



The Great Getaway

Text and photos by Dr Tan Yia Swam, Editorial Board Member

2

INDULGE



Photo: Small Luxury Hotels of the World

My family, comprising two adults and a toddler, took a short getaway to Koh Samui in Thailand in late August. We stayed three nights at the Akaryn Resort and Spa Samui, which is a luxury beach resort that is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World™ (SLH). If you've never been to Koh Samui, it is definitely worth a trip – if just for the rustic and charming airport! The airport transfer that we arranged with the hotel was THB 1400 (\$56) per car for a return trip, while hiring a cab from the airport counter would cost THB 500 per trip.

Upon our arrival at the Akaryn, we were greeted with a lovely welcome tray which included a cold tea drink, a delicious mango mousse, as well as a cool wet towel wrapped around a stick of lemongrass – a truly delightful way to freshen up in the heat! The hotel staff allowed us an early check-in as the room was vacant. Akaryn had four types of rooms: pool suite, pool suite with sea view, pool villa and double-bedroom pool villa. We stayed in a pool suite, which was essentially a square room containing a king-sized bed. From our room, we had direct access to our own pool with attached Jacuzzi, as well as attached bathroom facilities.

Lush greenery surrounding the outdoor pool provided the guests with privacy, even though the pool was just next to the common path. The bathroom was indoors, but the ceiling featured two skylights that let in sunlight, and a breathtaking view of the towering raintrees outside. Meanwhile, the rain shower would appeal to those who fancy washing in the rain. The hotel thoughtfully provided washing soap, shampoo and conditioner in little handmade



5



photo: Small Luxury Hotels of the World

6



pottery jars which were topped up daily. Our toddler had a wooden cot, with padding and pillows lovingly arranged by the staff. Other facilities included a large screen LCD TV with selected cable channels, iPod dock, mini-bar, hairdryer, kettle, air conditioner and an in-room safe. If you wished to stay connected to the outside world, there was also complimentary Wi-Fi throughout the resort.

The Akaryn had three free-form pools. There was a wet bar which allowed visitors to bask in the sun, frolic in the cool water, have drinks, *and* also admire the sea view. Sun beds in various designs, for both single persons and couples, were scattered around the pools and along the beach. In addition, large bean bags were placed on a platform overlooking the beach – perfect for lounging on while reading or snoozing.

The food was exceptional. There were three restaurants at the hotel – The Edge (pizza, pastas, salads and sandwiches), Ochos (a steakhouse) and The Legend (royal Thai cuisine). Our stay included breakfast at The Edge. They had conceived the clever concept of a “partial buffet” which minimised food wastage – each table had a three-tier tray with cold cuts, cheese, croissants and fruit, while each guest could order two food items from a specially designed breakfast menu, and the buffet had fresh bread, jams, cereals, yogurt and fruit juices. The thin crust pizza was to-die-for, and I had the best *tom yum* soup ever – sweet, spicy and tangy, its flavours perfectly balanced. One of the nights was Thai Night – we enjoyed a delightful buffet of Thai food, and were entertained by live traditional music and dance performances. No beach holiday is complete without enjoying a cold coconut by the sea. But they went one up and served us a fruit mocktail called Cocoryn, which has coconut, mango and sweet basil all blended together and served in a coconut. It’s now my gold standard for a beach holiday drink!

The beauty of this resort was that it brought us close to nature – birdsong woke us in the mornings, and there were butterflies, birds and dragonflies flitting among the lilies. A walk by the beach had the toddler pointing at various species of crabs (including hermit crabs) and a few seabirds. What I didn’t like about the resort was that it sometimes brought us too close to nature... It was really romantic to have a candlelit dinner under the trees, but there would be tiny green caterpillars descending upon us; while daytime saw flies sharing our food, and we spent a lot of time trying to swat them away.

The resort offered babysitting services, which we did not take advantage of, as the toddler chose those few days to fall ill... In the end, we spent all three days within the resort resting and recuperating, making it the most expensive and luxurious hospital stay we have ever had. There were many other activities available which we unfortunately didn't manage to try, like an in-house spa, canoeing, snorkelling and Thai cooking lessons. However, our fellow guests – several couples and families with young children – all seemed to be having a great time.

Nonetheless, the three of us did have a good time at this beautiful resort, and I do recommend it for those seeking isolated privacy in natural surroundings but with all the modern comforts. It is perfect for *pak tor*-ing couples, but is also family friendly. For more information, do visit Akaryn's website (<http://www.akaryn.com>), or SLH's website (<http://www.slh.com/hotels/akaryn-samui>), and for recommendations on things to do, see and eat near the hotel, do check out the TripAdvisor website (<http://www.tripadvisor.com>). **SMA**

Photos

1. One of the Akaryn's beautiful pool villas
2. A spacious pool suite with a picturesque view of the sea
3. Delicious thin crust pizza from The Edge



Dr Tan and her family's stay at Akaryn Resort and Spa Samui was made possible by Small Luxury Hotels of the World™. SMA has partnered Small Luxury Hotels of the World™ to offer a special rate exclusive to all SMA members. Visit <http://www.slh.com/sma> to find out how you can indulge in an unforgettable experience.



Dr Tan Yia Swam is a General Surgery registrar at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, who is currently doing her out-rotation at National University Hospital. She is busy juggling career, family and volunteer work at SMA. Stress relief comes in the form of Facebook, 9GAG and watching nursery rhyme programmes with her baby.

4. Juicy wagyu beef burger from The Edge
5. Relax by one of the Akaryn's free-form pools
6. Refreshing Vietnamese rolls from The Edge