

Travel

YOUR ADVENTURE STARTS HERE

ENTER: the *wild*-moons

Tarzan's gone posh... welcome to the wilderness retreats that come with a hefty helping of luxe

Keemala Phuket, Thailand

IF YOU WANT TO FEEL LIKE KING AND QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE, Keemala is the hotel to book. You'll think you've walked on to a film set: that's to say a more polished, picturesque version of the *Star Wars* Ewok village. Picture unusually shaped chill-out pods rising above the leaves, rope bridges connecting wooden walkways, and ancient enchanting trees with their gnarled trunks and giant canopies embracing buildings. It's designed to seamlessly blend into the thick, emerald green forest that's burbling with birdsong and monkey calls, and packed with exotic flowers. And the scent of the place? The air is sweet; heavy with the smell of mango and banana trees, with lemongrass wafting from the rooms as you walk by.

Unsurprisingly, it's taken all of five minutes for this new resort to be one of the most sought-after in Phuket. The architecture is impressive, with the soon-to-be-iconic shapes of the villas (loosely based on a mythical, tribal village) looking almost like giant birds'

nests or flower pods suspended in the jungle. It's all soothing and soulful, with plenty of curved spaces: even the baths (carved out of huge boulders) and beds are circular. Other, more Hobbit-like dwellings are made from concrete and clay: cosy cocoons with mud paintings on the walls, thatched roofs and stripped-back ceilings.

And the luxury factor? Expect to feel 'earthed' from the atmosphere of the place, yet looked after with five-star finesse. The Mala restaurant provides food to rival that of any top London establishment. You'll enjoy six-course meals with standout stars such as the Portobello mushroom parfait and white truffle oil starter, or local seabass served in parchment paper with a thyme, garlic and white wine jus. There's also a slick gym and fitness centre, a library, wine cellar, and a *stunning* pool, where your sunlounger

will be tickled by the leaves that surround a lagoon, wending its way through the resort. Oh and the spa, with its other-worldly, high-end treatments – we loved the raindrop and sound therapy that's guaranteed to obliterate any lingering wedmin stress for good. Keemala is a retreat with *serious* soul. **THE WILD VS. LUXE FACTOR:** Arrange a wine tasting with the sommelier (complete with a pairing platter of cheese or chocolate) in one of the intimate bamboo pods made for two. Here you'll look out across the rugged, jagged undergrowth to the views of the Andaman Sea – it's pretty breathtaking. **GO:** Destinology (destinology.co.uk) offers a seven-night stay in a Clay Pool Cottage from £1,589 per person, B&B. Includes return Etihad flights from London Heathrow →

