

TRAVEL • OCTOBER 29TH, 2018

In the time it takes to watch a *Game Of Thrones* episode, you could be transported to another realm. You'll experience the Sanchaya's VIP treatment even before you exit the ferry terminal, coming in from Tanah Merah in Changi. Hotel staff in batik uniforms efficiently usher you into a private lounge where Chesterfield sofas, aromatic teas, and cold towels await. Because, you know, ferry travel is *hard*.



Your bags quickly disappear, whisked off by butlers into waiting cars. If you're groggy from the 50-minute sea travel, ginger-and-honey candy is on hand to help you transition into the 15-minute drive to the resort.



It's tough to **escape Singapore** quickly. Most beach destinations within a couple of hours' travel are rambunctious family-affairs with all-day buffet rooms or pre-Instagram "luxury" properties that have seen better days. A low-key, elevated getaway isn't as easy as you might think.



Imagined by Thai firm P49 Deesign, the Sanchaya is a lesson in disciplined palettes, luxury hardware and top-notch finishing
All photos by The Sanchaya

The Impression

Opened in 2014 by Russian business owner Natalya Pavchinskaya, the Sanchaya is impressive off the bat. The colonnade of white pillars, gable roofs and dark wood floors that greet you as you enter are a pleasing aesthetic. Pavchinskaya's collaboration with Thai design firm P49 Deesign has clearly paid off in the language of open skies, a stunning low-rise enclave, manicured gardening and elegant



Southeast Asian architecture on the edge of the South China Sea. It's immediately disarming.

The sprawling compounds include a well-equipped gym, a croquet lawn, and a yoga pavilion if you want to align your chakras at sunrise. If you'd prefer doing proper laps in the 50m salt-chlorinated pool by the beach, pack your swimmers. There are submerged chaises lounges in the wading areas in case you can't decide between tanning in water or on dry land.



Unlike Bali, there aren't any surfer waves to catch here, but the beach cabanas facing the South China Sea make for more mellow afternoons

The Villas & Suites

Across almost 10 hectares of sprawling greens, there are 29 photogenic villas and suites in this award-winning resort. The suites are bungalow-sized affairs with pretty lawns – if you are on the ground floor. They are generously appointed with white linen



hangings, beautiful clawed bathtubs and Aesop bath liquids, and comfortably-padded sun-loungers with your own private patio.

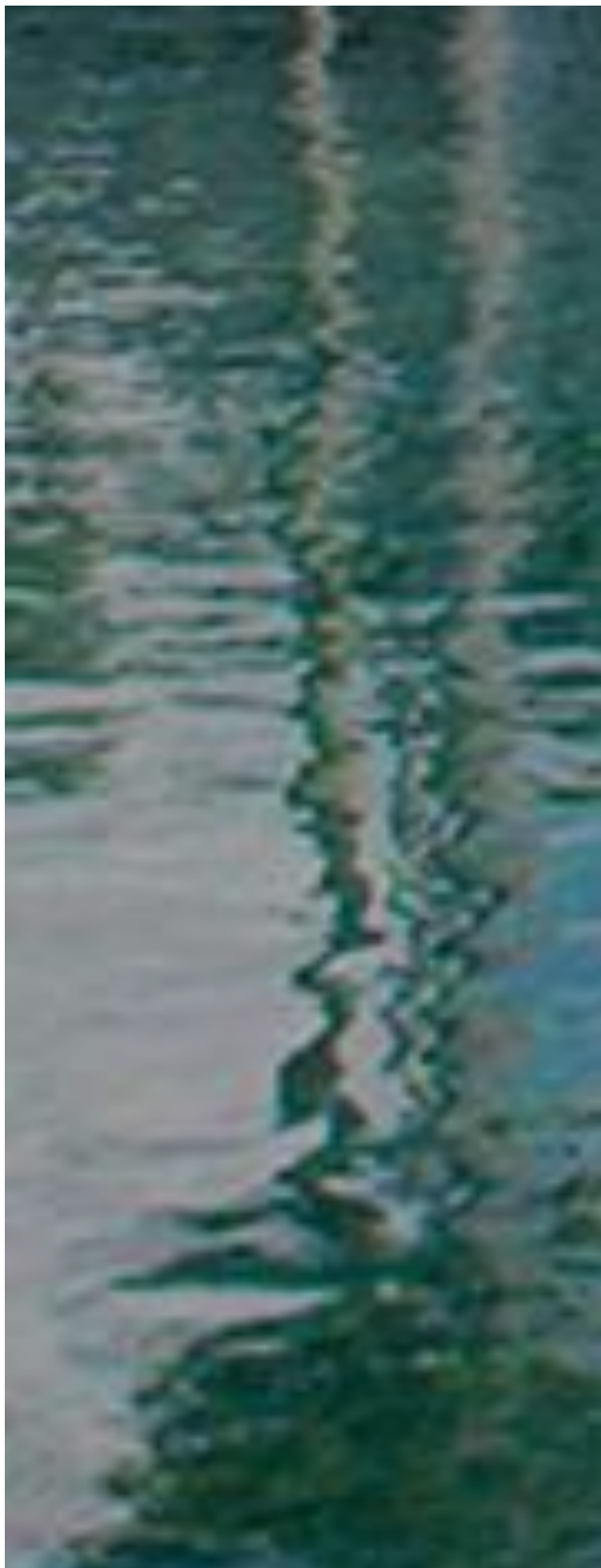
Most of the villas come with views of either lush gardens, or an idyllic man-made lagoon. WiFi is, of course, available throughout the property. The rooms' Bang & Olufsen TVs come with Apple TV – a complete necessity in the Netflix age. Aesthetes will love the black-and-white palette and walk-in wardrobe, complete with personalised stationery and mini-bar with complimentary soft drinks and juices.



Try the Pure Oxygen Facial (S\$193 for 60 minutes) at the Sanchaya Spa, which uses organic produce infused with vitamins and antioxidants to gently clean the pores and soften expression lines

The Dining & Drinks

The resort has two restaurants, an all-day Dining Room and the Thai Tasanee grill. The former serves an intercontinental menu while the



later is perfect for romantic poolside dinners. It's the kind of place where you graze on a menu inspired by Indonesian cuisine and Thai street-style fare while the moon shimmers off the pool. Go for the top-rated *som tam* (salad), *tom yum* goong (spicy-sour seafood soup) and *rendang*.

Drinks are easy as the breeze. There is no menu at the Bar, and the mixologists are more than happy to whip up cocktails based on the flavours you fancy. If you prefer popping the cork and chin-scratching over regions and growths, the Decanter is a proper room for oenophiles.



The Bar – open all day, you might like to note – at the Sanchaya offers custom cocktails, a relaxed vibe and perfect reading corners

The Spa

The Sanchaya Spa offers both indoor and outdoor treatment rooms. Herbal massages ministered by excellent therapists use locally-grown ginger and herbs to give a natural glow post-

The Sanchaya Is An Uber Retreat Hidden In Bintan

It's so close, yet so different

by **Tommy Wee**

massages. Try the Pure Oxygen Facial (S\$193 for 60 minutes), which uses organic produce infused with vitamins and antioxidants to gently clean the pores and soften your face's expression lines.

Need to know: The Sanchaya villas and suites start from roughly S\$650+++ per night. There's Bintan Resort Ferries (www.brf.com.s). Book via www.directferries.com for up-to-date prices. The hotel operates a free shuttle service to and from the ferry terminal, a 15-minute drive away. Private car transfers are US\$30 one-way



