GOURMET FOOD & WINE MAGAZINE

EXQUISITE Taste

The BEST Afternoon Tea
Featuring a round-up of the Favourite Spots to enjoy Afternoon Tea in Asia

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DAINE GILBERT • KENAN DEMIREL • SEBASTIAN COCQUERY-BERAUD
A TASTE OF PARADISE

Set in 10 hectares of hillside garden, stretching along a peninsula set high above the river valley, you will discover a host of culinary delights. Dine in comfort and style at any of our superb restaurants, Maya Sari, Asiatique or River Café.

MAYA RESORTS.COM
Natural Pampering

AT SPA AT MAYA UBUD

Ensconced in the rugged leafy terrain of a steeply sided river valley is a hidden gem where pampering is the order of the day.

By Amanda Luxford
MAYA UBUD RESORT & SPA IS A STUNNING DESTINATION DESIGNED TO RELAX AND IMMERSE YOU IN ITS DRAMATIC AND PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT. SET ON A PLATEAU BORDERED BY THE STUNNING PETANU RIVER VALLEY TO ONE SIDE AND VIBRANT RICE FIELDS ON THE OTHER, THE MANICURED GARDEN IS FULL OF INDIGENOUS PLANTS AND THE THATCHED VILLAS AND RESORT BUILDINGS BLEND EASILY INTO THE NATURAL FOREST LANDSCAPE.

However, if you walk through the spacious garden to the end of the path and down a short staircase, you will find an elevator that whisk you towards the valley floor and opens onto something completely different. This small area of rugged terrain is the hidden oasis that is home to Spa at Maya and River Café.

The steep valley walls are a jumble of dense hanging creepers, towering trees and shrubs of every shade of green with yellow and cream flowers and glossy crimson leaves that add flashes of color. Thatched treatment huts reached by wood and stone walkways are scattered around the valley making use of the naturally occurring nooks and crannies, while a small infinity pool with large sun loungers on the timber decking takes up another ledge, and a narrow deck of tables and chairs reaches out over the ravine for the River Café clientele.

This secluded hideaway is an adult only playground, an oasis devoted entirely to relaxation, wellbeing and pampering.

The spa reception, like much of the resort, reflects classic Balinese architectural styling. It is in an open-walled thatched hut and in this environment it really wouldn’t come as a complete surprise to see Tarzan swing by on a vine or for the spa receptionist to be a blue-skinned Na'vi from the film Avatar. However, this is not Pandora, despite the exotic, other world surroundings; it is Bali.

Sipping on a cooling welcome drink, we complete the health forms and choose today’s treatment – a romantic chocolate mask and much-needed back massage for two. Taking the narrow pathway up to our treatment villa, we step through the door into a darkly wooded haven of indulgence and tranquillity. The open walls reveal a 180-degree, eye-catching view across the woodland, a four-poster day bed with gauzy curtains stands in one corner, a deep copper bath is full of water densely covered in fragrant creamy frangipani and bright yellow alamanda flowers picked from the ravine and our treatment beds wait invitingly for our tired bodies.

Quickly undressing in the changing room, we have our feet washed in rustic copper bowls with cool peppermint-infused sea salt, then sprayed with a lemongrass mist. Lying on the beds we are startled to find them warm – with the prevalence of cool misty days in Ubud, electric blankets have been provided.

Our therapists begin the firm massage to unknot our backs and shoulders using long strokes with the elbows, firm thumbs
and gentle kneading to gradually remove all the tension and stiffness associated with today's world of computers and electronic devices. Before realising any time has passed, we have to roll over and settle back into the warm padded beds as the therapists move their attention to our heads and shoulders.

With all the stiffness finally gone, it's time for the oils to be wiped away and the sweetly scented creamy chocolate to be smoothed all over our fronts, then we're covered with sheets and heavy towels and left for a little while for the nutrients to absorb into our skin, before we roll over and have our backs smeared in chocolate too. We're left to lie in a sweet haze of laziness as the scent of chocolate evokes a sense of tempting treats and keeps the mind well away from serious thoughts.

After an eternity of relaxation we are invited to wash away the chocolate under the hot showers in the villa's bathroom, before returning to the main room to sink into the warm scented water of the giant, round copper bathtub. Covered in frangipani and alamanda we gaze out at the lush woodland valley and listen to trickling streams, the rushing river and the birds and crickets around us. While we have a sunny day, it's easy to imagine the sense of disconnectedness that a misty rain would bring as you lie in the tub. A refreshing cold drink and light offering of fresh fruit and yoghurt is provided to revive our senses, dulled by all the pampering, and we lie there in our secluded corner of the world.

Eventually, we force ourselves from our hideaway and get dressed so we can enjoy a light lunch from the highly health-inspired food and drinks at River Café.

Spa at Maya is a multi-award winning palace of wellness with a strong focus on nature's natural bounty for its products, infrastructure and ambience. With respect for its location, mountain-related produce, such as locally sourced coffee and chocolate, feature in the treatments. However, all the therapists have international training, either provided at the resort or overseas.

Both in-house and outside guests are welcome and a range of packages is available that includes various combinations of spa treatments, pool use, meals at River Café and resort experiences, such as yoga and cooking classes.

So whether you have 90 minutes free or a whole day, Spa at Maya can provide you with a heavenly escape from a busy life. (www.mayaresorts.com)