

Hansar Samui is the latest luxury resort and spa to open on Samui. Situated at the far end of Fisherman's Village in Bophut its eye-catching design, luxurious rooms and stunning cuisine have all made the headlines. Heading up the team is General Manager, *Indra Budiman*, we caught up with him at the resort to find out more about Hansar Samui and what he thinks about the island.

JP: Hi Indra, can you tell us a little about your background please?

IB: I was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. My parents ran several businesses which my brothers and sisters are now involved with. I'm the only one who chose to follow a different path. I was always fascinated with the hotel business.

JP: How did your career develop?

IB: I studied hotel management at university in Bandung, West Java; the country's third largest city. After graduating in 1992 I joined the *Sheraton Hotel* in Bandung where I focused on 'front office' operations. I worked on reception, as a bellman and as a doorman greeting guests as they arrived. I then moved to Singapore and joined *Le Meridien* in their rooms and housekeeping department. After some time with them I moved back to my home city and worked at the *Four Seasons Jakarta* for seven years. During that time I covered every department from front office to food & beverage, rooms, reservations, accounting and conferences. It gave me a much greater understanding of what managing a luxury property really involves. I then took up a position at *The Empire Hotel and Country Club*, in Brunei, and stayed there for four years. Then it was on to Cambodia for another four years at the award-winning *Hotel de la Paix*. I was the Front Office Manager, then the Executive Assistant Manager of the Rooms Division and, finally, the Resident Manager.

JP: When did you come to Samui and why did you take up this position?

IB: When I was offered the job of General Manager I jumped at the opportunity. It's a big challenge opening a new resort (I had heard so much about it from colleagues in the industry) and I was also keen to work in Thailand. I was able to come to Samui early last year and begin the work of overseeing the development and starting to put the key people in place. It's great to be involved in the build-up to an opening though it's tremendously hard work and probably more stressful than actually running the resort when it's operational.

JP: How would you describe the resort to someone who's never been before?

IB: Hansar Samui is a unique and beautiful property which is situated just 10 minutes from the airport. It offers spacious beachfront accommodation with unobstructed sea views from every room. There're super-sized private balconies and over-sized daybeds for outdoor living and entertaining. Open-plan yet intimate, each room has been artfully finished with teak floors, terrazzo bathrooms and local textiles to provide a real sense of Asia. And chic custom furnishings and large flat-screen TVs balance the design's natural touches with a modern flair. The name Hansar is taken from the ancient Sanskrit language and translates to mean 'happiness and joy'. The concept and philosophy of Hansar Samui is to deliver an experience to each guest that is happy, memorable and enjoyable.

JP: What were your first impressions of Samui?

IB: It's a beautiful place which offers every kind of accommodation and plenty of activities and sights for visitors to enjoy. There's a very relaxed feel to the island particularly when I compare it to other places I've worked.

JP: What's the impression you have about the standards and levels of cuisine at your restaurant and on the island as a whole?

IB: Chef Stephen has successfully launched a unique culinary experience for everyone to savour at *H Bistro*. We serve French-Mediterranean cuisine and classical Thai dishes. Our focus is on combining the right array of simple textures and flavours with the finest ingredients available, which are sourced from around the world, whilst still ensuring value for money. The foie gras comes from the Soulard Farm in France's Perigord region, we import fresh Maine lobsters and oysters are flown in from Canada, Japan, and France. Menu items are complemented by a handpicked list of international wines and Champagnes, reflecting the resort's commitment to creating a truly epicurean experience. And as for Samui's other restaurants, well, talking with managers who have been here for some time, the island has a long tradition of attracting excellent chefs and so the bar keeps getting raised. You need to operate at a consistently high level just to get noticed and that is wonderful in terms of the choices available to visitors.

JP: What skills and attributes do you need to be successful in your job?

IB: Keep finding new ways to improve, never stop learning and unless you have a real passion for the hospitality business then don't do it. It's also critical to create a strong team and, in Thailand especially, that sense of family and belonging is very important to the staff. Part of my role is to foster and encourage those values and that, in turn, reflects on how we collectively interact with our guests.

JP: Finally, Indra, when you get some time to yourself, what are some of the things you like to do or experience on Samui to relax?

IB: I like to spend my free time with my wife and children. We're relatively new to the island and it's fun to explore the markets, tourist attractions and off-the-beaten-track local restaurants. Whilst we're here, I'm very keen that we should all absorb, learn and understand as much as we can about our host country, in general, and Samui, in particular.

Johnny Paterson

What was it that brought **Indra Budiman** to **Hansar Samui** and why does he **love the island** so much?



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