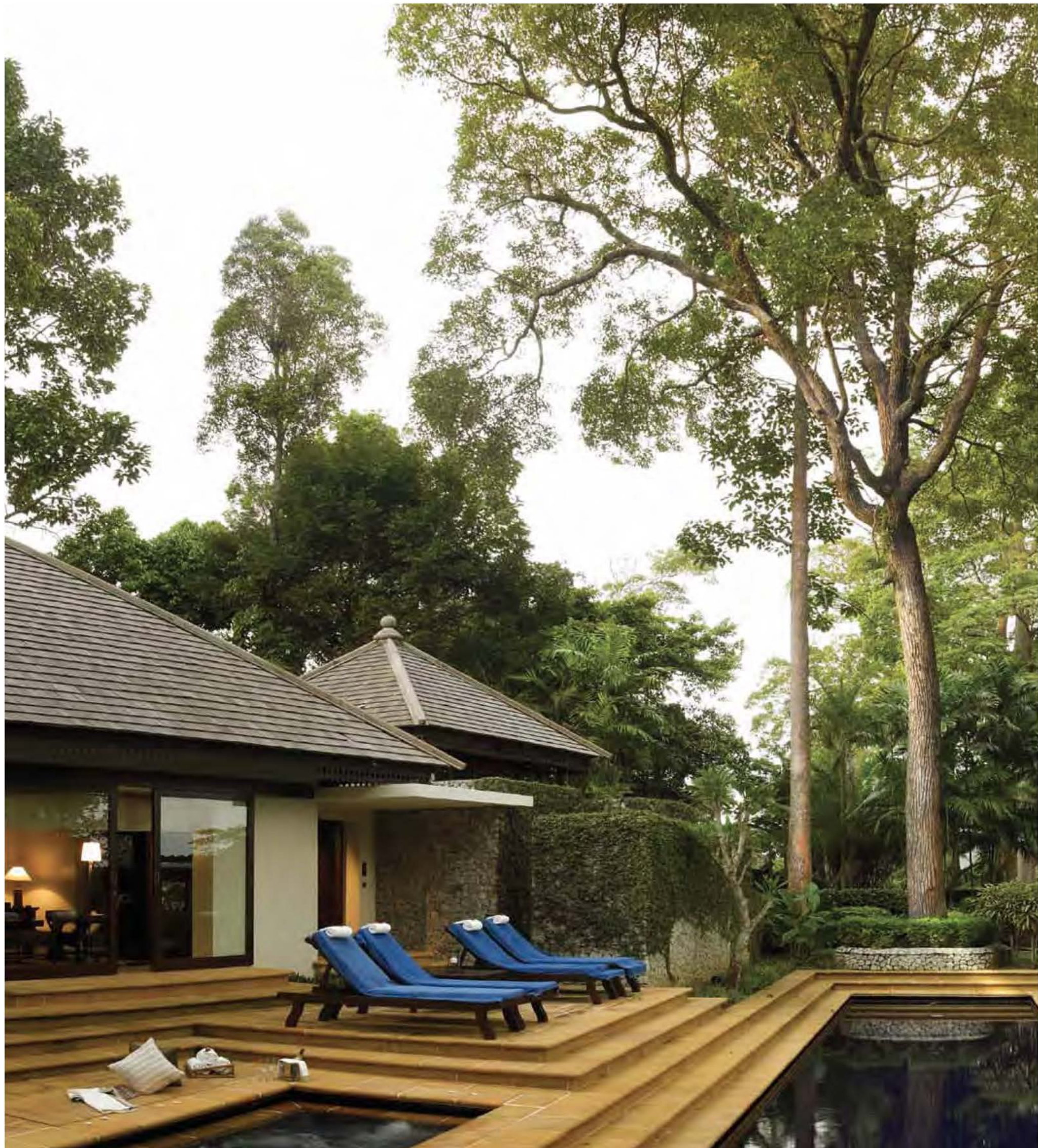






Estate 6

e
6





A lush tropical garden scene featuring several large, mature trees with thick trunks and dense green foliage. In the background, a traditional building with a dark, tiled roof is partially visible, situated behind a well-manicured hedge. The foreground is dominated by a large, vibrant green tree trunk on the right and various tropical plants and shrubs. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

All Things Bright

Opposite:
The old-growth dipterocarp trees
of this Estate kept undergrowth
in check for centuries, creating
a generous swathe of open
area under their canopy.

and Beautiful

genius loci e6
OPEN SKIES AND OPEN LAWN

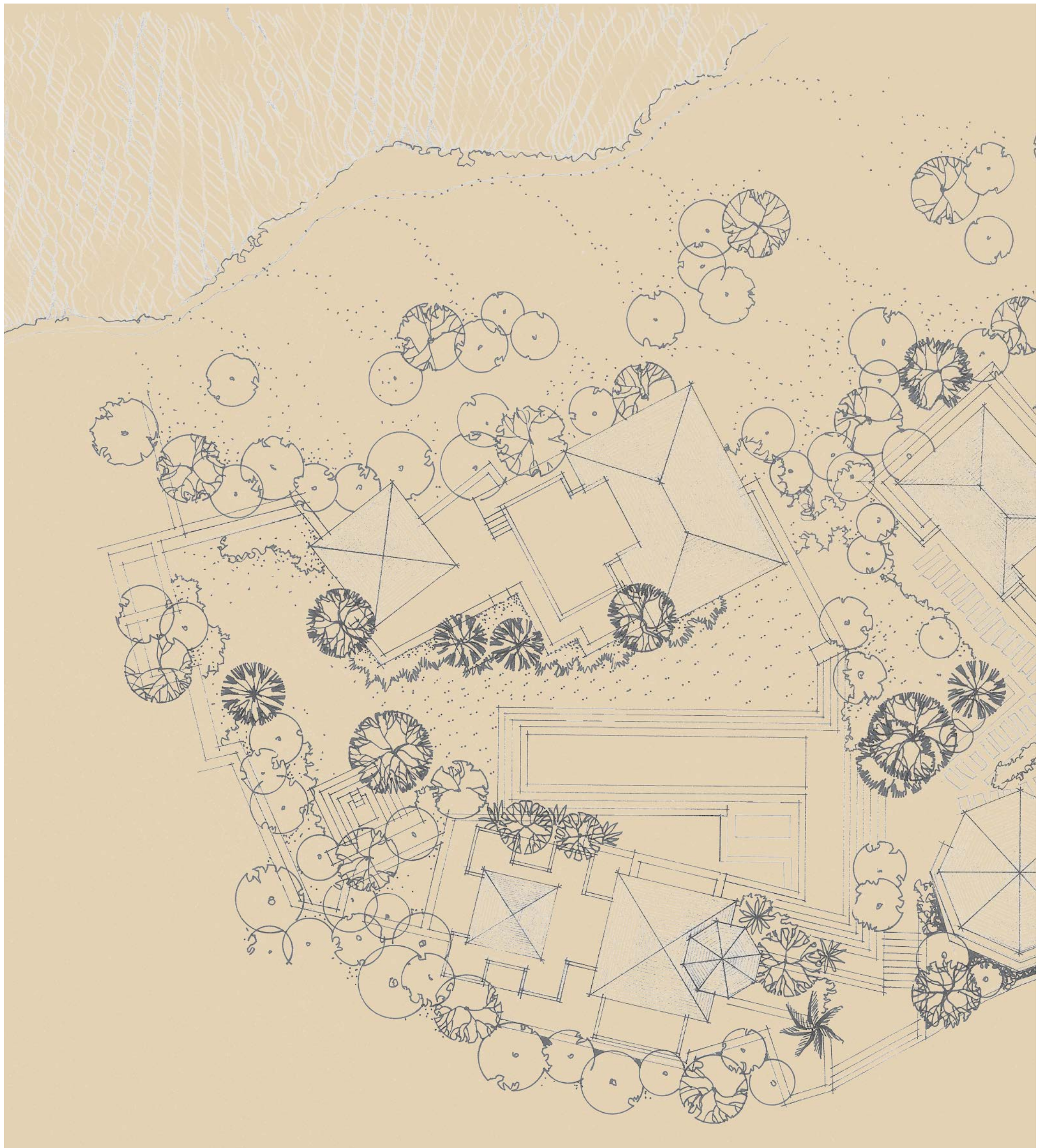
*Blazing sun –
Whose barefoot child
Is running free?
- Koyo -*

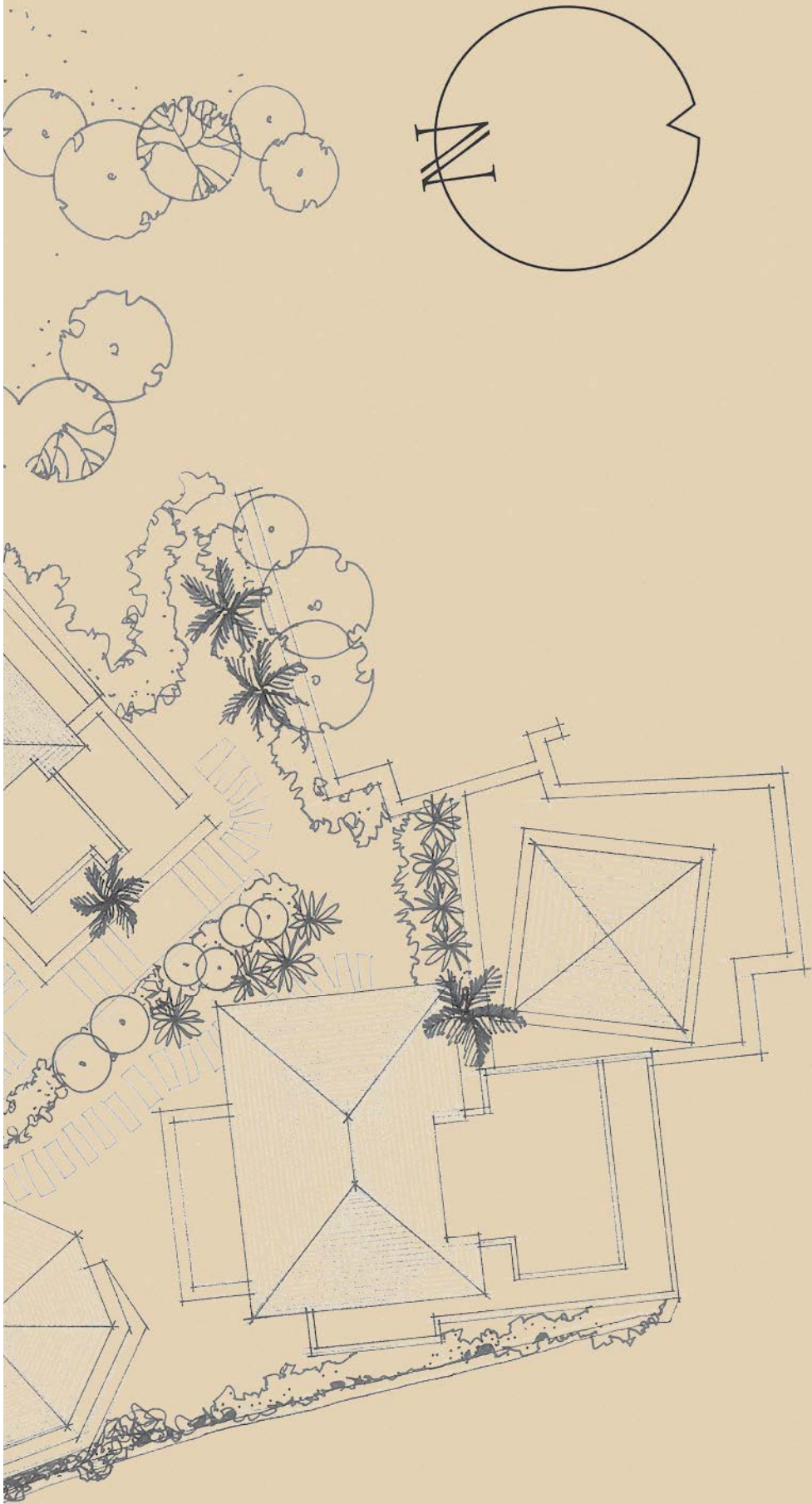
Stepping into Estate 6 is stepping into sunny brightness. The unframed, open sky forms the background against which brahminy kites and white-bellied sea eagles ride the warm thermals in lazy spirals over the bay below. Virgin dipterocarp trees, several reaching heights of at least 120 feet above the ground, tower like gentle sentinels over the area.

The first thing that the architects discovered when they set foot on what would be Estate 6, was that the presence of these tall trees had through the years shielded much of the ground at the foot of the trees from direct sunlight. The dense canopy discouraged undergrowth, which resulted in a natural swath of land beneath the trees that was more scant of vegetation than in the rest of the forest layers. This patch of sparse undergrowth is Estate 6's *genius loci*, a naturally open arena beautifully juxtaposed with the neighbouring stands of gigantic ancient trees. From their size, it is patently obvious that these huge dipterocarps and their ancestors have been growing here for eons. But the chronicles of their lineage, however interesting they may be, are still not widely known.

"The Malaysian rain forest has a fascinating history," says Dr. Rhett D. Harrison, a tropical ecologist with over 15 years of experience in Malaysian forests. "Tropical forests are actually dynamic. They 'move' over the landscape in response to climate and topographical changes; species colonise, go extinct, and re-colonise; and species are evolving." That was what happened to the dipterocarps. Millions of years ago, these trees called India home.

In the mid- to late-Eocene epoch about 40 million years ago, the large Indian plate collided with Asia. Dipterocarps spread over from India into Myanmar. Twenty million years later, they had spread throughout the region, as indicated by widespread pollen deposits and other evidence. "Most of the region was covered in low diversity monsoonal dipterocarp forests with abundant grasses. The palm *Oncosperma* also arrived at this time," explains Harrison. It did not take long (relatively speaking, of course) for the dipterocarps to diversify and colonise the rain forest of this region. Today, dipterocarps constitute up to 40% of basal area and form the most important feature of South East Asia's forests.





Estate 6

The sunniest of all the properties, Estate 6 is sprawled beneath age-old lofty trees on the eastern ridge of the area. It is anchored by a long lawn and lap pool, their central location making the property a favourite among families with young children. Its facilities include:

- Three bungalow bedrooms
- Two outdoor jacuzzis
- Geometric sunken pool
- Living pavilion
- Dining pavilion
- Outdoor hot spa
- Central lawn and pool area

A hot spa just next to the pool is an added attraction, as is the unobstructed sky for viewing eagles soaring above. Each of the three bungalow bedrooms features a private balcony or verandah that together offers views of the many layers of the rain forest. Estate 6 is the most clearly interconnected of all the Estates as all the built structures flank the central lawn and pool.

Prominent figures that have stayed here include world-famous golfer Sir Nick Faldo and Academy Award-winning actress Jodie Foster.



Almost half the length of an Olympic version, this pool facilitates serious laps. At the same time it is also reminiscent of the rivers that flow beside traditional longhouses and villages of the Malay Archipelago.

There must be quite a few things a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them.

– Sylvia Plath, Poet and Novelist –

H2O: TWO PARTS HEART, ONE PART OBSESSION

Taking centre stage on the long lawn, and presided over by a majestic living pavilion, is a rectangular and exceptionally slim pool. This elongated pool is designed to effectively highlight the length of the open area. Its length is also reminiscent of a river, a much-loved image in the Malay Archipelago, a region made up of more water than land. In this part of the world, swimming is an activity that is naturally learnt during the exhilarating days of childhood for the natives who grow up in its riverine communities and coastal villages.

One of the few proper lap pools in The Estates, this pool is almost half Olympic standard length, which allows swimmers to do serious laps. Lap swimming may not be traditional resistance training as weight-lifting is, but what it does is give relief to the joints without compromising on the benefits of exercise. When water supports the body's weight during exercise, synovial fluid lubricates the joints. Thus when the swimmer gets up to walk and run, there is a greater feeling of mobility. Swimming proper laps also disciplines the lungs to take in large amounts of air as the face would be submerged underwater every few seconds for prolonged periods. As one's face tilts up for air, the lungs naturally increase the air intake. After half an hour of serious, continuous laps, fresh oxygen would have flooded and recharged every organ and muscle in the body. Exercising in the right environment can only enhance that experience of rejuvenation, and in Estate 6, the endless acres of lush rain forest provide what is arguably the freshest supply of oxygen in the world.

Whether it is a cool dip or a hot soak, guests in Estate 6 will not have to go far to find either. Located right next to the lap pool, as part of the extended hard landscaping, a hot spa has been built. The gurgling water produced by underwater jets creates a hydro-massage that soothes away aches and pains. Guests of the Estate have found that the hot spa is the best place to connect with family and friends as the swirling water ministers to their bodies. Sitting within the spa is not unlike being pleasantly buffeted by the churning water in the natural pool at the base of a small waterfall.

In the 1950s, adventurous scouts camping on the then uninhabited Pangkor Laut reported the existence of just such a waterfall somewhere in the middle of the island. By the 1970s, however, the waterfall had probably dried up since subsequent groups visiting the island did not notice its presence.



The sound of flowing water and gentle bubbling starts to soothe even before one steps into this hot spa.



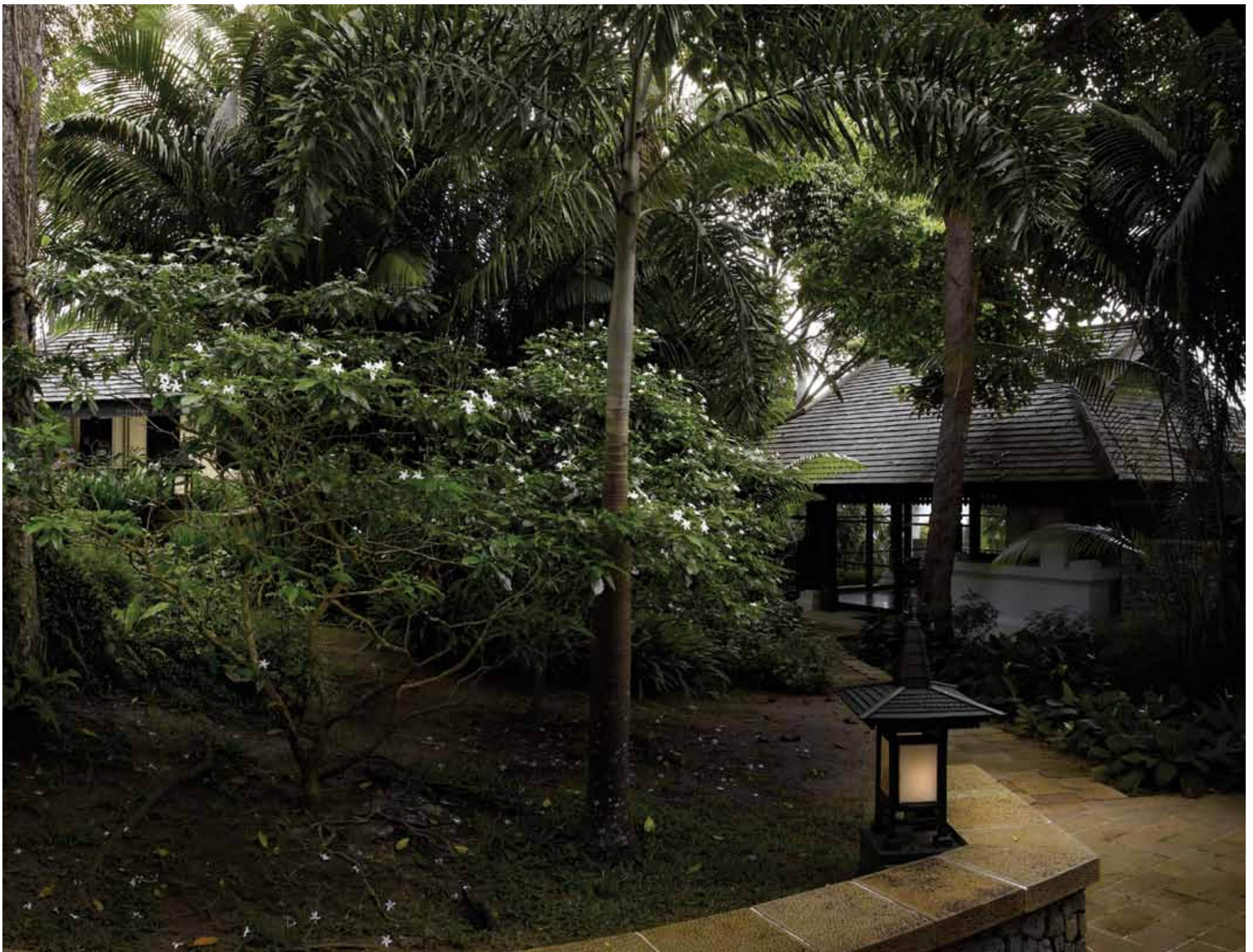
*Every forest branch moves differently
in the breeze.
But as they sway,
they connect at the roots
– Rumi –*

CONNECTING WITH NATURE CONNECTS PEOPLE

Estate 6 is characterised by a long lawn and rectangular lap pool that anchors the entire property. This characteristic effectively serves to connect all the built structures into a cohesive whole. Even though all the buildings are woven among the age-old trees, they still flank the central lawn and pool area. The well-connected relationships between the built structures and the natural lawn combine to make the property a cosy place to be. This emphasis on connectedness within the Estate is deliberate; it is to cater for the universal human need to have social connection and affectional bonds with each other as they relax and play. The psychologist John Bowlby believed that the

earliest bonds children form with their caregivers (usually their mothers) have an immense impact throughout life. His attachment theory postulates that “mothers who are available and responsive to their infant’s needs establish a sense of security. The infant knows that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to then explore the world.”

The connectedness of this Estate is thus ideal for families. The central lawn and pool area is a natural congregating point for family bonding times. Parents with little children can also easily watch over their young from their bungalow bedrooms as the children safely gambol on the lawn or play in the pool while nature’s chorus of cicadas and birdsong plays in the background.



Play, remarks Richard Louv in his landmark book “Last Child in the Woods”, has been commercialised to the extent that children lose out on unstructured, natural and self-directed play. Because parks and for-profit indoor centres have been structured to accommodate organised sports, there is a lack of simple, multi-choice space for play. “Indeed, research suggests that children, when left to their own devices, are drawn to the rough edges of such parks, the ravines and rocky inclines, the natural vegetation,” Louv writes. The children’s loss is reflected in the telling quote by Wendell Berry: “Our children no longer learn how to read the great Book of Nature from their own direct experience or how to interact creatively with the seasonal transformations of the planet. They

seldom learn where their water comes from or where it goes. We no longer coordinate our human celebration with the great liturgy of the heavens.”

Estate 6’s open lawn area offers guests, particularly young families, the opportunity to once again reconnect with nature and with each other. With live specimens all around – real sarsaparilla trees (*Cinnamomum porrectum*) to smell the flavour of natural sarsaparilla, hornbills to watch, cicadas to hear, and a resident naturalist to explain it all – a stay in The Estates is an everyday nature adventure for both parents and children.



This page:
Trees take precedence over man-made
structures on Pangkor Laut's Estates.

Opposite:
"Tread lightly on the land" is the
commitment of the VTL architects
who designed The Estates of Pangkor
Laut. Thus not a single tree or granite
boulder was ever moved from
its original location.





This page:
The bungalow bedroom in this hilltop
Estate offers views that skim over the
forest's tree tops



There is a serene and settled majesty to woodland scenery that enters into the soul and delights and elevates it, and fills it with noble inclinations.

- Washington Irving (1783-1859) -

(Author of "Rip Van Winkle")



Left:

Sunlight filtered by the courtyard's overhead timber slats help create an environment that is just right for the unusual and lace-like climbing figs growing on the granite walls.

Right:

The doors of this pavilion open to reveal a balcony that overlooks the sea and the rain forest canopy.

THE POETRY OF EARTH

When Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson, Ph.D, coined the term "biophilia" (which literally means "a love for nature"), he argued that human beings have an innate and evolutionarily-based affinity for nature. In Alex Wilson's article "Biophilia in Practice: Buildings that Connect People with Nature", he noted that Judith Heerwagen, Ph.D (a psychologist who has written widely on biophilia) held that this strong preference to have nature around them shows in the way people fight to keep biophilic features in non-biophilic conditions, such as sterile offices which do not offer views of the outdoors. They do so by "surrounding themselves with potted plants, images of nature, and nature-focused screen savers on their computers". What is now catching on, the growing movement to put biophilia into practice and designing buildings that connect people with nature, was long before applied in The Estates.

From the 'high rise' of the forest canopy to the 'ground floor', the complex magnificence of the rain forest unfurls before the eyes when one makes time to notice it. The immobile plant world captivates not with movement but with the sheer immensity of its variety. On this one Estate, one can find several different palms. Among them are the brilliantly coloured sealing wax palm, the bertam, the nibong and fan palms. The sealing wax palm (*Cyrtostachys lakka*) is native to Malaysia and originally grew in the rain forest. Though very commonly grown as an ornamental in gardens and pots throughout the world these days, truly wild specimens of sealing wax palm are now rather rare. According to Dr. Saw Leng Guan, senior forest botanist at the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), Malaysia has about 15% of the

world's total palm species. "Palms range from minute forest plants without obvious stems to lofty trees with massive trunks which reach the canopy of the forest," notes Saw. Palms in Malaysia can be categorised under four major groups – fan-leafed, feather-leafed, rattans and *Nypa* – based on the fronds (or leaves), inflorescence and flowers. Although only coconut palms, rattan palms and the introduced oil palm from Africa are considered to have obvious economic value, other palms play significant roles in the daily lives of Malaysian villagers. The trunk of the *nibong* palm, for example, is resistant to saltwater. Thus it is used by natives as stakes in the sea and to build *kelong* (fish traps).

In the rain forest, there are points where plant and animal kingdom seem to merge. What one mistakes for just another twig might prove to be a stick insect (*Phyllium* sp.) ingeniously camouflaged within its natural environment. From the comfort of personal bedrooms, catch these marvels that nature unfolds. All three bungalow bedrooms in this Estate have either private balconies or verandahs that are suspended over the surrounding greenery. One which is closest to the rain forest gives a view that skims just over the jungle canopy, another offers glimpses of the sea through the tall trees, and the third shows a living, green 'cascade' of vegetation down the hill slope.

Each of the three bungalow bedrooms has a generous platform bed, tailor-made cane furniture and a sumptuously appointed marble and granite bathroom that looks out onto a private garden. In The Estates, even the mundane cannot escape from Nature's poetry.



MORE THAN JUST GETTING CLEAN

A bath in the outdoors: the very words conjure up images of being totally elemental while in the invigorating embrace of clean water, sunlight, fresh air from the rain forest and a chorus of leaves rustling in the breeze. Feeling the delightful sense of liberation and being at one with nature calms the mind and soothes the spirit in a way that few other actions can replicate.

In designing the two outdoor baths in the Estate as ‘living bathrooms’, the architects ingeniously created spaces in which guests can take their baths in privacy and seclusion, or paradoxically, also all out in the open. The surrounding rubble walls, carefully planted gardens and the natural foliage of the rain forest, see to that.

The Art of the Bath

One might think that taking a bath is simply just to wash off the day’s dirt, but in the Malay Archipelago, there is more to it than getting clean. The adage of “cleanliness is next to Godliness” is practised quite literally in this region. Every day starts with a bath, even on the coldest of mornings, and even in traditional villages and longhouses that have yet to get piped water and water bills. Such bathrooms do not feature a shower or a bathtub. Instead, the bathroom is beside a well, or on a *titi* (wooden platform) built over a river or stream (that was the natural equivalent of ‘running water’ in the ancient world of the Malay Archipelago). A pail is lowered to draw water, and a dipper is used to scoop water out of the pail for splashing over one’s body. Another delightful

alternative is to dive straight into the river, stream or waterfall and bathe directly in the flowing waters (although this has been known to result in the occasional crocodile snacking on a delicious bather or two in the rivers of Sarawakian Borneo).

Beyond the routine daily bath, the natives also practise ceremonial bathing. The Malay *mandi bunga* (bathing with flowers) is just such a bath ritual, engaged in as an act of *sambut*, of embracing and of receiving. Candice Foong in her article “The Art of Malay Spa” explains that traditionally, taking a *mandi bunga* “marks the passing of certain significant times in a person’s life such as when a son prepares for circumcision, a daughter comes of age, on the eve of a wedding night, even at the seventh month of a pregnancy at a ceremony called *Lenggang Perut*, where the stomach is ‘turned’ in preparation of the pending birth.” The Malay *rendam-rendam* treatment (*rendam-rendam* literally means “soaking”) involves a sitz bath of sea salt, henna, betel leaves and black nigella seeds. “This ancient Malay therapy,” writes Foong, “is renowned for its effectiveness throughout the ages. Married women practise *rendam-rendam* each time after intimacy, childbirth and after every monthly menstruation to strengthen vaginal muscles and to keep it moist, warm and firm. It is both a cleanser for women at the end of their periods or for women who have just given birth ... It is also believed to firm up vaginal muscles and reduce inflammations.”

In The Estates, however, no reason other than that of pure relaxation is needed to enjoy the outdoor bath, restfully sited within the bosom of the rain forest and bathed by cool island breezes.



Opposite:
The traditional Malay Archipelago timber detailing of this bathing pavilion is reminiscent of Balinese spas – except that the one here is totally private and access is exclusively through a secluded pathway and door via the bungalow bedroom.

This page:
Located in the tower-like structure of the main bungalow, this bright and spacious day bed is perfect for a spot of tea, an afternoon nap, a good book or a snuggle.

*I am one with wind and eagles, I am free.
 Given wings to sail in gracefulness, the sky, the sky.
 Given a voice to sing in breathlessness, I find that I can fly, fly away.
 In the hands of my Father, in the light of the sunshine.
 On the wings of an eagle, I'm flying again.
 - John Denver -*

ON THE WINGS OF AN EAGLE

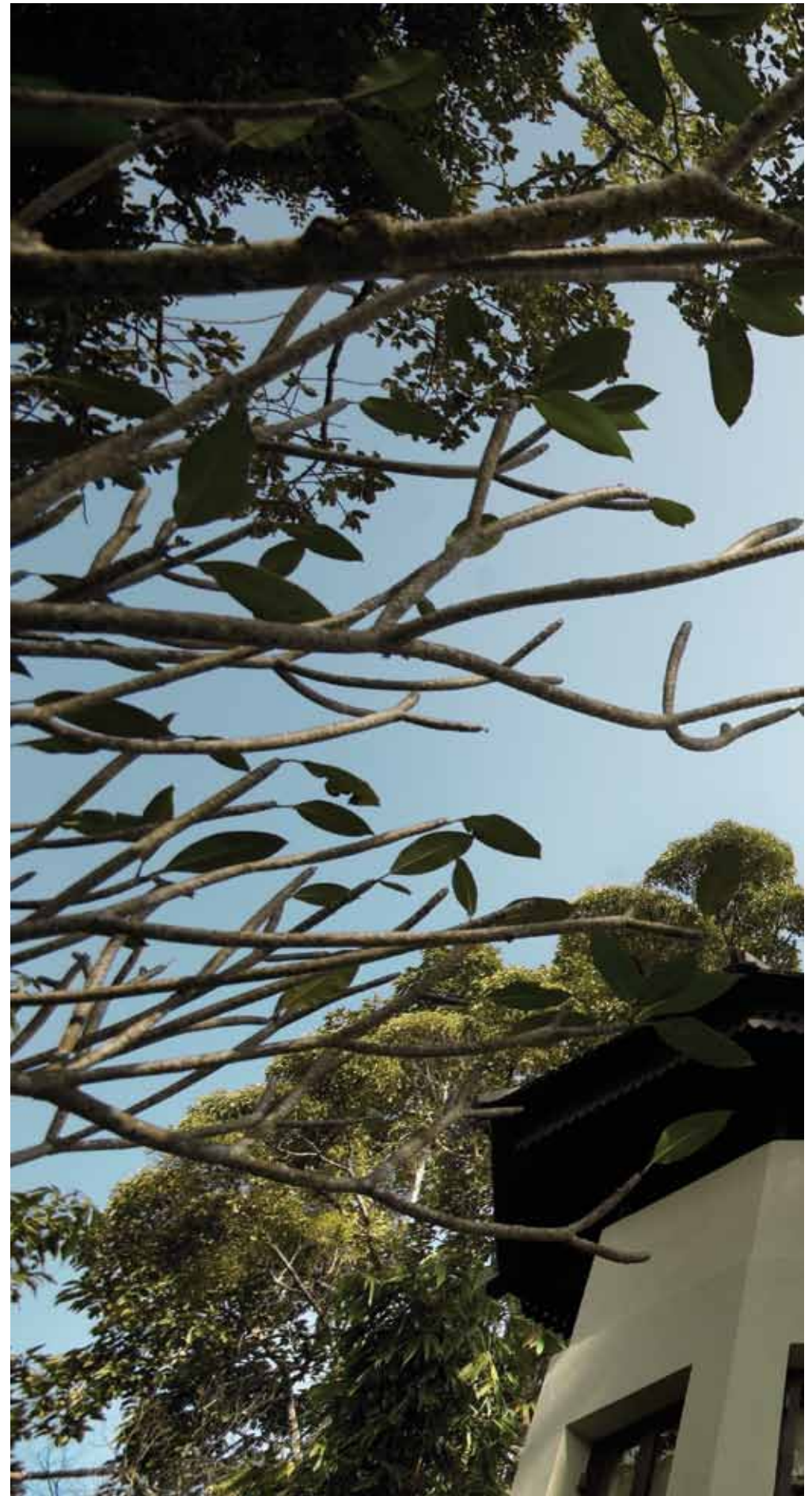
The unhampered view of the sky above the central lawn and pool makes Estate 6 the most logical place to view the brahminy kites as they glide on the warm air that rises from the sea. In flight, the raptors are identified by the slow deep flapping of their long but broadly angled wings. The call of these soaring kites, described as a thin mewling scream that sounds like *kweeaa* or *kyeeer*, is also easily heard in the quiet peace of the surroundings.

The brahminy kite (*Haliastur indus*), or *lang merah* in Malay, has a distinctive white head, neck and breast that contrast with its chestnut body and wings. It's a bird that mates for life, remaining faithful to its one chosen partner and raising their young together.

As with all successful birds, the brahminy kite is highly adaptable and feeds on live fish, crabs, sea snakes, small mammals and carrion. Ocean-borne prey is deftly snatched from the surface of the sea as the brahminy kite does not dive into water. To avoid theft by other raptors, this eagle can even eat its prey on the wing. The brahminy kite usually hunts alone.

Highly regarded by the Ibans of Sarawak, it is called the *singalang burung* (bird-god of war in the Iban language). Its presence helped the Ibans of old to make major decisions such as whether to fight or to build a new longhouse. To the Ibans, these birds never reveal themselves without cause; they always have something to communicate from the gods. Hence, when the call of the brahminy kite is heard or when it is seen winging across the sky on a lazy afternoon spent outdoors in the Estate, one can imagine relaxing outside an Iban longhouse in the wilds of the jungle. The difference is that the interior of the dwelling has been magically transformed into 5-star accommodations, complete with attentive service from the staff of the Estate.

Sharing the skies with the brahminy kites are the white-bellied sea eagles. Growing up to 71 cm in length, the large white-bellied sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) is conspicuous as it soars on its immense wings high over the waters and island of Pangkor Laut. In its breeding season, one may catch the very rare sight of aerial displays in which two of these eagles lock talons and do cartwheels in the open skies. These faithful raptors also mate for life, and their nest is a huge platform of sticks. Occasionally, one may also see the sea eagle swooping down to catch large fish from the surface of the sea with its amazing talons.





A pair of Brahminy kites (*Haliastur indus*) hunting above Estate 6. Intensely loyal, these monogamous raptors mate for life. With wide open skies, this hilltop Estate is perfect for viewing sea eagles soaring in the thermals.



This page:
Like a leafy maze, these granite courtyard walls help merge the built structures with the rain forest.

Opposite left:
For party animals: this unassuming wild bertam palm (*Eugeissona tristis*) naturally yields fermented nectar from its flower buds.

Opposite right:
This plant with tiny leaves that thrives on the rubble wall is actually a species of fig.



CHEERS TO THE “HAPPY HOURS” PALM

Several dense clusters of *bertam* palms (*Eugeissona tristis*) are scattered about in this Estate. This unusual palm, native to Peninsular Malaysia and usually found on hilltops, is a stemless palm with large, ascending leaves which grow to about 6m (20ft) tall, glossy green leaflets, sharp spiny leafstalks and a mostly underground, clustering trunk. The *bertam* has large, brown scaly fruits (shaped like cloves of garlic, akin to the fruits of the *salak* tree to which the palm is related). The leaves make excellent thatch. This palm is found in disturbed, open areas in rain forests between sea level and 800m (2,700ft). It is rarely seen in cultivation and looks its best in tropical areas where there is plenty of sun and water.

In July 2008, the *bertam* palm was highlighted in major newspapers throughout the world, not so much for itself as for the little nocturnal animal that visits the plant come nightfall. BBC News, UK, reported that the pen-tailed tree shrew (*Ptilocercus lowii*), commonly referred to as *tupai ekor kembang*, goes on a natural-palm-beer binge that lasts, on average, two and a half hours each night. What it imbibes during its protracted drinking spree is the fermented nectar from the flower buds of the *bertam* palm – comparable to a case of beer with alcohol content of up to 3.8% – and it does not get into a drunken stupor! That is almost like drinking a case of Guinness Draught or Bud Light, except that at 4.0% and 4.2% respectively, their alcohol contents are only slightly higher. Even more amazing is the fact (highlighted by the United Kingdom’s “Telegraph” and local Malaysian newspaper “The Star”) that tree shrews have been living on a diet that is the equivalent of nothing but beer for up to 55 million years.


This astonishing feat by the only nocturnal species in the tree shrew family was discovered by Dr. Frank Wiens and Annette Zitzmann of the Animal Physiology Department at the Bayreuth University in the United States when they carried out research at the Segari Melintang Forest Reserve in Perak, Malaysia, and other areas in the country. Their findings were published in the “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences”, the official journal of the United States National Academy of Sciences.

BBC News further reported that the *bertam* palm produces nectar year-round on a complex schedule that appears to maximise pollination by small mammals. “Each bud is a miniature brewery, containing a yeast community that turns the nectar into a frothy beer-like beverage ... Chemicals in the hair samples showed that on any given night, a tree-shrew had a 36% chance of being drunk by human standards. The shrew’s resistance to intoxication suggests its body must have an effective mechanism for breaking down alcohol.”

This small, hard-to-spot creature can be identified by its tail which is naked except for a whitish feather-shaped arrangement of hairs near the end, hence its name. Although there are no recorded sightings of the pen-tailed tree shrew on Pangkor Laut which belongs to the state of Perak, the small mammal is an inhabitant of the mainland rain forest of the country.

There is still so much to be learnt about the rain forest of Estate 6. In keeping this irreplaceable heritage safe for future generations, YTL’s policy of conservation resonates with the wisdom of Michel de Montaigne, French philosopher and writer (1533-1592): “Let us permit nature to have her way. She understands her business better than we do.”



A photograph of a dense tropical forest. In the foreground, a green lamp post with a single lamp head is visible. The background is filled with various types of trees, including palm trees and large-leafed trees. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day, with some light filtering through the canopy. The overall scene is vibrant and lush.

The bungalow bedroom of this hilltop Estate seems to 'grow' out of the forest, in unison with nature rather than in competition.