

THE SAROJIN
Khao Lak
THAILAND

The land of silk and honey (moons)

Honeymoons come around only once (hopefully), so it's fair to say expectations run high. **TATYANA LEONOV** sees if this Thai resort can deliver



Clockwise from opposite The divine swimming pool with infinity edge and romantically draped pavilions; A beachside dinner by torch-light; The relaxing couples' bath at Pathways Spa

I've got a theory when it comes to Thai resorts. If the welcome drink is delicious, the stay will be good. So I'm pretty pleased that The Sarojin's welcome drink tastes marvellous. In fact, once a week the resort hosts complimentary sunset drinks, and fortunately for us our arrival was impeccably timed. A few hours after our smooth, unhurried check-in we find ourselves sipping yet another welcome drink, followed by a few more, these ones of the rather more potent variety. My welcome drink theory is proved correct.

The Sarojin as it is today is actually attempt number two: the first Sarojin was scheduled to open in 2004, two weeks after the infamous tsunami knocked it down. Because all the planning, design and building elements had been completed previously, version two shot up quickly in just eight months.

Wisely, the star of the design is not the resort itself but the grounds in which it sits; tropical gardens abuzz with a myriad of birds and an ornamental pond complete with scooting fish and singing frogs. Architect Sim Boon Yang has an impressive portfolio that includes W Hotel in Goa and the Metropolitan Hotel in Bangkok. The Sarojin was his first resort and his design ethos is evident through his cohesive lattice of buildings and land.

The 56 residences are housed in seven separate buildings that are scattered throughout the sprawling grounds. As we're here for our honeymoon, we've booked The Sarojin Suite (top floor, baby) for the length of our stay. The room is seriously huge. One hundred and fifty square-metres huge.



The spatial generosity is enhanced through balanced proportions and a fresh and simple colour palette – soft beiges, dreamy creams and natural browns. Hard wood floors complement the contemporary feel in the lounge room and the king-sized bed is just the right level of softness for a comfortable sleep (and beautifully decorated with an elaborate flower arrangement for our first honeymoon night). A pebbled floor takes you through to the modern bathroom where there's a deep stone bath (that's scattered with rose petals and lit with candles during turndown service) and a spacious rainfall shower.

The only 'missing' facet, in my opinion, is a door between the bedroom and living room. The free-flowing design works on most levels, but my husband is an early riser, and

on holidays I definitely am not. A door would have allowed him to make a bit more noise in the mornings.

We spend most of our days lazing by the pool or on the beach, taking leisurely dips at the appearance of the merest bead of sweat, and returning to our sun beds to find our water glasses replenished. The staff is always on hand yet never intrusive. Each one looks genuinely happy to be there.

Breakfasts are all-inclusive and à la carte with no scheduled times. Whether you turn up at 8am or 2pm, whatever menu item you select is cooked to order. I quickly learn that serving sizes are smaller than I'm used to, although it does say the menu is designed with the idea of ordering a few dishes. But as with any extended stay you become accustomed to the differences: after receiving one egg with one piece of toast on the first morning I start asking for two; an easy issue to resolve.

The two on-site restaurants, although expensive by Thai standards, offer quality fare. The beachfront restaurant, The Edge, has some of the best Thai food I've ever tasted. At the Mediterranean-style Ficus most dishes are a hit (an entrée of scallops is my foodie highlight) and only one is a miss (the delicate flavours of the lobster meat in a lasagna are lost in a mountain of cheese).

Check-out, like check-in is smooth. There are more towels, more smiles; an employee sneaks cold water bottles into the taxi to ensure our return journey is comfortable. Apparently it's common for couples to return to The Sarojin (eight times is the record), and although Thailand is home to so many other award-winning resorts, I'm pretty sure we will be back for another welcome drink. Our first wedding anniversary perhaps. ●

DETAILS

• WHO

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sarojin.com

• THE IT VERDICT

Tatyana Leonov, who visited anonymously and paid her own way, says: "A honeymooners haven. The attention to detail was spot on and everything was thought of to ensure our stay was perfect. In a word... heaven!"

• INFO

Tatyana stayed for a week and paid a low-season rate of \$285 per night including breakfast.