

Estate 5

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This page:

The scenery here constantly changes with the life cycle of the trees, the passing of the seasons, the flight of the hornbills, the soaring of the sea eagles, even the migration of whale sharks as they pass these waters *en route* from Ningaloo to the Andamans twice a year.

A photograph capturing a serene tropical sunset. The sun is positioned in the upper left, partially obscured by the dark, silhouetted branches of a large tree. The sky transitions from a pale yellow near the horizon to a soft, hazy blue above. The ocean stretches across the middle ground, with gentle waves and a small boat visible in the distance. In the foreground, the dense, dark foliage of a tropical forest frames the view, with various leaves and branches creating a complex, layered texture. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

The Sight

Opposite:
The photographs here are but part of the hilltop view of the Straits of Malacca from this Estate. For the full experience, one has to feel it in person on the viewing deck.

is Glorious

No life can be barren which hears the whisper of the wind in the branches, or the voice of the sea as it breaks upon the shore; and no soul can lack happiness looking up to the midnight stars.

– **William Forrest Winter** –

genius loci e5

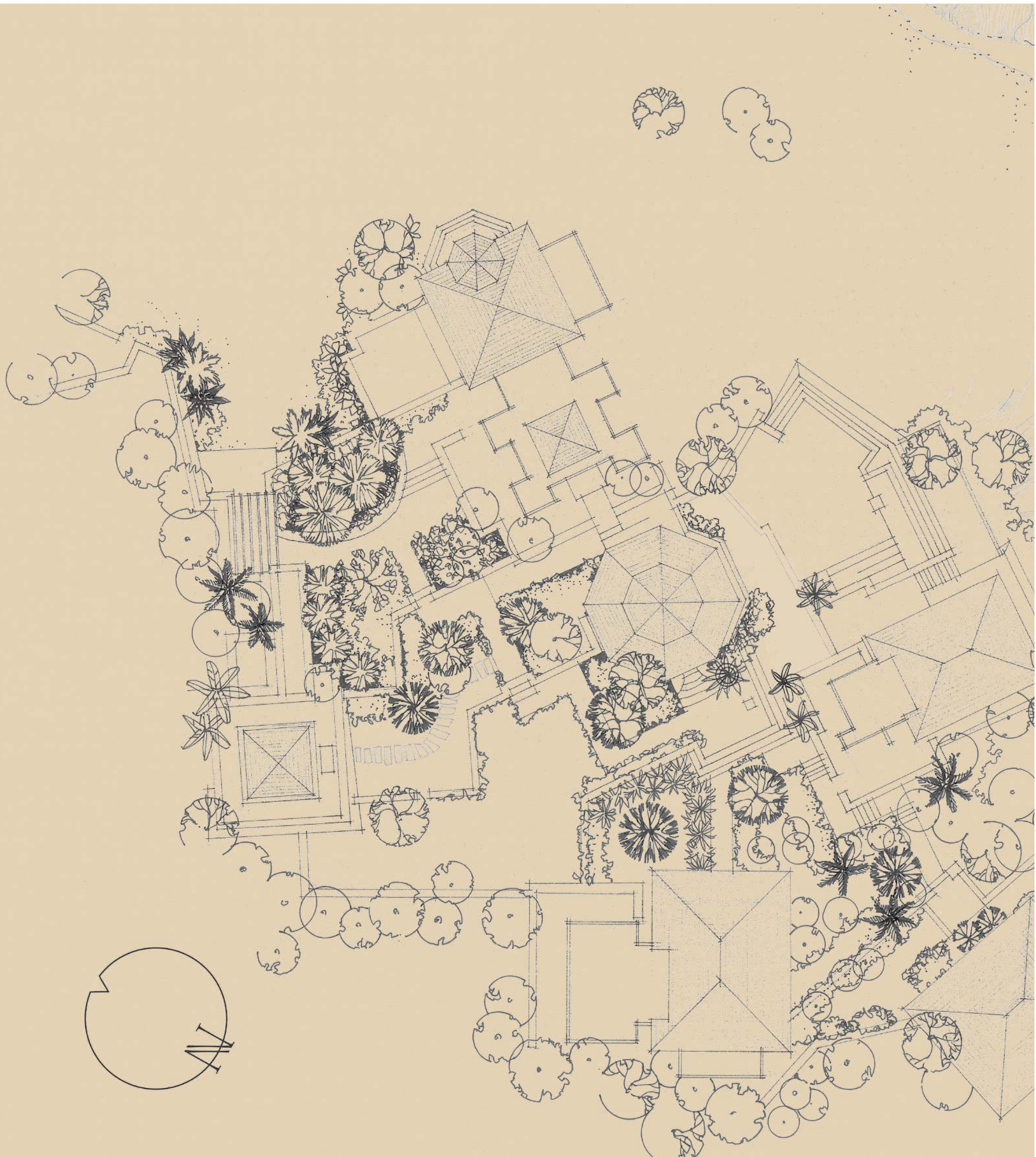
270° HILLTOP VIEW OF THE STRAITS OF MALACCA

Right at the eastern tip of the semi-circle of hilltop Estates is Estate 5, neatly tucked into the hillside and surrounded by verdant vegetation. Guests enter the property following a sandstone pathway that meanders past gardens of flowering shrubs. Round a corner and, like a suddenly sprung surprise, the reason that this Estate is considered the prettiest of all the properties bursts upon the senses: a panoramic view of the sea.

This is the *genius loci* of Estate 5: the best view of the Straits of Malacca in all the nine Estates. Before one's eyes, the tops of trees draw level with the horizon where sea meets sky. Overhead, sunlight twinkles through the canopy of towering trees, the largest existing timber trees in the area. Here too, in the twilight, the setting sun trails its last rays for the day across the clouds in brilliant streaks of crimson and gold as it sinks below the horizon.

The Straits of Malacca is the waterway that connects the Andaman Sea (which is part of the Indian Ocean) with the South China Sea (which is part of the Pacific Ocean). Named after the Malaysian state of Melaka and running between Sumatra to the west and the mainland of Malaysia to the east, the Straits is one of the most important shipping lanes in the world.

However, the area has not always been filled with water. It was dry land during the Ice Ages when huge amounts of water were locked up in icecaps and extensive glaciers, lowering the sea level across the planet. During this period, Pangkor Laut, Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, Java and Bali formed one land mass (named "Sundaland") which allowed animals to migrate from Asia across the entire region. This explains why animals like the prehistoric pangolin – which is not exactly an Olympic swimmer – can be still found today digging for termites on Pangkor Laut even though this island has been surrounded by sea for countless centuries.





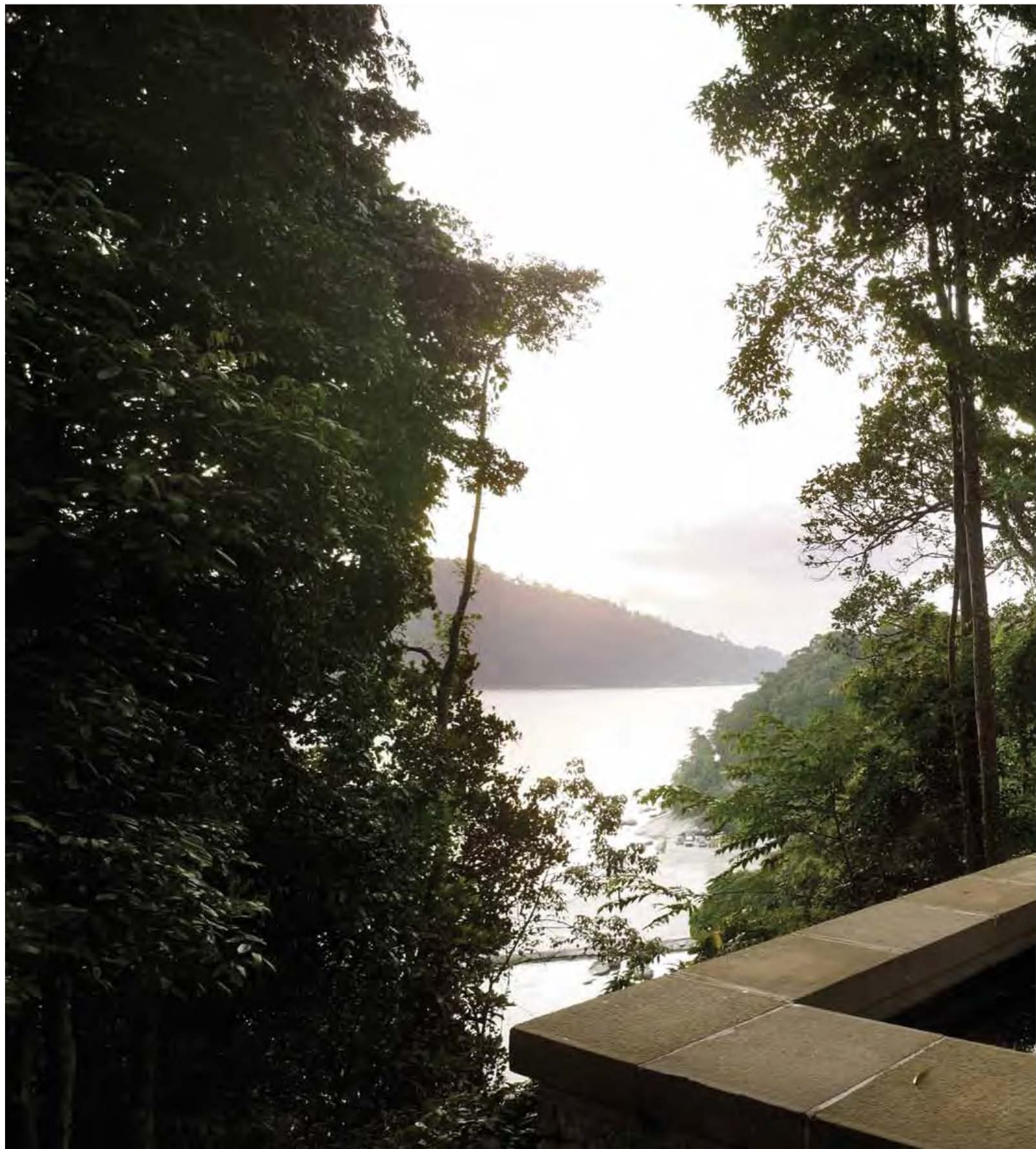
Estate 5

Estate 5 rests at the head of the eastern ridge of the island. It is the only Estate with a wide wooden deck strategically placed to offer a sweeping view of the Straits of Malacca over the canopy of rain forest trees. Guests will also enjoy:

- Three bungalow bedrooms
- Outdoor jacuzzi
- Geometric infinity pool
- Living pavilion
- Sitting pavilion
- Fish pond

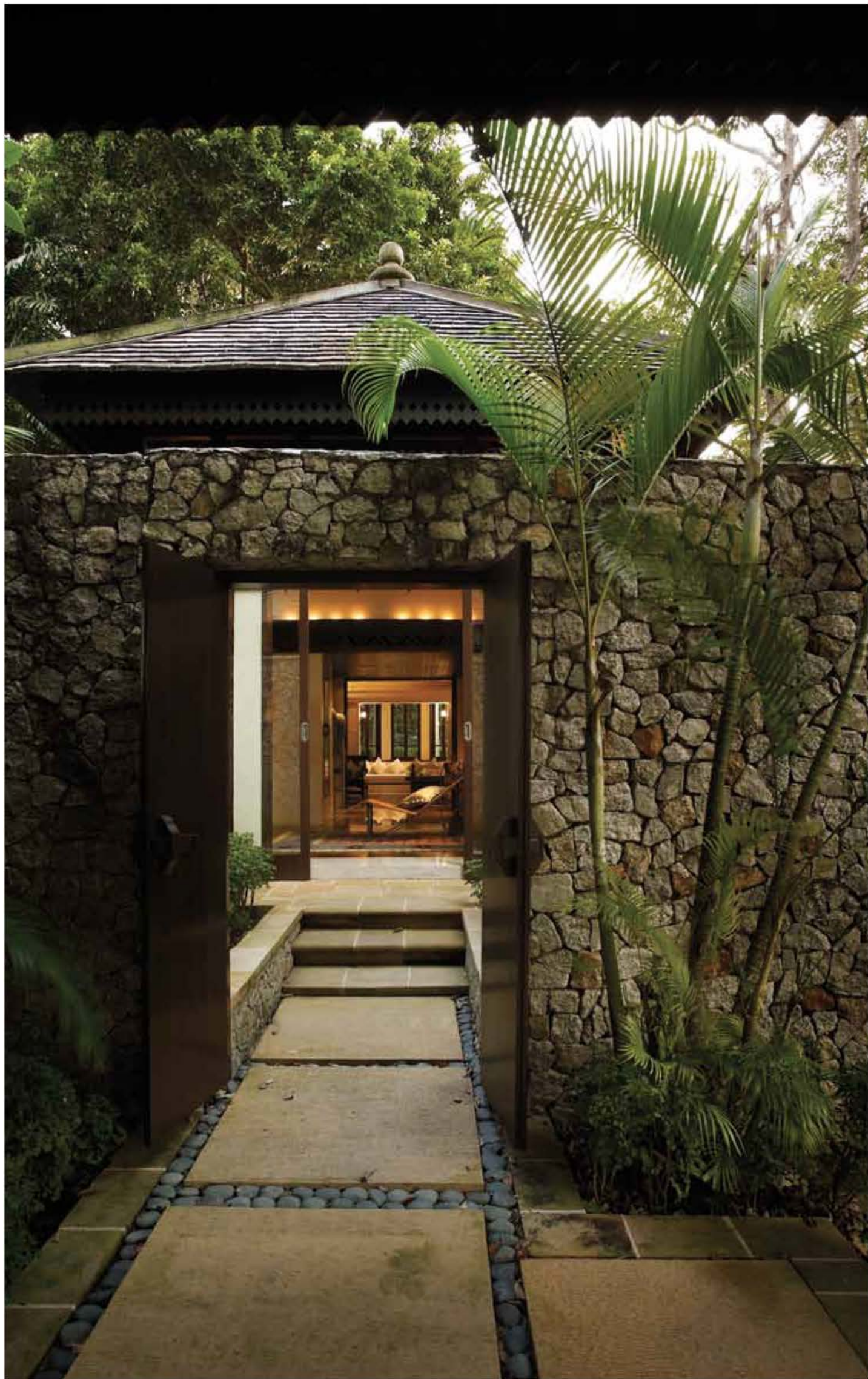
This property is a favourite of guests who like having parties and barbeques out in the open. As a natural gathering point, Estate 5's centrally located deck is the perfect place for whiling away the wee hours of the night under a velvety indigo sky, with the lights of Pangkor Island in the distance.

Prominent figures that have stayed here include Tun Dr. Mahathir, former Prime Minister of Malaysia and international cricket legend Vikram Solanki.



This "floating" pavilion is surrounded by a moat of clear water filled with water plants, creating yet another isle of calm on the island of Pangkor Laut.





*Creativity is the power to connect
the seemingly unconnected.*

– William Plomer –



PLACED APART, YET TOGETHER

One of the endearing facets of The Estates is that each living space seems to have been randomly placed, haphazardly separated from the others. Yet each structure is perceived as being inexplicably connected to its companions. The answer to the mystery lies in the ingenuity of the architects who brilliantly rose to the task of designing each Estate as a cohesive entity while respecting the injunction not to uproot existing trees and boulders to build the structures. The breathtaking effect is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Maintaining the natural state of the rain forest is of utmost importance in The Estates. This means that built structures do not have first priority on where they are to be sited. The challenge to the architects therefore was not only that each Estate should have an entire 'working' house, including its many function rooms, the house must also accommodate the various trees and rocks which have first right of way on the land. The answer lay in placing each function 'room' in a separate location and interconnecting the 'rooms' in creative ways.

In Estate 5, all it takes to enter the 'living room' of the 'house' is to slide open the glass doors of a bungalow bedroom and step outdoors onto a sandstone path that leads directly to the threshold of the living pavilion. On that short walk between the two living spaces, the forest – complete with the calls of hornbills and the flight of tufted *pulai* seeds – comes indoors. This in-between feature, a place which is neither inside nor outside, is the intentionally created connecting element. This is very similar to Frank Lloyd Wright's thoughts on architecture: "We have no longer an outside and an inside as two separate things. Now the outside may come inside and the inside may and does go outside. They are of each other". Wright's own architectural work incorporates a close dialogue between humans' basic need for safe shelter with the natural world of rushing water, forest and rocky ledges.

The same luxurious feeling of being in a single, expansive 'house' situated within the rain forest is repeated on the short secluded pathway leading to the private outdoor jacuzzi connected to the bungalow bedroom. As Dato' Mark Yeoh, Executive Director of YTL Corporation in Malaysia, says, "Luxury means a lot of things to a lot of people. To us it means having monkeys and hornbills as your neighbours."



One with nature: When first built, this rubble wall was but a neat stack of granite. All it took was one tiny seed distributed naturally by the island's abundant wildlife, and within a few years, this wall has become one with a magnificent fig tree.







Opposite: The sweeping vista from the deck commands attention. Above: A living tree extends through the floorboards of the deck, testimony to The Estates' steadfast commitment to living in harmony with nature.

ONE SPACIOUS OUTDOOR ROOM

The most striking feature of Estate 5 is the vast timber deck that surrounds the swimming pool on three sides and connects directly to the living pavilion as well as the dining pavilion. This 'one spacious outdoor room' holds a truly commanding position. The capacious deck, cantilevered into the hillside, is often used as a venue for parties by guests of the Estate. Just as inviting are the comfortable deckchairs, strategically placed at the front of the deck, on which one can lie in contemplative silence to watch the day draw to a close and listen to the growing noises of the rain forest in the night.

From the start, trees in The Estates were treated as having a right to grow where they did. A closer look at the pool in Estate 5 reveals an interesting little tidbit of fact. Near one end of the infinity-edged swimming pool, is the intriguing presence of a wedge-shaped "cut-out" in the walls of the pool. A tree had once stood there, at the time of the pool's construction. True to their respect for the land, the architects had made allowance for the tree's presence. This respectful act of making way for trees is evident all over The Estates.

The historical use of decks in the East can be traced back hundreds of years to the Chinese and Japanese gardens. Seattle's landscape architect Daniel Winterbottom in "Architecture Week" explained that in the Chinese garden, "a miniature representation of nature with symbolic lakes, mountains, and trees is viewed from an open wood-decked pavilion. In Japan, the deck became an extension of the pavilion, often appearing to float out over a water body. Wood benches were incorporated into the framing and the orientation of the deck was directed towards specific views. The use of the deck in Chinese and Japanese cultures often served the individual or family as a platform from which to view the garden, or as a place of contemplation."

In contrast, the prevalence of timber decks is a relatively recent phenomenon in Western cultures, according to Winterbottom. It is thought that the closest forerunner of the wood deck in the West may be the expansive porches and verandahs found in certain parts of the United States. As a relatively recent architectural feature, the deck functions as "the focal point for entertaining and socialising ... (and also) to link the house to the outdoors on steeply sloped sites, where patios are not possible".

In the architecture of the Malay Archipelago, decks have featured prominently in Sarawak's Iban longhouses for centuries. Called the *tanju*, these very long sunny decks are located next to the *ruai* or common indoor gallery where guests are entertained and festivals celebrated.

Some symbolic ceremonies of the Malay Sultans are held on a *panca persada*, a specially built, multi-tiered Royal Platform or deck sited in the palace grounds. One such ceremony is the symbolic bath (*istiadat siram tabal*), the most significant ceremony before a Sultan's coronation. In the state of Perak, to which Pangkor Laut belongs, the *panca persada* is also used for the *tabal pusaka*, the customary installation ceremony for a new Sultan of Perak.

Unlike the high, multi-tiered Royal Platform, the deck in Estate 5 is of a single tier and is not taller than the native trees. Yet it is no less majestic because of the view it offers. Built as a natural part of the surroundings, the deck becomes part of nature's palace in which living, constantly growing trees replace the minarets and towers of a Sultan's royal residence.





Left:
Sleep in the bosom of Mother Nature with the rain forest just a few feet away from your bed, and the sea breeze from the Straits of Malacca caressing your hair.

DIALOGUE WITH NATURE

“Pause; drink in my beauty,” entices the rain forest. “I do not disappoint.” From the moment of wakefulness until the moon is high in the heavens and sleep beckons, each of the three elegantly appointed bungalow bedrooms in Estate 5 has its own way of inviting a relationship with the outdoors.

In The Estates, whether within the bungalow bedrooms in air-conditioned comfort, or out on the breezy verandahs, a dialogue with nature is inevitable. In one bungalow bedroom, double volume bay windows seem to bring the surrounding lofty dipterocarp trees right into the room itself. Dipterocarps once covered the entire length and breadth of Malaysia. The *keruing belimbing* is one of the many species of dipterocarps here. An interesting characteristic of the *keruing belimbing* is that it flowers gregariously at apparently irregular intervals of between three to five years. It has also been observed that non-dipterocarp trees will flower outside their regular flowering season when mass flowering occurs – followed by mass fruiting – adding colourful patches of pink, red and brown to the green of the rain forest canopy.

In another bungalow bedroom, guests come directly in contact with nature even when they relax in their own private outdoor jacuzzi in the heat of the afternoon. The third bungalow bedroom features a timber verandah which seats guests among the foliage and offers a commanding view of the sea and all three layers of the rain forest.

In the gathering dusk, the verandah is a marvellous place on which to dine and be effortlessly transported back in time to a more leisurely era when there was time to stop and smell the roses. “On the verandah,” Somerset Maugham wrote half a century ago, “the air was scented with the heavy perfume of the tiare, and overhead the Southern Cross shone in a cloudless sky”.





Opposite:
To ensure total privacy, your bathing pavilion is accessible only through a special door and hidden pathway connected to your bedroom.

On this page:
Conscientious use of old wood artefacts balanced with floors of natural stone in the bathing pavilion creates a soothing environment open to and in harmony with the surrounding forest.



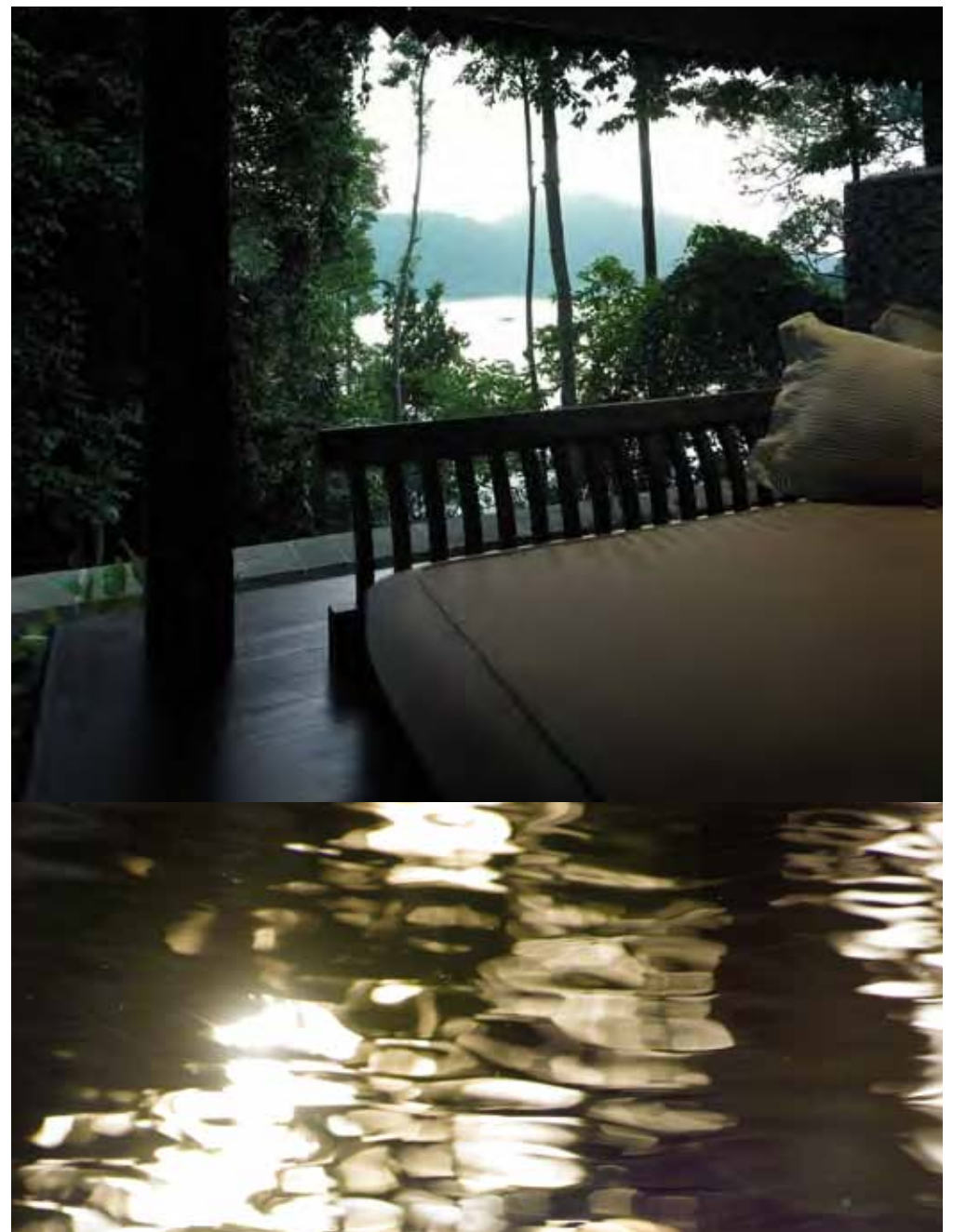


Opposite:
Illuminated only by sunlight filtering through the leafy canopy, these majestic granite walls are reminiscent of an ancient Aztec pyramid that has become one with the rain forest.

This page:
Even on the hottest afternoon, the secluded pathway to your private pavilion is kept naturally cool by the thick courtyard walls.



This art of resting the mind and the power of dismissing from it all care and worry is probably one of the secrets of energy in our great men.
– Captain J. A. Hadfield –



Opposite:
From this Estate's resting pavilion, guests not only have views of the forest but also of other islands around Pangkor Laut.

Top right:
View of the sea and other islands from the day bed in the pavilion.

Bottom right:
The shimmering waters of Pangkor Laut

ISLAND ON AN ISLAND

In a quiet corner of the Estate, a resting pavilion perches over a steep drop to the valley below. Surrounded completely by a tranquil moat filled with water lilies and brightly coloured carp, the gazebo is the ideal spot to commune with nature in the stillness of the early morning when the sun bathes the sky with tentative light.

In addition to being relaxing and soothing, spending time in nature can help to improve one's memory and attention span, scientists from the University of Michigan recently discovered. This happens because paying attention to nature is involuntary and gives the brain a break from the kind of voluntary attention that is mentally draining, such as conducting business meetings. "You don't hear people say, 'Well, I got really tired out looking at this great painting, or looking at this beautiful waterfall,'" said Marc Berman, lead author of a paper on the research.

The view from the resting pavilion is like a great painting revealed, with the Straits of Malacca studded with craggy little isles of forested granite spread out before one's eyes and in the near distance, the hills of Pangkor Island.



Opposite:
Old-growth dipterocarps tower
over the pavilions on this Estate

Left:
A mere ten-year-old, this young
fig tree is one of 80 species found
in Peninsular Malaysia.



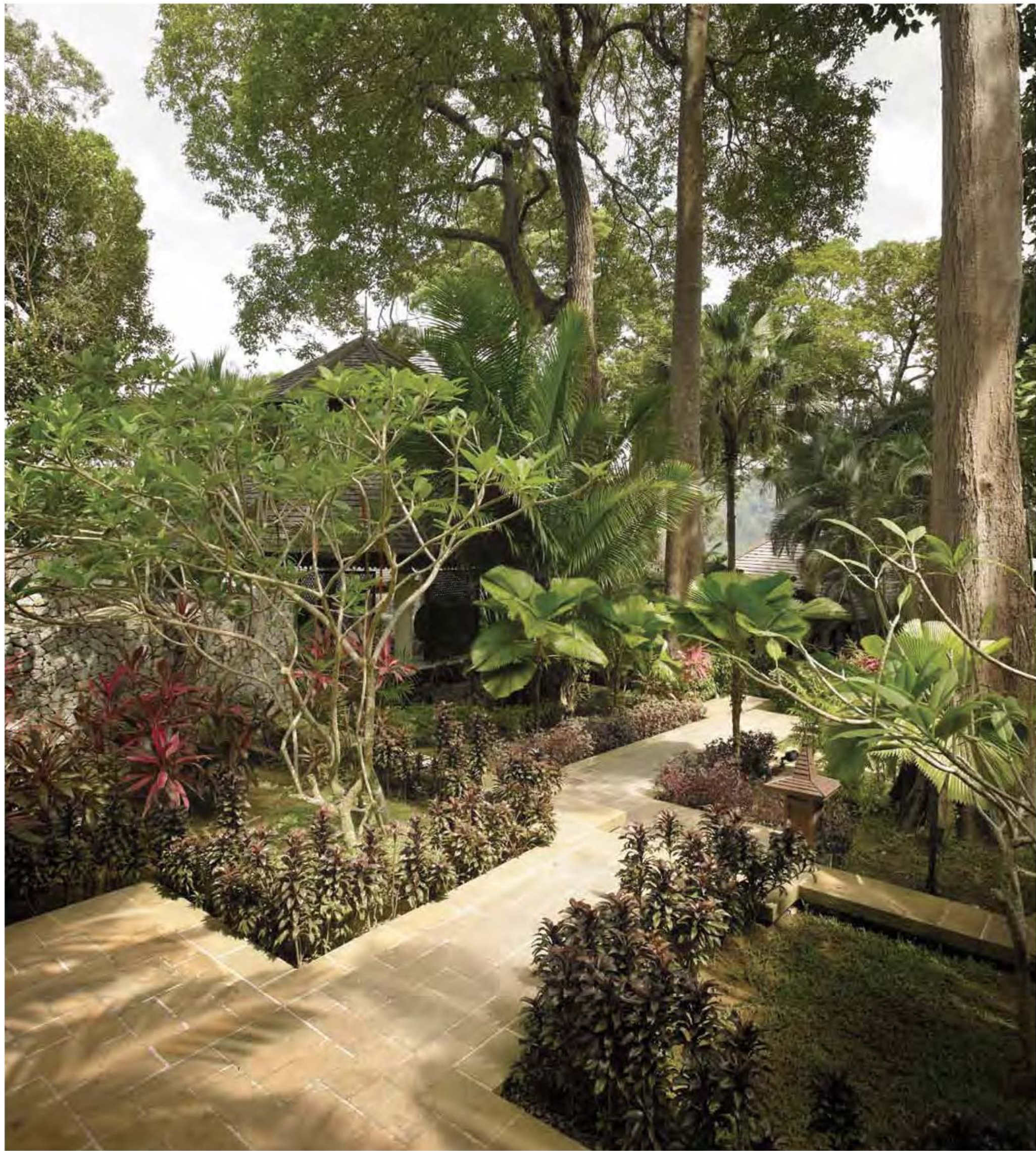
REACHING FOR THE SKIES

Trees are truly one of the most wondrous creations. Among other functions, they act as nature's weather stabilisers while they live. For the most part, because they are so numerous in the rain forest, it becomes an unusual case where one "can't see the trees from the forest". Once in a while, however, a tree can make one sit up and take notice. Such a one is the robust fig tree (*Ficus* sp.) that straddles the rubble wall at the entrance of Estate 5. Ten years ago, when construction of The Estates had just begun, this native fig sprouted from its miniscule seed the size of a grain of sand. Today, it is a towering tree that has grown enormous roots that embrace the rubble wall. Figs are key to the rain forest ecosystem. There are 80 species of figs in the Malay Peninsula, and a few different ones on The Estates itself. Each of them bears fruit at different times of the year, ensuring a more regular supply of food for various birds and animals.

The ancient *keruing belimbing* (*Dipterocarpus grandiflorus*) towers in various parts of Estate 5. One of the country's most valuable timber trees, it belongs to the dipterocarp family. Fossil evidence in Malaysia indicates that the dipterocarp has been around for 30 million years. Its unusual fruit displays four flanges like the edible starfruit (*belimbing*), but they do not belong to the same family. *Keruing* timber is very resinous and is used for medium and heavy construction, agricultural implements, and toys. The wood yields large quantities of oleo-resin called *minyak keruing* which is used by Malays as a coat for waterproofing or caulking boats and baskets, varnish for walls and furniture, and fuel for torches.

Two majestic *pulai* trees flank the walkway just inside the entrance to the Estate. The *pulai* (*Alstonia angustifolia*) is a virgin rain forest tree with fruits that are distinguished by two horns, typical of the Apocynaceae family to which the oleander plant also belongs. (*Alstonia* is named after Dr. C. Alston [1685-1760], a professor of botany at Edinburgh University.) The *pulai* is recognised by its fluted bole trunk and the light, wafer-thin seeds which are hidden inside seed pods. When ripe, these pods break into two distinctive horns, exposing the seeds within. The tuft of silky hairs at each end of the seeds helps them to be easily dispersed by the wind. I.H. Burkill noted in his book "A Dictionary of the Economic Products of the Malay Peninsula", that traditionally "the Malays use the leaves of this tree medically, heating them after oiling the surface, and applying them to the spleen for remittent fever". *Pulai* trees are also found at the back of the living pavilion and the dining pavilion.

The poet William Blake rightly wrote: "The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see Nature all ridicule and deformity, and some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination, Nature is Imagination itself." A tree is never just a tree. It is a member of an interdependent ecosystem that is essential for individual survival. When a tree is cut down and dies, so do many living things, as does a little of humankind.





Opposite:
A rare sight: a patch of sandstone walkway being warmed up by the sun. Much of this Estate's grounds receives only dappled sunlight filtered by the tree canopy

On this page:
Stairway to heaven: The trees with distinctive red stalks just beyond the sandstone steps are the *Cyrtostachys renda*, an unusual native palm that can be found growing wild only in Peninsular Malaysia and Sumatera.