Wishing you a Blessed Christmas

MALIGAYANG PASKO!

Christmas in the Philippines
The wellness theme continues into the dining room. At the poolside River Café, one of four F&B outlets at the resort, chefs whip up what they term ‘conscious cuisine’ derived from locally sourced seasonal and sustainable produce. Food here is prepared with nutritious ingredients such as whole grains, natural sweeteners and organic vegetables and healthier cooking methods. Even the juices they serve are cold-pressed and touted to retain more vitamins, minerals, enzymes and phyto-nutrients than conventionally prepared juices. As a prelude to my meal, I sampled The Petanu Jamu Tonic, a refreshing and rejuvenating blend of tangerine, lime, turmeric, cinnamon and honey. Jamu (traditional herbal tonic) is reputed to improve metabolism and liver function. For mains, I selected their Chilli Rubbed Snapper Fillet, a dish of mildly spiced fish served atop a bed of pearly quinoa and accompanied with a fresh pineapple salsa. Who knew healthy cuisine could taste so good!

The hilly, landscaped grounds are ideal to work off your meals but for serious fitness enthusiasts, the well-equipped gym with floor-to-ceiling panels overlooking a putting green will do the trick just as well. If gym training is not for you, there are two large pools and a tennis court. Early birds can take advantage of complimentary yoga sessions, offered daily in a purpose-built yoga pavilion, a sleek open-air building that affords stunning views of the manicured lawns. Guests of the resort can also enjoy a roster of wellness activities, from tai chi to meditation, offered every afternoon between 3.00 and 4.00pm at no charge.

I wish I had attended one of the morning yoga lessons, but unfortunately, I found it difficult to extricate myself from the comforts of my fluffy, goose-down pillows and cozy canopy bed. I did, however, rise early enough to enjoy the daily breakfast spread at the Maya Sari, the resort’s main restaurant that dishes up local and continental breakfast favourites. Here, guests can get their dose of fresh fruit juices or choose to rev up their mornings with a shot of jamu, available daily.

If you’re feeling peckish in-between meals, I highly recommend Bar Bedulu, a cozy nook that offers complimentary hi-tea and delicious nibbles alongside a beverage list that includes Balinese wines. A must-see here is their Crunchy Peanut & Chicken Tempura Satay accompanied with an addictive spicy tomatillo dip. With its vantage point overlooking the verdant landscape, Bar Bedulu is also the ideal spot to spend a leisurely evening. I very nearly drifted off to sleep on my last evening at the resort, lulled not by standard elevator music but the enchanting sounds of Sanskrit mantras – a fitting finale for a wellness weekend to reconnect mind, body and soul.

JALAN GUNUNG SARI PELEMBATAN, UBUD, BALI 80571, INDONESIA

Maya Ubud Resort & Spa

I closed my eyes and surrendered to the expert ministrations of my masseuse, Rima, the tension in my shoulders melting away as her long, measured strokes worked their magic. I’m one of those people who can’t sit still even during a massage but something was different at the Spa at Maya. Here, in an open-air thatched pavilion overlooking Ubud’s Petanu River, I slipped into slumber as Rima kneaded my knots, the chirping of birds and gurgling of the stream providing musical accompaniment. Anointed in essential oils of kananga (ylang-ylang), tangerine and lavender, I emerged from the 90-minute treatment refreshed and re-energised.

I was after all at Bali’s Maya Ubud Resort & Spa, a healing haven designed to balance mind, body and soul. The sprawling resort is nestled between the Petanu River valley and the terraced rice fields of Peliatan, and yet just minutes away from the town centre. Spread over nine hectares of lush greenery and tropical gardens, the multiple award-winning property is a green paradise in the heart of Bali’s art and cultural district. The décor here reflects Balinese culture and traditions with the use of thatched roofs, stone sculptures, granite floors, recycled timber fittings and antiques while maintaining a modern vibe. Nothing is over the top; the understated elegance, accented with tones of egg yolk yellow and apple green match the surroundings allowing for a seamless indoor to outdoor transition.

Accommodation options include entry-level superior guestrooms measuring 43 square metres with private balconies overlooking either the river or rice fields, 50-square-metre superior garden villas replete with outdoor plunge pools and for the ultimate luxury, 230-square-metre duplex pool villas boasting both open-air Jacuzzi and pool! My hideaway for the weekend was a deluxe pool villa ensconced in a frangipani-scented garden of its own. My thatched-roofed home away from home, inspired by a traditional Balinese abode, came with all the modern conveniences city folks are accustomed to such as a flat screen TV, coffee machine and deep-soaking tub. My four-poster bed was draped with gossamer curtains and in the expansive bathroom, the deep-soaking tub was perfectly positioned to take in the outdoors, with a glass panel looking out onto the plunge pool and garden. Guests can select from a bath menu of sensual soaks that include the Romantic Flower Milk Bath ideal for two and the De-Stress Bath to alleviate stress and fatigue.