-paired menus specially crafted by Chef Stephen for that special moment, as well as an a la carte menu featuring French Mediterranean and authentic Thai cuisine.

### Pampering

No R&R break, especially in Asia, is complete without some stylish pampering and the indulgence of a massage. With this in mind, I headed off to Hansar's Luxsa Spa, which won the World Luxury Spa Awards 2014 as Best Luxury Resort Spa in Asia and well deserves the accolade.

The spa treatments are focused on naturally regaining the internal balance of body and mind and soothing the soul. The treatment rooms are, like the rest of the resort, in warm woods, with textures and natural colours set off by the wood and bronze Thai statues and decorative pieces in nooks and crannies. My Eastern Blend massage was a medium to strong Thai massage to relieve sore and tired muscles and improve and unblock blood circulation. The therapist's skilled hands kneaded and worked their magic and by the end of the heavenly 90 minutes, I almost floated out of the spa. In fact, it was so good that I was back the following day to try the Luxsa massage, a more gentle treatment to promote a sense of well-being, stimulate the metabolism and relieve mental and physical fatigue. It was possibly the best massage I have ever had.

### Koh Samui

Hansar Samui is located in the upmarket Bophut Bay, less than two minutes' stroll to the vibrant Fisherman's Village with its antique wooden shop fronts, chic cafes and atmospheric seaside bars. Koh Samui itself is not large, a trip round the island only takes a couple of hours, but if you can prize yourself out of the luxury of the resort, there are places to visit, beautiful sights to see and things to do.

I took a short trip, arranged by the resort, to visit Wat Phra Yai, the Big Buddha Temple, which is an active temple with a 12-meter golden Buddha, built in 1972, that has become a popular tourist destination offering souvenirs, Buddhist blessings and amulets. Nearby is the 10-year old Wat Plai Laem, a brightly coloured active temple complex in traditional Thai and Thai-Chinese styles that is home to the huge statues of a laughing Buddha statue and the 18-armed Guanyin, the Chinese Goddess of Mercy and Compassion, protector of women and children, the sick and the poor.

Elephant trekking is offered on Koh Samui, diving and snorkelling are popular, and Angthong marine park is only a short boat trip away.

### The resort

Hansar Samui is just 10 minutes from the quaint, open air, low tech airport and offers 74 spacious rooms. The private supersize balcony was a favourite of mine with its oversized day bed and rocking chair providing a great place to while away the hours relaxing or entertaining in the ocean air. A ceiling fan ensures you stay cool.

The spacious rooms are artfully finished with teak floors, terrazzo bathrooms, a huge rain shower, local textiles and chic custom furnishings. Beds are king-plus size with plush down comforters and pillows for a restful sleep. The curtains are heavy and genuinely block the light – another thoughtful touch in line with the resort's philosophy "to deliver an experience to each guest that is happy, memorable and enjoyable". Hansar is Sanskrit for happiness and joy.

Hansar Samui is about living life in full colour and finding joy in every moment and I personally cannot wait to return.



### Hansar Samui

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