

firstCLASS

EDITOR: MARK SARIBAN

Far & away

SUNSETS and serenity in
a tropical IDYLL or adrenaline
and après-ski in the *French Alps*
– let love *take flight*.

A sunset dinner on a
sandbank at the Sarojin
resort in southern Thailand.



Honey, I'm home

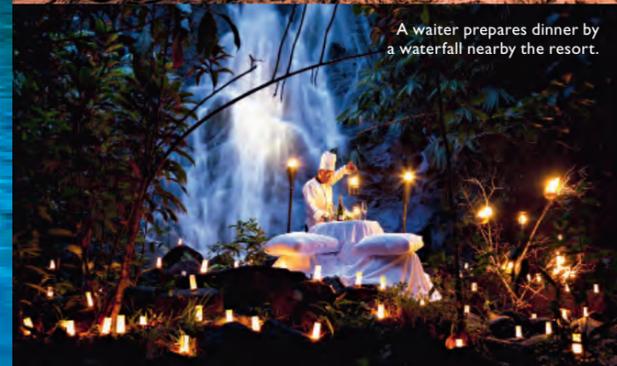
Right on the doorstep of the *ANDAMAN SEA*, a secluded tropical oasis answers every heart's desire. A newlywed couple falls IN LOVE with the quieter side of Thailand.

WORDS: REMY RIPPON

Individual pavilions line Sarojin's infinity pool.



A romantic dinner for two is set up on the beach.



A waiter prepares dinner by a waterfall nearby the resort.



Bathrooms bring the outdoors in.

Arriving at the five-star Sarojin resort feels a bit like walking onto a film set. It's 11.30pm, and although I'm weary-eyed from two flights, I immediately find a burst of energy on arrival. The backdrop to this setting is a tropical oasis: palm trees aplenty in the richest hue of green and paths of stepping-stones that wind into the unknown. You could say it's the world of Willy Wonka for grown-ups: a fantasy sensory overload made all the more memorable for me by the fresh pandanus juice I'm sipping. In that moment, I briefly ponder how the plant life appears to be hovering over the lotus pond, but not for long (I'll work that out in the clarity of daylight). Right now, I'm more than happy to succumb to the notion that this vision is so perfect, it can't be real.

Although just over one hour's drive north of Phuket airport, seclusion is this boutique beach resort's major drawcard. Singha paraphernalia and swarms of tourists have

no place here among the private enclaves and sleepy fishing villages that line the white sandy beaches of Khao Lak.

With just 56 suites set on 10 acres of gardens on turquoise coastline, it's possible to meander the short stretch from the beach to your suite without passing another soul.

The pool residences tick all the boxes for honeymooning couples: open-plan sleeping quarters spilling seamlessly into a bathroom of equally generous proportion and overlooking a private pool. The rain shower and "pod bath" get the honeymoon treatment during turndown service, scattered with red rose petals and lit by flickering tealights.

If you do find yourself in one of the garden residences (*sans* pool), then Sarojin's

luxurious 25-metre infinity pool is hardly a consolation prize. Mr and Mrs Smith named it a finalist for the best hotel pool of 2014 and it only takes a moment on a daybed in a poolside pavilion to understand why. It's quite possible to lose entire days here when there are waiters on hand with not one but two white towels and ice-cold water. You can also tap into Wi-Fi and order a delicious lunch from a menu catered by the resort's Thai and European restaurants.

FOR TRUE ROMANTICS, A PRIVATE DINNER AT A NEARBY WATERFALL SURROUNDED BY CANDLES

For those rare types, like my new husband, relaxation can be misconstrued as boredom, so the resort's full-time "imagineer" is our saving grace. The motto is simple: if it's possible then it can be delivered, whether that means a day trip by boat to the Similan Islands aboard the

resort's pride and joy, *Lady Sarojin*, or a more cultural experience navigating the mangroves of Takuapa River (or "little Amazon"), followed by a guided tour of the local food market. For true romantics, a private dinner at a nearby waterfall surrounded by candles might be in order.

As for the professional relaxers among us, day three warrants spa treatments at the resort's award-winning Pathways Spa, a tucked-away haven surrounded by greenery. As I stand in front of the spa, one of the ever-friendly staff members points out that its sign is the only one at the resort. The reason? The Sarojin is intended to be a real home to its guests during their stay (one couple we meet are back for a third time), and as everything is within easy walking distance, signs are thought to be a distraction from your Zen state. Three days in and I can vouch for the theory: Sarojin does feel like my home away from home.

For more details, go to www.sarojin.com.



The suite's living area flows out to the balcony, complete with spa.