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Island Retreat: Treasure Bay Bintan

Bintan might well be the new Bali as the go-to getaway hotspot just a stone's throw from Singapore, thanks to new developments like Treasure Bay Bintan, writes Hashirin Nurin Hashimi.

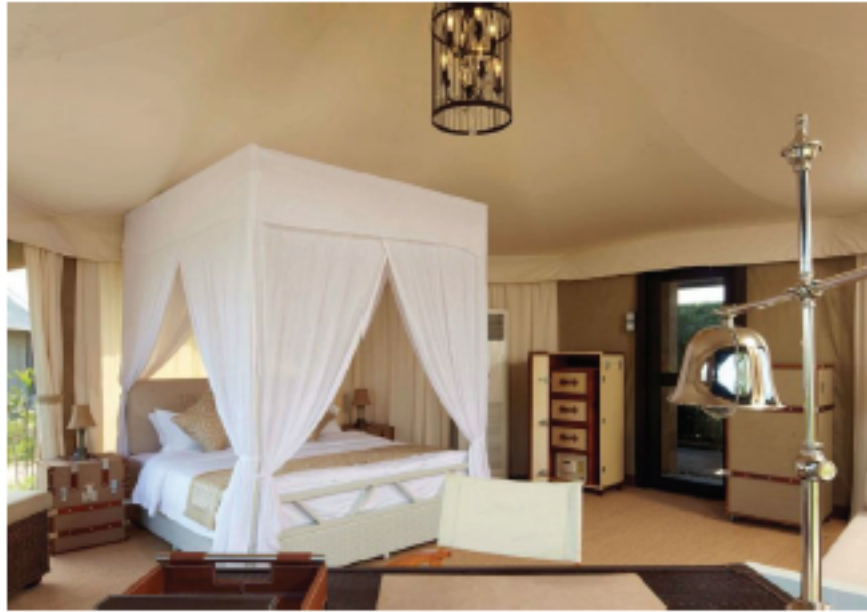
By Hashirin Nurin Hashimi on Jan 12, 2016



Judging by its proximity to Singapore—a 45min ferry ride from the Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal—one would expect the Indonesian island of Bintan to be a first-choice destination for those in need of a quick retreat. But for most of the 2000s, Bintan was overlooked for neighbouring Batam and its cousins Bali and Lombok. Add to the fact that the last resort opened there in 2000, Bintan Resorts registered nary a blip on the radars of holidaymakers.

Until now. The sleepy Riau island is experiencing a new awakening as Southeast Asia's latest waterfront playground with integrated resorts in the north such as Lagoi Bay, where luxury resort The Sanchaya is situated, and now Treasure Bay Bintan. "Truth be told, we needed to revive Bintan. The stigma Bintan had was that it is dated and nothing has changed for a long time—which is true. But that's different now and we have seen several new exciting projects in the market," says Stefan Thumiger, chief operating officer of Treasure Bay Bintan.

Just a 5min drive from the Bandar Bentan Telani Ferry Terminal, the 338ha Treasure Bay Bintan by Malaysian property developer Landmarks boasts several first-in-Asia concepts that meld luxury with adventure and family fun. The first is The Canopi Resort—which opened last November and is currently the only accommodation at the integrated resort—with an on-trend "glamping" or glamorous camping concept.



Step inside one of the 40 Safari-themed air-conditioned “tent suites”, and you will be cocooned in all the creature comforts you would expect of a full-fledged hotel—from a cozy four poster king-sized bed to the luxe chandelier in the centre of the room, and requisite wifi. The campsite influence extends to the sisal carpeting, trunk-like storage spaces and ensuite semi-open-air bathroom, which let you be one with nature.



Right at your doorstep, the Crystal Lagoon beckons. Southeast Asia’s largest man-made seawater body, equivalent to 50 Olympic-sized swimming pools, its seawater undergoes an eco-friendly filtration and treatment process to turn it “crystal clear”. The lagoon makes up Chill Cove, the site for myriad water sports activities such as cable ski, aqua glide sailboats and an inflatable water park, so that even children can get in on the action. For the more adventurous, hop on the jetovator and be elevated in mid-air. There are also plans for bungee jumping at the lagoon’s deepest end.



On land, there are just as many activities: from ATV (all-terrain vehicle) and UTV (utility task vehicle) drives through the resort's nature reserve to Segway and scooter rides around the lagoon. Nature lovers, you don't want to miss a tandem kayak ride through the resort's private mangrove reserve. I had the good luck of being paired with chief glamer Wayan, who did most of the paddling work as I admired the plants and wildlife.

For an experience like no other, take flight with an open cockpit seaplane ride with a pilot from the Air Adventures Flying Club Bintan. The seaplane takes off from the Crystal Lagoon and you can soak in the idyllic sights of the island from the air. I saw more action in the two days I was at Treasure Bay Bintan than I ever did in a normal month!



But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The resort's first development phase, which is part of a 20-year master plan, will include a wellness cluster that offers Western and Eastern approaches and concepts. First on board is US-based health spa resort, Canyon Ranch, with its first property in Asia, alongside two Accor Group hotel chains. Chill Cove will also see F&B and retail strips this year.

"It's really a build-up, which I think is going to peak when the Bintan International Airport is completed in 2017, making it easier for more visitors to get to our resort. And that would be when Bintan as a destination would be on a turning point," enthuses Thumiger.