



Isle of dreams

Cempedak Private Island is a collective of good causes
wrapped in jungle reverie.

A shy scent of salt saturates the air. The steady rhythm of the ocean exhaling on the shore echoes near. Late dawn light sifts through and rests upon the eyelids, quietly making its presence felt. I arise, but I still feel like I'm dreaming. Easing up on my elbows, I see the sky outlined by the frame of the villa, veiled behind the translucent canopy of the bed. The ceiling fan hums on. I lean back and look up. Not bad for a morning call.

Not a bad place to wake up to either. Nestled on a private island off Bintan,



Left: enjoy sunset cocktails at Dodo Bar.

Facing page: it takes two and a half hours to reach Cempedak Private Island from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal.

Island. The design was pleasantly surprising, to say the least. Over years of unsubstantiated and frankly ironic eco-friendly products on the market, my perception of all consumer green was not the healthiest. To counter high costs, design is seemingly the first element to be compromised at best and absent at worst. It was refreshing then, to witness a creation that was kind to the environment without the blunder of excessive minimalism.

To founder Andrew Dixon, sustainability is not a pet project. As an observer you would see that passion is necessary to foster a mission like this. It goes beyond no single-use amenities, a change which most luxury accommodation options are barely willing to effect. Now a member of independent non-profit The Long Run, the scope at which the resort is running is considerable.

Aside from cultivating a garden on the island and a farm nearby to supply a portion of dining directly, systems are introduced to properly close the loop. Perishable food waste gets broken down by maggots, which are kept as feed for chickens that eventually contribute back via, well, death or reproduction. If that makes you feel uncomfortable, firstly, man up, secondly, prepare to be amazed. Each meal is served with immense reverence to Indonesian cuisine in exceptional form.

Still, the impressive bit is not the solar-generated electricity and self-sufficient water source, but the impact Cempedak has on the community. Staff are local and given great opportunity to grow in skill. A percentage of proceeds also fund The Island Foundation, a charitable organisation that focuses on education in the Riau Archipelago.

I make my way to my favourite part of the villa—the bathroom. The personal pool and sun deck are great in their own right, but something about showering in the semi-open... damn you, biophilia. While musing on the available activities for the day ahead—snorkelling, paddleboarding or just perpetuating laze at the Rock Spa—I spot a dead moth on the ground. With wings extended, the palm-sized insect was in a state of almost flawless taxidermy. I pick it up, marvelling at the fragile creature frozen in time. Even moths die a beautiful death on the isle of dreams. ■

engulfed only by a pervading sense of serenity. And humidity, if I'm being honest, a likely result of the lush tropical greenery native to Cempedak. The name of the island is rather tongue-in-cheek, seeing that there are no indigenous *cempedak* (the sweeter cousin of jackfruit) trees found.

I finally evict myself from the bed after a good half hour of idling. The sensation of naked feet on smooth bamboo is subtly liberating. Perhaps biologist Edward O Wilson was right;

man does have an innate affinity with nature. Nearly entirely constructed out of bamboo handpicked from the islands of Java and Sumatra, the villa is a living childhood treehouse fantasy. Roofed under cogon grass, two floors are organically connected by a curved stairway, also completely comprising treated bamboo.

As opposed to a toddler's pipe dream, the purpose of its unique build was one of sustainable responsibility, as with precursor resort Nikoi Private