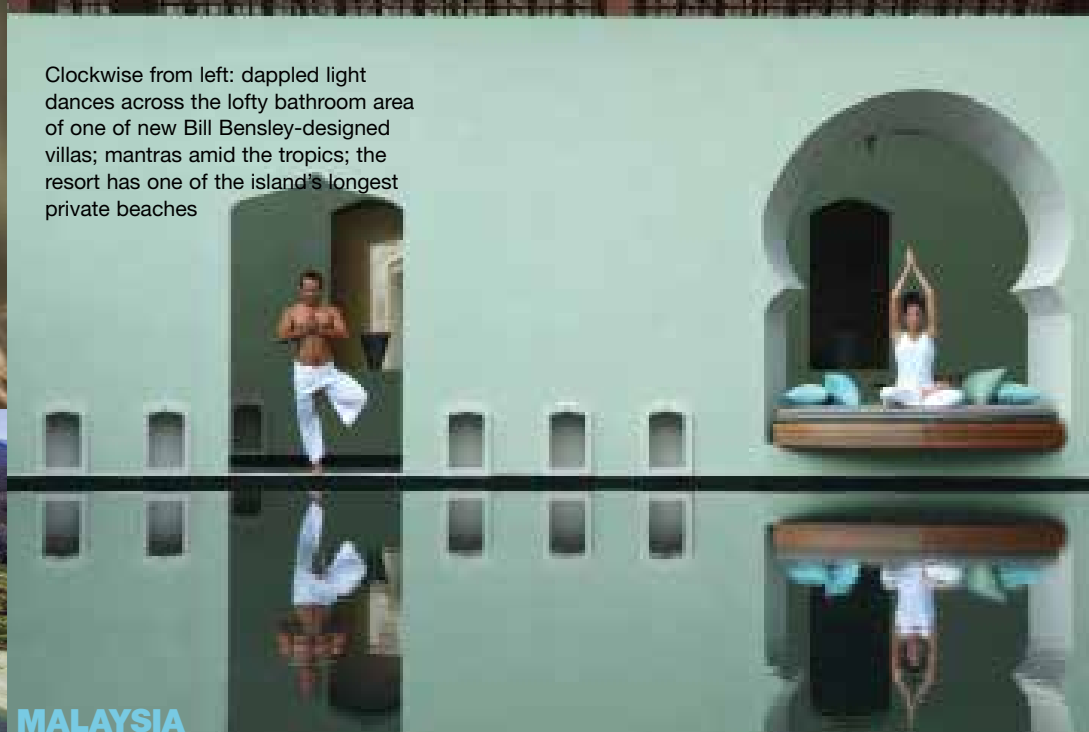




Clockwise from left: dappled light dances across the lofty bathroom area of one of new Bill Bensley-designed villas; mantras amid the tropics; the resort has one of the island's longest private beaches



FOUR SEASONS LANGKAWI MALAYSIA



Any jet lag will be salvaged as you step through the tall ochre entrance to Four Seasons Langkawi and skirt between sandy Alhambra-style courtyards to a tranquil check-in beside a lotus pond, ginger tea in hand. A world away from the hustle of Kuala Lumpur, and perfectly poised on Langkawi's north-westerly tip between the blue hues of the Andaman Sea and the precipitous limestone cliffs that cradle the island's luscious labyrinth of rainforest, the 48-acre resort is tailor-made for R&R.

Further balm is found amid the ylang ylang-perfumed foliage of tropical gardens in the form of a flurry of brand-spanking new beach villas. Stretching along the golden, mile-long Tanjung Rhu beach (one of Langkawi's best), every inch of these outrageously oversized havens demands your attention. Masterful interiors courtesy of Bill Bensley take their cue from Malay design, expertly fused with Moorish flourishes. The aesthetic extends across the resort via geometric pattern, batiks, bright blue block-colour walls straight out of Morocco and lantern-festooned walkways. The result, a playground for bolshy leaf monkeys, is contemporary, thrilling and one of the finest we've encountered.

Spend days flitting between your open-air veranda, complete with a slinky plunge pool, and a hammock bolstered by palms on your own private patch of paradise and soak up views that

stretch to Thailand's southernmost isles. A raised terrazzo bathtub big enough for five (though better *à deux*) and an outdoor shower cloaked in vegetation that the resident hornbills are fond of overseeing, will refresh you come evening.

Elsewhere, three restaurants ensure you're well fed – our favourite, Ikan-Ikan, serves classic Malay fare – and you'll find a sumptuous spa and two indigo infinity pools, one featuring eight secluded cabanas. A boat trip to South East Asia's first Unesco Geoforest Park, nearby Kilim Karst, is a must. Resident naturalist Aidi Abdullah, on top of being delightful company, is an expert at uncovering convocations of eagles, kingfishers, mudskippers and monitor lizards, all of whom call the tangle of mangroves home. *BG. Pavilions from £444. Villas from £1,065. fourseasons.com*

Places

This month, we monkey around in Malaysia, private water entrance in Venice, get pampered

Splendid Venice ITALY

With its majestic tapestry of canals and grand 16th- and 17th-century palaces and piazzas, Venice, the city miraculously built on water, unfailingly enchants. You are never more than a winding alleyway or bridge away from a secluded spot, with lively cicchetti bars, traditional pastry shops and gothic squares that on first glance appear undiscovered.

It's hard to better Splendid Venice when it comes to location; both St Mark's Square and the Rialto Bridge are just a stone's throw away, while crooning gondoliers gliding by the hotel's private water entrance add further exclamation points. Feeling more intimate than the sum of its 165 rooms, the classic bedrooms make for a playground of Venetian damask, sumptuous velvet armchairs, marble bathrooms, and views over the crisscross waterways or labyrinthine streets. After days spent primarily getting lost, the exceptionally comfortable beds give cause to linger but restaurant La Maschere, twinkling in the glass-roofed courtyard, is worth



exploring for plates of delicate home-made pasta with seafood gathered from the lagoon and desserts served from a generously packed retro trolley. The comfy canal-level bar, with arched windows overlooking the water and sparkling Murano glass chandeliers, was made for a Venetian spritz or fragrant bellini, but on warmer evenings the roof terrace beckons with the promise of sprawling views over the endlessly alluring city. *AB. Doubles from £168. starhotelscollezione.com*

Words by Anna Benilli; Blossom Green; Imogen Leeper; Stephanie Dobritjevic; Photos by Stefano Scatà; Chiara Cadeddu; Hugo Thomassen; Kensho; Dimitris Poupalos; Mark Lord Photography; Jamie Lau



KENSHO MYKONOS GREECE

The first thing you'll notice about this bastion of Cycladic cool is the smell. A decadent mixture of sea salt and fig that lingers in the folds of the snowy bed linen and wafts out of the spa, which is housed in a cave. The second is the use of texture. Interior designers including Paola Navone and Il Laboratorio have collaborated to create a haven of hanging wicker chairs, ceilings studded with crystals, smooth stone furniture and aged wooden detailing, and the result is effortlessly stylish. This is a hotel you'll fall in love with and want to linger in endlessly. By day the pool, which has views of Ornos Bay, is a zen place to soak up some early summer sun, while at night it is transformed with twinkling lights and gentle jazz, becoming a focal point where you can sip mezcal cocktails and soak up the general fabulousness all around. Chef George Stylianoudakis is on a mission to win Greece its first Michelin star outside of Athens by reimagining ancient culinary traditions in colourful, contemporary ways and the results are as surprising as they are delightful. Don't miss his take on the *kakavia* (traditional fisherman's stew). *IL. Doubles from £370. kenshomylonos.com*



Gourmet bolthole THE POINTER, BRILL

Perching on the border of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, Brill is the sort of village American tourists dream of. Quaint buildings with names like 'Primrose Cottage' surround a green across which tweed-wearing Labrador walkers call out greetings, while a 17th-century windmill offers sweeping views.

The Pointer takes its food seriously. Their own 240-acre farm, with 200 cattle and 30 breeding sows, supplies the majority of the menu. From the first bite of sourdough, unctuous with veal-dripping butter, it becomes obvious why Michelin named it Pub of the Year 2018. Longhorn beef, hung for 35 days, is superb and served with chips crisped in more glorious dripping. The drinks are equally good. Bar Manager Christian Zeiss joined from Tom Kerridge's The Hand and Flowers and his list is impeccably sourced. Try TOAD gin with strawberries and pink peppercorns.

The four bedrooms opened last year and their stylish, modern design reflects owners David and Fiona Howden's ongoing love affair with Morocco. A smart palette of mushroom and cloudy grey is cheered by woven cushion covers and oversized rattan lamp shades. *IL. Doubles from £130. thepointerbrill.co.uk*

to stay

catch some rays – and cocktails – in Mykonos, arrive via in Belgium and fill up at Michelin's Pub of the Year in Brill



DOMAINE LA BUTTE AUX BOIS LANAKEN. BELGIUM

Tucked amid verdant countryside, within striking distance of Belgium's Hoge Kempen National Park, sits Domaine La Butte aux Bois. The luxury resort abounds in floor-to-ceiling windows, while the wooden decor is sympathetic to the surrounding terrain. Slip into your robe and be indulged in the newly opened spa, then enjoy a glass of wine on the outdoor terrace. The real draw here is two Michelin-starred restaurant La Source, where chef Ralf Berendsen dishes up the likes of haddock with gillardeau oyster and passion fruit with aplomb. *SD. Doubles from £280. labutteauxbois.be*

