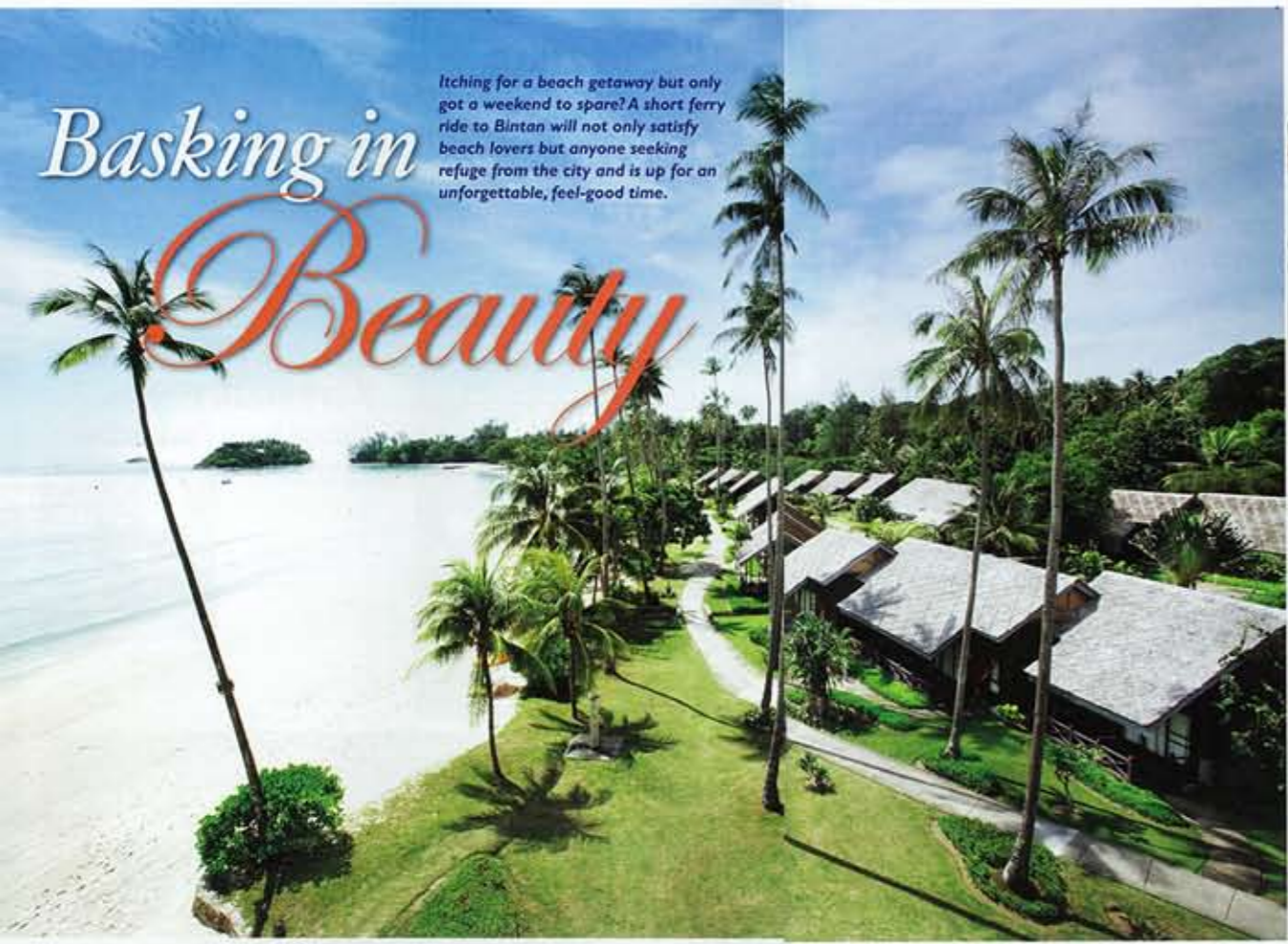


Basking in Beauty

Itching for a beach getaway but only got a weekend to spare? A short ferry ride to Bintan will not only satisfy beach lovers but anyone seeking refuge from the city and is up for an unforgettable, feel-good time.



Text by Nurul Huda Rasheed
Photos by Bintan Resorts, Nirwana Gardens and Focus Adventure

If the thought of being surrounded with white sandy beaches, gentle sways of palm trees, enchanting turquoise waters and clear blue skies, is making you smile like there's no tomorrow, then Bintan is the place to be. Take an afternoon sista by the beach and lie on the hammock for hours, or sink your feet into those soft, fine white sands, engage yourself in the adrenaline-pumping water sports or simply admire the world of nature, there's something for everyone here. All you have to do once you're Bintan is to switch off, leave the cares of the world behind and start your getaway by enjoying the caress of the tender breeze on your skin.

Bintan Island forms a part of Indonesia's Riau Archipelago and is located just a short 55-minute ferry ride away from Singapore's Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal. The island enjoys a generally sunny weather all year round and while the Indonesian Rupiah can be used, most hotels and shops do accept Singapore Dollars as well.

Warm Indonesian Hospitality
One thing that stands out in Bintan is how widely used the English language is, even if Bahasa Indonesia is still the national language. Hence, there won't be a need to start pulling your hair trying to communicate with the locals. Conversing with them is such a breeze as they are friendly and will go out of their way to help you if you ever need them.

When it comes to accommodation in Bintan, you'll be easily spoilt for choice. Nirwana Gardens for instance, has a string of different accommodation to suit every budget and preference. There's the



family-friendly, laidback Nirwana Resort Hotel, the calm and picturesque Masang Sari Beach Resort, the extravagant and luxurious Indra Maya Villa and Nirwana Beach Club, which is a fit amongst the backpackers.

And if total privacy and a secluded tranquil retreat is what you want, then the breathtaking Banyan Tree Bintan offers an exclusive villa lifestyle amidst the mystic charm of its natural surroundings overlooking the majestic South China Sea. Stay at Villa On-the-Rocks and wake up to the sound of waves breaking on the rocks. To end a perfect day, experience romance at its finest form when you have Dinner on the Rocks with your significant other, a romantic dinner for

two on your very own rocky island. This definitely makes for a truly intimate and unforgettable moment together.

The Need for Speed
There's an abundance of water sports like snorkelling, wakeboarding and kayaking to satisfy water sport fans and sun seekers. But if you feel the need for



test how good you are. Find out more at www.focusadventure.com.

Nature Awaits
There is more to Bintan than just its pristine white beaches and water sports activities. Stimulate your senses further by experiencing the award-winning Mangrove Discovery Tour to have a better understanding of the tropical rainforest's unique ecosystem. The Mangrove Day Tour feels like its taken right straight from a movie, and the kids will love the upscale and personal educational concept where they witness local residents of the mangrove like the Yellow Banded Mangrove Snake, Python, Tree Snake, Monkeys, birds like the Kingfishers to other marine life and mangrove trees right in front of their very eyes. The unique root of the mangrove serves many practical purposes, from a nursery for reef fishes

and small prawns to coastal protection and natural water treatment system. If you opt for the Mangrove Night Tour, you're in for a whole different experience. Get a close up look at the mesmerizing sight of fireflies, a type of beetle that produce light and feed on small snails, under the starry night sky.

speed, try the Jet Ski Safari for the ride of your life. It is truly an experience to explore the beautiful coastline of Bintan and to breathe in the fresh air in the middle of the sea while feeling the breeze on your face. Don't fret if you're a first timer, as the experienced instructors will assist you on how to handle the Jet Ski safely before you set off on your adventure!

There's also the thrilling, adrenaline-pumping activity - All Terrain Vehicles (ATV). Choose from a variety of rides like the dune buggy, quad bike or dirt bike and navigate your way through steep slopes, sharp bends and lots of mud to keep the fun going. The best part is, you don't need a license to ride the ATV. If you aren't too confident in driving, you'll be given the easier route, and if you crave for more adrenaline rushes, there's the tougher terrain to

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Necessary Indulgence
What's a beach holiday without a spa treatment? Indulged in the heavenly pleasures offered at many wonderful spas in Bintan: Aroma Day Spa at Kampong Lagoi Leisure Village makes a good midday pick-me-up and the wonderfully designed Kedaton Tropical Spa at Mayang Sari Beach Resort will have your soul in place. With a wide range of spa treatments ranging from ancient Asian and traditional Javanese massages to modern western therapies and natural beauty care, the spas in Bintan are not to be missed.

While Bintan is no shopping paradise, there is still Pasar Oleh-oleh

for you to do some shopping against a rustic kampung backdrop. Buy made-in-Indonesia souvenirs or the popular kueh-lapis for loved ones back home. If you love shopping for clothes, the Real Bandung Factory Outlet situated right next to the ferry terminal is a great place to satisfy your last minute shopping endeavours.

Who would have a thought that 55-minutes away from Singapore lies a wonderful slice of the tropics and paradise that surprises? Bintan is still truly off the beaten track and still mostly a work-in-progress, but take a refresher course in Bintan and you'll be amazed at the wonders it does for your body and soul.

