

The Joy



Left:
Though one hardly notices them, a total of twenty butlers, nine chefs, four maintenance crew, and eighteen gardeners work together as one family to look after guests from check-in to check-out.

of Service

“Grown-up luxury is what you get in this private bay in the famous island-resort of Pangkor Laut. The island is proper living rain forest stuff, with eagles and hornbills swooping overhead.... (With) your own butler rustling up margaritas and your own chef chopping sushi so fresh you want to slap it, you may just find that you... Don’t... Move... A... Muscle...”

- Best 101 Hotels In The World, Tatler UK Travel Guide 2006 -

What puts The Estates in a class of its own is the level of service. No less than a team of two personal butlers together with a dedicated chef serves every Estate, notes the smallest details, and anticipates the guests’ requirements before ever the thought occurs to them to request for assistance. Each guest is treated like royalty. The exquisite service and hospitality shown to guests of The Estates offer hints of a gracious era of old Malaya, in which the ones being served are the “*Tuan*” and “*Mem*” – Master and Mistress – of the household.

With one foot in the present, Pangkor Laut Estates looked back into the past and modelled its service on three figures of exemplar professional expertise in their respective fields: the Chinese *amah*, the English butler and the Hainanese chef.

VESTIGES OF THE PAST

1. The Chinese *Amah*

In the days of the Federated Malay States (F.M.S.) – when the British colonial *Tuan* strolled about in white ducks and white *topees*, played lawn tennis and billiards, and called for their *gin pahits* to be served on the verandah while the *Mem* read illustrated magazines sent from England – the estate planters employed a host of servants including the Chinese *amah*, a paragon of pure devotion. Traditionally dressed in black trousers and white tunic blouses, the *amah* was a dedicated live-in female servant who consecrated her entire life to see to the well-being of the family.

2. The English Butler

The butler of English tradition was trained never to judge his employer. He was in the private life of his employer and so tended to know more about the boss than anyone else over the long run, including the spouse, but he was never to lose his good opinion of his master. The butler was to be discreet, low-key, unobtrusive, and to give anticipatory service. With a “Very good, Sir”, it is as good as done. The butler makes it happen; no questions asked.

3. The Hainanese Chef

During the colonial era, many locals found employment as support staff to the British. Among them were the Hainanese. Through the years, Hainanese chefs have earned the reputation of being superb cooks. Armed with a working knowledge of cooking for the Western palette, some of these Hainanese chefs started restaurants of their own or worked for the private sector when the British left the country.

The characteristics of these three exemplars of devoted service personnel are mirrored in The Estates. Innovative, dependable, discreet and always on call, The Estates’ personal butlers and chef are a credit to Pangkor Laut. Skills and traits such as these can be acquired and inculcated through training but when the sparkle of sincerity shines in their eyes as they go about their duties, that is something truly impressive.



“Come morning, a sumptuous breakfast is delivered by a butler to your villa’s sunny deck. It is all accompanied with a side-servicing of views that stretch back to the Malaysian mainland five kilometres away and then far down the jungle shoreline of Pangkor Laut Island. Indoors, just beside the spacious living-sleeping room, your bathroom boasts a tub the size of a small rowboat; on three sides of this wonder are huge windows that open to infinity, with no one but the sun or night stars peeking in”.

- John Borthwick, The Age -

HONOURING A PROUD TRADITION OF SERVICE

Pangkor Laut’s legendary, superb hospitality and VIP service starts even before guests put a foot on the island. It would not be an overstatement to say that from the moment a booking is confirmed, the quiet efficiency of Pangkor Laut personnel takes over. In preparation for their arrival, The Estates Manager finds out each guest’s preferences, likes, dislikes and special requests. Whether one arrives by helicopter or yacht, either journey is a presage to the luxurious service that guests will grow accustomed to during their stay in Pangkor Laut.

Upon arrival, the effervescent, ever-hospitable and indefatigable Estates Manager, together with one of the two assigned butlers are the first to welcome the guests and drive them to the Estate which the guests have selected. On hand to greet the guests with a delightful cold towel and a glass of refreshing ice lemon tea when they alight from the car are the other butler and the dedicated chef.

Guests are then given a short tour of their pre-cooled, air-conditioned *en suite* bungalow bedrooms. On the quaint side-table stands a delectable selection of exotic tropical fruits in a smooth, carved wooden bowl lined with huge leaves from the garden. The swirling water of the ready-filled jacuzzis, generously sprinkled with petals of fragrant flowers freshly gathered from the garden, waits to soothe tired bodies.

The Estate Butlers

Trained to be attentive to needs even before they are voiced, the butlers quickly familiarise themselves with the preferences of the guests within the first day. “There is no routine,” says The Estates Manager. “Our butlers have the space to be creative and we encourage them to surprise the guests.” This can take the form of a romantic dinner at the living pavilion, a barbeque on the rocks, or a birthday on the beach, over water, on a yacht, even island-hopping.

The Estate Chef

The Estate chef is a master of surprises and intuitive innovation. There is no set menu to follow; hence every meal is an exercise in creativity, something which the chef thoroughly enjoys. Guests are welcome to walk into the kitchen in The Estates and try their hand at cooking or ask for the recipes.

When alas, as all good times do, the holiday comes to an end for the guests, both butlers and the chef are present to see them off. The chef would have packed snacks or sandwiches for the guests’ journey back to K.L. International Airport and one of the butlers escorts them all the way to the mainland. The Estates Manager ensures that birthdays and anniversaries are remembered. Judging from the many appreciative notes written by guests of The Estates, their eventual return to the island is very much a happy probability.



"I love this place and the style, quality and attention to detail. The service has been unbelievable! The staff are always smiling and they spoil us!"

"I was trying to think of how we're going to prepare ourselves to go home, going back to the real world. It's going to be very difficult. The surroundings are beautiful, the staff is fantastic, the food is incredible. It's going to be a big shock going back to London."

– Sir Nick Faldo –

