

THE SPIRIT OF HIGH SOCIETY

# HONG KONG TATTLER

**CANNES  
OPENER**

*France's  
Hedonist  
Capital  
Exposed*

**BRIT  
STOP**

*Lewis  
Hamilton's  
Silver Lining*



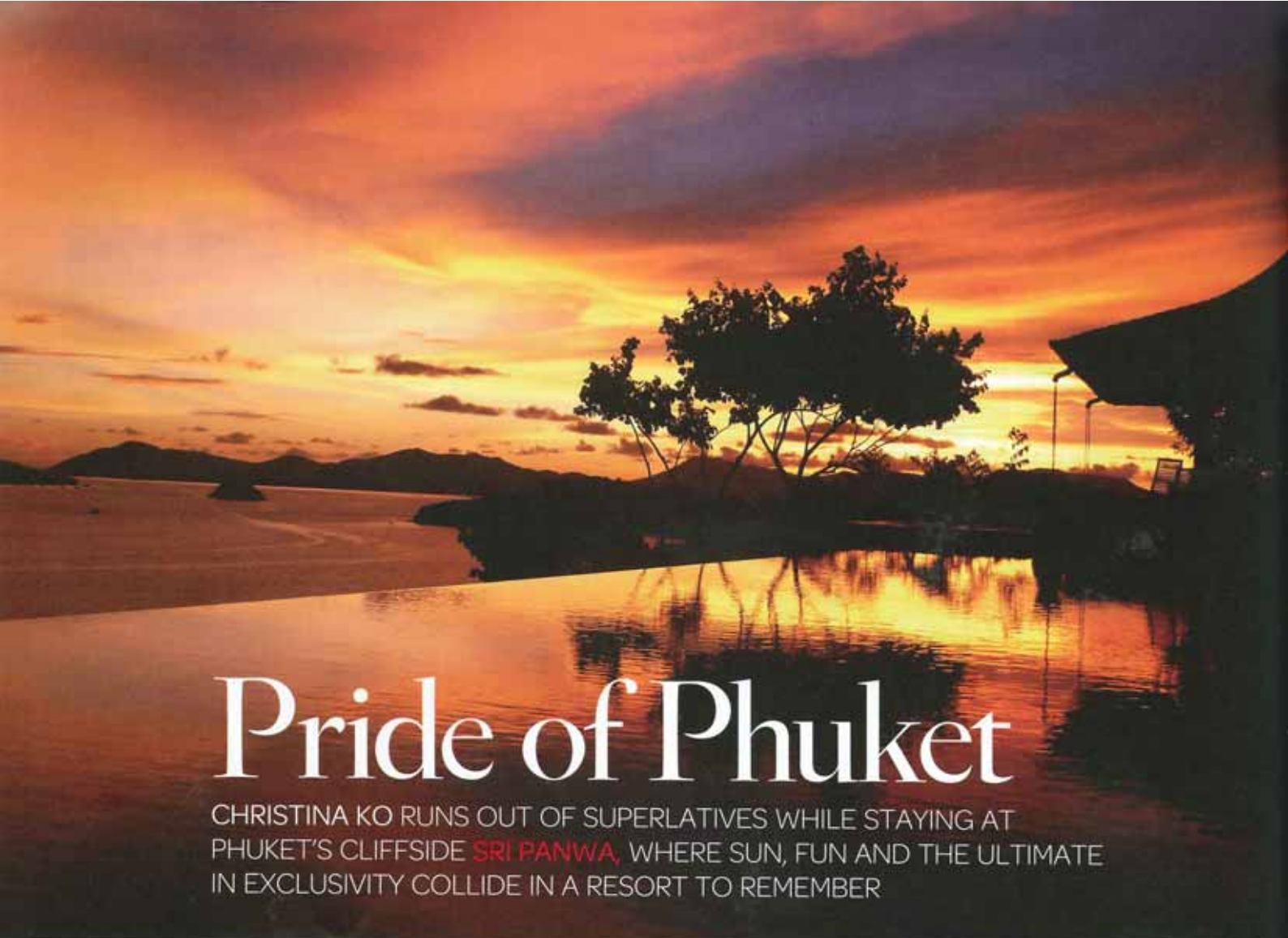
*Pointe &  
SHOOT*

BALLERINA TAN YUAN-YUAN ON DANCING,  
DREAMING AND BEING A MUSE FOR **ROLEX**

JULY 2009 HK\$45



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# Pride of Phuket

CHRISTINA KO RUNS OUT OF SUPERLATIVES WHILE STAYING AT PHUKET'S CLIFFSIDE **SRI PANWA**, WHERE SUN, FUN AND THE ULTIMATE IN EXCLUSIVITY COLLIDE IN A RESORT TO REMEMBER

**I**F GOD IS IN THE DETAILS, THEN HE IS ALL OVER SRI PANWA, THE BEACHSIDE villas-only resort that sits calmly in its own secluded section of Cape Panwa. Lots of hotels claim to go the extra mile, and most of them do. But without exaggeration, Sri Panwa takes the cake. ¶ Where to begin? For starters, there's the typical iPod speaker dock, but this one comes complete with an iPod preloaded with chill-out music (feel free to let the staff know what other tunes float your boat so you can enjoy them on your next visit). Each villa is outfitted with an abundance of Bose speakers that can be switched on in every room, as well as your outdoor sala.

Order room service, and on first glance you may fall into the trap of believing they have misplaced half of your order; in fact, it's the hotel's practice to bring your meal in intervals so your mains don't get cold while you're on the salad course, and the ice cream doesn't melt all over your desert plate. Before bedtime, there's a scented sleep mask placed above your pillow. There's a complimentary minibar and snacks that are replenished daily without fail. Even the toilet paper seems softer than usual.

But sweet villa treats are not all that this exquisite property has to recommend itself. The secure location and expansive design of Sri Panwa make it the perfect haven for honeymooning couples and other privacy-hungry types (Gordon Ramsay, Grammy-winning saxophonist Kenny G and the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, have all made holiday

stops here). There are around 70 private villas in total, with roughly 40 one- to two-bedroom villas for holiday rental, and the rest, consisting of up to five bedrooms and four floors, for purchase, all equipped with their own infinity-edge pools and outdoor bathtubs, among other amenities. Almost all of the properties are set along the edge of a mountain, facing in the same direction, so that sunrise and sunset are equally accessible (60 per cent of the greenery was retained au naturel, while the other 40 per cent was replanted to preserve the eco-system). Traversing the property is done in chauffeured golf buggies, as much of the hilly surface was maintained to keep things private for residents, who are the only people allowed in this gated community.

TVs are, emphatically, not present in the bedrooms, which may be a big deal to any urban transplant, but when this vestige of unhealthy

## INFINITY AND BEYOND

In-villa infinity pools create a seamless line when placed against the backdrop of the horizon

*In spite of the idyllic premises and secluded location, the resort knows how to throw a good party*

**TRAVEL**  
Checking In

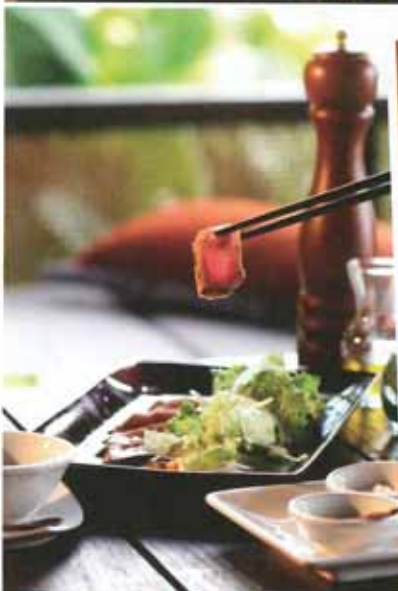
**TRIP**

city living is replaced with 270 degrees worth of windows overlooking a private wraparound pool, literally footsteps from your bedside, and the Andaman Sea only a stone's throw away, somehow the technological dependence falters. With pool access from any window surface in your villa, why would you ever leave?

Sri Panwa is owned by the Charn Issara group, which also developed Bangkok's Royal City Avenue (RCA) bar and clubbing district, so in spite of the idyllic premises and secluded location, the resort knows how to throw a good party. The property is run by Charn Issara's grandson, the 27-year-old Vorasit "Wan" Issara, whose gregarious and engaging presence seeps through to the other staff (many of whom are cohorts from his Swiss hotel-school days), who share that impromptu wakeboard trips are part of the unwritten employee benefits. The great working environment in turn infuses their work ethic: their manners and sincerity appear motivated more by a true enjoyment of their jobs than good PR. Once-a-month parties at the resort's Baba Lounge, featuring guest chefs and DJs from Bangkok, are a perk to them, rather than a chore, and the smiling staff integrate seamlessly and enjoyably with guests.

They're also happy to arrange any number of excursions, should cabin fever set in. The resort is in possession of a private beach with beach club, yacht mooring, water sports and swimming facilities. Yacht or speedboat trips to Phi Phi island, shopping or nightlife tours, safari adventures, sea canoeing, fishing, elephant treks, horse riding, golfing and mountain biking are also on the menu. Or for a less strenuous option, Sai spa offers a full-service pampering place, where you can spoil yourself with any number of treatments, from traditional Thai massage to water therapy.

This exclusive hotspot is only going to get hotter with the opening of its final phase, which includes a complex made up of seven suites, new nightclub venue Baba 88, another restaurant and a cooking school. As if there isn't enough cooking at Sri Panwa already. ■



**PARADISE FOUND**  
**CLOCKWISE**  
**FROM TOP**

The view from a villa's outdoor sala; bedroom windows give access directly to the pool; idyllic by day, Baba Lounge is a happening party spot on event nights; western and eastern cuisine are on Baba Lounge's menu

**SRI PANWA**

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