



Shangri-La

Escape to paradise

The beautiful Shangri-La's Rasa Ris Resort on Pantai Dalit Beach

Sabah's finest five-star resort, Orang-utan Sanctuary and world-class golf course is a one-stop passport to pleasure, writes Sam Arthur

JUST a short drive north of Kota Kinabalu (Malaysia), Sabah's capital, is one of the best resorts I have visited.

Shangri-La's Rasa Ris Resort on Pantai Dalit Beach is sensational – seriously.

Surrounded by beach and a tranquil nature reserve, the resort is stunningly spectacular and the view from your comfortable accommodation opens your eyes to another world.

And what makes it even more appealing is the hospitality staff have perfected the art of being friendly, relaxed and efficient and nothing is too much trouble. Yes, here it's service with a smile.

The resort caters for all-comers including honeymoon couples, weddings and other functions, family holidays and even business conferences.

Set on 400 acres of tropical forest, it even

allows for your own secluded private beach.

There is plenty of space for guests, which is a huge factor when holidaying at this luxurious resort. Because the resort faces west, each day resort guests flock to the beachside Sampan Bar for cocktails and to watch the sun set. Magic!

After the sun disappears over the horizon, guests have the choice of several restaurants or they can take a seat outside and enjoy the experience of Tepi Laut Makan Street.

The mini-street is set up with food stalls, which offers several delicious Asian flavours and cuisines.

Open for lunch and dinner seven days, it's a brilliant way to sample the many tasty Sabah and Malaysian dishes.

We visited the new Ocean Wing, which has brand-new executive rooms from \$US500 per night that include a Jacuzzi on your private balcony. The automatic blinds give that extra privacy and even allows guests to watch television if they can take their eyes of the scenery for a minute.

These days, hotels and resorts try to attract guests with that point of difference and Shangri-La's Rasa Ris Resort is no different.

Still, there is nothing better than kick-starting a holiday with a spa treatment. The feeling of complete numbness hits you after an hour session in the spa at Dalit Bay.

The spa choices are varied, however, a standard traditional massage is enough to



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Clockwise from above: The par-3 169m 11th is a real treat; Riding on the beach is pure magic; The Orang-utan Education Centre is one of the resort's biggest drawcards; Cool off in the Shangri-La pool!

release the stress and get you in the mood for whatever takes your fancy.

One of the resort's biggest drawcards is the Orang-utan Education Centre.

Established in 1996, the Rasa Ria Nature Reserve is protected ecological space and was set up to help facilitate rehabilitation programs for endangered species of fauna as well as those endemic in Sabah.

It's a fantastic centre that provides a home until they reach an appropriate stage when they are ready to be reintroduced into natural habitats.

It's a truly amazing and touching experience watching these lovable animals grow and learn each day.

Even the kids get to help the rangers look after the baby orang-utans.

Each day between 10am and 2pm, you can watch handlers teach the infants how to climb and, more importantly, hang on to tree branches.

That helps them build strength before being allowed to join the more mature orang-utans. It's a close up and personal involvement everyone should experience.

Other activities available at the resort include horse riding, all-terrain safaris and even deep-sea fishing.

"But what about the golf?" I hear you ask.

Well, the resort's Dalit Bay Golf & Country Club is a magnificent championship golf

course where water virtually comes into play on every hole.

That means finding the fairway off the tee is crucial if you want to score well. But the fairways are generous and you really have to spray it wide to find trouble.

It's a terrific layout and once you walk off the 18th green you'll want to return to the first tee to have another go.

In many ways, the course, which stretches to just under 6400m, demands respect.

One of the highlights was arriving at the par-3 11th hole. It's a real gem as the tee is surrounded by the South China Sea.

For me, hitting a mid-iron over water to a largish green was an enjoyable challenge.

Sabah's weather is perfect all-year round although when it rains it pours and is mostly it's only the occasional storm, which doesn't really interrupt your golf and relaxation time.

For more information about Dalit Bay Golf & Country Club, Shangri-La's Rasa Ria Resort Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia go to the website www.dalitbaygolf.com.my

To contact the resort's director of golf Aaron Johnston email aaron.johnston@shangri-la.com

The writer was a guest of Brunei Airlines, who fly daily from Melbourne.

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