

Solo at the Sarojin

HONEYMOONING ALONE IS THE NEW BLACK! OUR WRITER SELFISHLY DECLINED TO SHARE THIS EXPERIENCE WITH ANYONE.

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Normally, if I read, or hear, that a certain place is an ideal spot for the perfect honeymoon I'd run a mile. If you turn up at some of these places alone, just wanting a couple of days R&R solo, you start to feel like some abandoned Nigel No-Mates, ostracised by smooching couples and given sad smiles by staff.

Well, I found somewhere that took me in and looked after me like I was on my own happy honeymoon!

North of Phuket with a bit more than 90 minutes' drive through scrabbly bits of jungle, a national park (with an elephant in the wild chewing away happily by the side of the road) and a string of scattered

villages along the way, we pull off a very ordinary road into a driveway and hello! The entrance to the tucked away and eminently private and elegant Sarojin.

The entrance pavilion is impressive and more so the kindly staff who grabbed my bags and gave me cold towels to soothe my fevered brow. Looking down from the airy foyer a glorious garden spread out before me. Large pools shimmered in the midday sun and water lilies curled their lips against the hot sun.

I was walked down the garden path and taken to my residence, set back from the garden and ready in all its air-conditioned coolness to greet me. This was a beautiful, calm room with polished teak floors and

detail. Behind the bed a long desk was set up for me to recharge my tools to the outside world and behind that a cauldron of a bath sat on a sheet of pebbles. The shower was under the skylight and far too many towels were stacked and ready.

Time to shift down to fifth gear and chill before walking over to the pool. And after a long paddle I relaxed into the glam day beds.

And so to dinner, by candlelight – solo on my honeymoon dinner. It was a little humid but to sit outside listening to the night sounds surrounded by trees was too hard to resist. Spicy, oriental aromas emanate from my two courses and it was full on seafood time for me and me. I was rather over



The Sarojin Swimming Pool.



Sarojin Pavilion.

serviced – it comes with the territory when the staff feel sorry for the lone diner!

A little tip for first-time diners. Don't take a short cut across the lush grass of the vast lawns. When the sun goes down, the lawns are watered – in fact soaked. I tiptoed through the grass and sank about 10 centimetres down into squishy mud and arrived at the restaurant with a really bad muddy-foot-look. A quick, discreet hose down was offered by bemused staff.

An early start next morning – I was to go to the market town and take food from our chef's kitchen to feed the monks. This noble and generous gesture is a daily occurrence for local citizens and I was privileged to spoon the rice, meat dish,

fruit and sweets into begging bowls. I was a little rusty at kneeling down to be blessed by rather surly monks. But, not everyone is happy this time of day! A young, pregnant woman joined in the alms race and toppled over as she bent to kneel. The monks looked straight ahead and ignored her. Well, they can't touch women. My Zen bliss evaporated as I helped her up and said a few choice unzen-ish words to the monks...

On to a visit to a local temple, then a look in at a cashew production factory – a simple shed with a couple of fancy, homemade fandangle tools to get the husks off the roasted cashews and a bagging machine – one old happy solo guy working there – we clicked.

The heat and the outing propelled me back to my honeymoon palace and to an hour's worth of an excellent spa experience that transported me to Nirvana. This was best done solo.

Drugged from relaxation oils and deft hands, I dragged myself beachside – a sublime stretch of coastline on Phang Nga. Dinner that night was at the beach bar. Seafood again, my feet in the sand, cool drinks and the sound of waves washing the shore made for a perfect date with myself.

The Sarojin was a hard place to leave, I felt I was just beginning to know the ropes here. I indulged myself by letting the attentive staff spoil me – and within 24 hours they had my number. The right drink came along, coffee just as I like it and a casual meeting with the Executive chef led

to a 30 minute conversation on cooking methods and favourite cake recipes.

A little excursion for half a day was enough for me as I wanted to enjoy my own company and the beauty and comfort of The Sarojin – but – if I had been so inclined, I could have gone elephant riding or sea fishing or snorkelling, looking through caves or shopping in the larger nearby town.

Friends had called it a 'hidden gem'. It's not hidden, but it is cool and calm and has a shining, polished aura – perhaps it is a gem. And I can recommend it for a solo honeymoon. And if you are desperate, bring someone else along. •

TRAVEL FACTS

Getting there

Thai Airways International flies from all major Australian cities to Bangkok daily.

Visit:  www.thaiairways.com
From Bangkok fly to Surat Thani with Thai Smile Airways:  www.thaismileair.com

Stay at

The Sarojin Resort, Thailand, is a five star luxury boutique beach resort located in Khao Lak, Phang Nga, Thailand, near Phuket.

Visit:  www.sarojin.com/en