



The perfect place to escape Sydney's autumn chill

Sweet times at the Sarojin

If you really want to splurge on staying somewhere special, Thai resort The Sarojin ticks all the boxes, writes Winsor Dobbin.

If you love luxury and seclusion, it's hard to go past **The Sarojin**, a beautiful hotel in Khao Lak, Thailand, that has three times been named the leading boutique hotel in Asia at the World Travel Awards – the travel industry's Oscars.

Just before it was scheduled to open, in late 2004, the resort was destroyed by the Boxing Day tsunami. A year later it finally did open – and it has been setting the standard ever since.

Owners **Kate** and **Andrew Kemp** have created a resort that gets all the little things right – but is delightfully unpretentious. There are staff to cater to every whim; there are 56 rooms and around 250 employees.

The Sarojin is **designed for couples** looking to kick back and relax – although there are endless options for those who want to get out and about; ranging from voyages on the Lady Sarojin motor yacht (the nearby marine park is rated among the top 10 dive spots in the world), to mangrove river tours on traditional river craft, to classes at a **Thai cooking school** on the banks of the Takuapa River "The Little Amazon", or maybe a cheeky "Lady Boy" show in town.

The **cooking school** was excellent – even I managed to produce a passable beef salad and green chicken curry.

Golfers will be in their element at the acclaimed Blue Canyon Country Club, Mission Hills, Tap Lamu or Thai Muang, while elephant treks are also popular. The Sarojin can provide personal guides to accompany guests on whatever adventure they choose.

For those inclined to stay close to the resort, it has 10 acres of lush tropical gardens and access to 11 kilometres of **white sand beach**. Many of the suites, have their own relaxation or plunge pools. All feature king-size beds, couples baths, rainfall showers, satellite TVs and DVDs, internet and Wi-Fi connections and their own mini bar with snacks and drinks.

Despite all this luxury, however, it's the calm efficiency of the delightful staff that is most impressive.

The resort also offers the services of its own flamboyant concierge, former Moulin Rouge dancer **Joel Philemond-Montout**, dubbed the "Imagineer", who can suggest a range of settings on the beach, maybe, or perhaps under a waterfall, for a romantic tryst or meal.

The gorgeous swimming pool with its private pavilions is a favourite spot to wind down, as is the **Pathways Spa**. Children under 12 are not allowed in the resort, giving parents the chance for some "me" time.

Dining options in the resort include the **Ficus restaurant**, which serves international and

Italian food of a high standard and which is given shade by a magnificent old fig tree overhanging a delightful flower-filled pool. The Edge, more relaxed with Andaman Sea views, serves tasty Thai dishes and seafood and is an excellent spot for a pre-dinner drink.

Each Wednesday night is a **Taste of Asia** evening with individual cooking stations set up in the gardens serving dishes from China, Indonesia, Japan and other culinary hotspots, while Sunday night is Thai night with traditional dancing and a range of fresh food stations featuring an array of local culinary treats.

There is also something that used to be elusive in Thailand – an excellent wine list. Put together by New Zealand-born consultant **Sam Bonifant**, it is the winner of an award of excellence from leading American publication *Wine Spectator*. Several wines are available by the glass and there is a walk-in wine cellar from which to make your selection. Choose maybe a Dr Loosen dry riesling from Germany, a Kiwi sauvignon blanc, a Sancerre, or maybe a chilled **Drouhin Beaujolais Villages**, ideal on a warm day.

A **romantic dinner for two** with daybeds and your own chef on a deserted beach is hard to beat for those who want to rekindle, or maybe kindle, a relationship. Room service is also available and can be ordered while you are in transit from Phuket Airport (a journey of around 90 minutes).

Free shuttle services are available day and night between The Sarojin and Khao Lake Town, about eight kilometres away. ■

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Global Village Travel Tips

● **First Timer:** Book a tour to familiarise yourself with the city or a week touring a certain region. Have the first few nights pre booked when you arrive so that you may sleep and be replenished to enjoy your sightseeing and ongoing organising.

● **Money:** Cash Passport is the safest way to carry money but it is always a good idea to have some of the local currency for when you first arrive as well and you can purchase these from us.

● **Passport:** Leave a photocopy at home and take one with you.

● **Must Pre Book:** Entry to the Alhambra in Granada, Spain. The Sistine Chapel in Vatican, Rome. Lunch or Dinner at the Eiffel Tower Restaurant.

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The facts

● **The Sarojin:** 60 Moo 2, Kukkak, Takuapa, Phang Nga, Thailand. Ph: +66 76 427 900. www.sarojin.com. Special promotion valid until October 31 2010: Stay two nights or more and receive the same number of nights free. Rates are inclusive of daily a la carte breakfast with sparkling wine served for 2 persons. From AUD 225 for 2 adults staying in a Garden

● **V Australia** offers three flights per week from Australia, via Melbourne or Brisbane, to Phuket with a choice of economy, premium economy and business class cabins. Connecting flights from Sydney to Phuket start from \$405. www.vaustralia.com.au

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