

Mary Lussiana

heads to two luxury beach resorts in the south of Thailand where the pleasure is very much in the pampering

Andaman experience: one of the Sarojin's private dining pool pavillions

A Thai spa sensation



WITH its cerulean skies, clear sea and many attractions, Thailand is hugely popular as a winter escape. "Culture in the North, shopping in Bangkok, beaches in the South", say the Thais. To see the south, I tried the coast of the Andaman Sea and an island in Phang Nga Bay.

The Sarojin was due to open in January 2005 but on 26 December 2004, the tsunami swept it away. Luckily no one was in the hotel at the time, but it was 11 months before it could open again.

British owners Andrew and Kate Kemp and local staff aim to make you feel you are at a friend's house, and it works. Proof comes in the form of an award as Asia's leading boutique hotel in 2008. Fifty-six rooms in contemporary Asian design sit among a white and green garden that surrounds a beautiful swimming pool and leads down to an unblemished beach. Bathrooms have rainfall showers suspended over smooth pebbles, ginger soaps and large baths for two.

Under the hanging roots of a Ficus tree, dine on international favourites or go beachside at The Edge for Thai cuisine such as tom yam goong, a spicy Andaman prawn soup that you can savour while gazing at the perfect view of turquoise blue seas and golden sands.

In an old coconut grove lies Pathways, the Sarojin's spa, with a dizzying range of treatments in rooms open to the sea.

During a traditional Thai massage the masseuses tease out your stress with a painfully pleasurable touch. For the restless, there are local markets with exotic fruits, cooking lessons held out in the open, led by the Sarojin's chef, tailors

design is breathtaking. Hidden among the rainforest, the 56 wooden villas, with palm-leaf roofs, each have a generous swimming pool. Bathrooms have jungle showers where, with the bamboo shutters open, you can lie back and admire the Tokay geckos.

Personal butlers are your link with the outside world and The Six Senses Spa adds to the magic. Its signature Yao Noi ritual is a delicious four-hour soak, steam, scrub and wrap. But if there were only one reason to come here, it would be the mesmerising view of the sea, studied with limestone formations.

■ *The Ultimate Travel Resort Collection offers a tailor-made seven-night stay at Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi from £1,959pp B&B in a pool villa, includes return flights from Heathrow and transfers. Valid in November and December. www.sixsenses.com, www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk.*

DETAILS

THE FLIGHT

Thai Airways has return flights from Heathrow to Phuket via Bangkok from £812.90, www.thaiairways.co.uk.

THE HOTEL

The Sarojin, Garden Residences, from £297 per night B&B. www.sarojin.com.

