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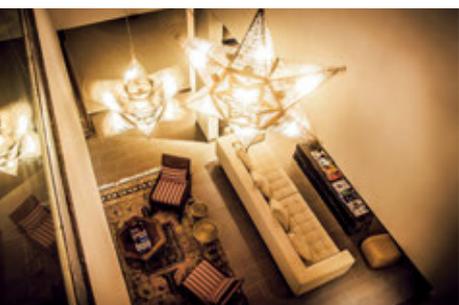
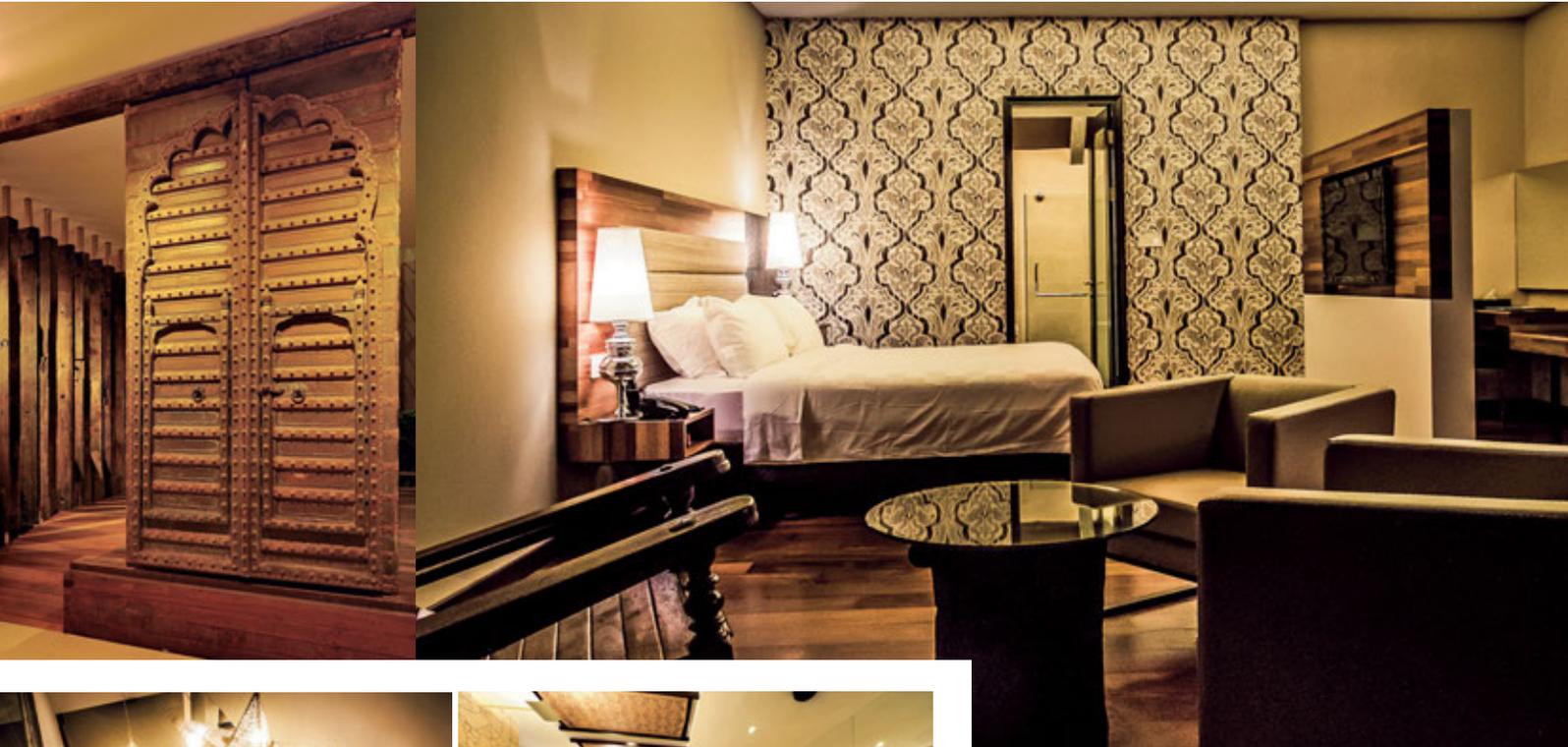
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04
2013

CALL OF THE KENYALANG

Often referred to as the Land of the *Kenyalang* (hornbills), Sarawak is not only the biggest state in Malaysia, it is also big on arts, culture and hospitality. The capital city of Kuching offers a diverse range of accommodation available for visitors to this East Malaysian city.



craft such as Sarawakian floor mats hoisted up as ceiling and wall décor, wooden bowls with Orang Ulu tribal carvings and blocks of *belian* driftwood fished out of the Kuching River and transformed into modern table stands. The main lobby is reminiscent of an art installation space with walls lined with antiquated tiffin carriers, a child's tricycle and strips of planks and wooden beams salvaged from the earlier building, which was

ROMANCING THE PAST

A true gem of a find in Kuching facing the city's famous Waterfront Promenade, the Astana and the futuristic DUN (state legislative council) building, The Raneé transports you to a point in history that celebrates the romance of travel, adventure and exploration of far and exotic lands.

Honouring the consort and female personages in the family of Charles Brooke, the 19th century White Rajah of Sarawak, the main suites of this boutique hotel are named after Margaret, Charles' wife; Sylvia, his daughter-in-law; and Elizabeth, Leonora and Valerie, his granddaughters.

With so much history imbued in this cleverly rebuilt and restored 19th century shoplot, don't expect to walk into a dusty museum with unnerving portraits of stern women glaring down from the walls. Instead, the design of this boutique hotel is modern contemporary with attractive accents of traditional Sarawakian arts and crafts. The old is ubiquitous in light-handed touches of antique pieces sprinkled throughout the premises but what really impresses is the artful blending of indigenous

gutted by fire. More than just a place to crash at the end of the day, it's like coming home to an art collector's house that just happens to be your accommodation for the night.

Wood plays a significant role in the hotel finishing, with some furniture pieces remodelled from salvaged window and door frames, and transformed into tables, consoles or mirror frames. But other than that, the look and feel is neo classical with European flair and finish. Another point of interest is how the owners have chosen strikingly different wallpaper for each room. One has Indian-inspired coloured stripes, while another is all style and elegance with a damask-inspired print. A third shakes up the scheme with chevron. These designs complement the spacious rooms most eloquently.

The bath in each room is much larger than what you'd expect in such a limited space. As none of the rooms are identical in size, the bathrooms too come in a variety of built-up areas. Most are equipped with bathtubs and the shower cubicle is literally twice the size of similar spaces in most cookie-cutter hotels. There you'll find a low bench of salvaged wood that acts as both table top for the bath amenities and a place for you to sit



as you luxuriate under the warm shower. The vanity area is also pretty large with His and Her workstations. Female travellers will appreciate the vanity desk, which is a narrow but long strip that enables you to get real close to the mirror so you don't need to peer painfully from a mile away to apply your mascara!

Some of the suites on the top floors open up to glorious views of Kuching city with its many historical buildings in clear sight. But even the rooms that look out to the back of the building still offer charming views of terracotta rooftops of neighbouring homes, shoptots and temples.

With two F&B outlets, the MBar & Bistro, and the Trio's Café, the Ranee invites you to immerse yourself fully in the local food scene. MBar serves local favourites like *ayam pansuh* (chicken cooked in bamboo), and will even endeavour to scour the city for the best local dish like Sarawak *laksa* and *mee kolok* if you tell them early. So, instead of serving you a badly made in-home version, they'll go out to buy the best for you to enjoy in the comfort of the hotel. The Sarawak *laksa* that I had came from one of the best stalls in the city, which normally sells out by 8.30am. But, there it was waiting for me piping hot at 10am when I finally sauntered out of bed.

Hotels are a dime a dozen, all claiming to offer the best in service but Ranee is small enough to really treat you like royalty while taking you on a journey that celebrates the charm and romance of a bygone era.

THE RANEE
 6 & 7, Main Bazaar,
 Kuching, Sarawak



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LUSH & LAVISH

Singapore is well known for its lush greenery and one hotel in the heart of the city is further contributing to the island state's 'green' reputation by adopting a hotel-in-a-garden concept. Singapore's multi-award winning sustainable hotel, the PARKROYAL on Pickering, seamlessly blends environmental principles with elements of nature throughout the property. With lush 'sky gardens', reflecting pools and cascading vertical greenery, the hotel boasts a unique concept that breathes new life into urban hospitality.

To make guests feel at one with nature, the hotel incorporates wood and stone finishes that create an organic feel, while soft hues and floor-to-ceiling windows produce an airy ambience. Guests can also indulge in relaxing dips in the terrace pool before laying back in the comfort of the unique cabanas to take in the spectacular views of the city and beyond.

Situated in the thriving heart of Singapore, PARKROYAL on Pickering is strategically located in Chinatown and close to Singapore's Central Business District.



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