

**REVIEW**

# The InterContinental, Hua Hin



This luxurious resort which has opened at a beautiful seaside town in Thailand has all the trappings for a lavish vacation. **BY PALLAVI PASRICHA**

**H**UA HIN? Where is that?" This is the surprised reaction of several friends when I tell them that I am heading there for the opening of the InterContinental Hua Hin. I find out why. This quiet beach town, about two hours away from Bangkok is, thankfully, not yet overrun by tourists. Lined with deluxe resorts and spas, it is also home to the Thai royal family's Summer Palace—Maruekhathaiyawan Palace.

**THE ROOM**

Leaving behind the skyscrapers of Bangkok, I doze off in the car on the way to the resort, only to wake up to a large wooden façade, and a sprawling lobby. Having travelled all night, I decide to go to my room straight. As the butler opens the stark white door, I realise it is laid out very differently from usual hotel rooms. To

my left is a huge tub with a wash basin behind it. It is not unusual to have glass divisions these days, but this hotel has gone a step further and virtually made it part of the room, separating it from the sleeping area with only a delicately-patterned wooden screen. An inviting king-sized bed on the other side of the panel overlooks the swimming pool. I step out into the balcony where a day bed tempts me to plonk on it right away.

**THE OUTDOORS**

After an hour's nap, I get up feeling ravenous. Not in the mood to order room service, I walk to the poolside restaurant, Azure Beach Grill, and tuck into some spicy Thai Chicken and rice. I am surprised to see the staff laying out tables inside the shallow area of the pool for dinner. Then I notice that the sun beds are also placed in the pool, so you

actually step into ankle deep water and walk to them. The resort has used water cleverly, giving you opportunities to be in the pool without actually swimming. Even at the Thai restaurant, Pirom, a part of the seating area is inside a waterbody with different pavilions which can seat four and it's calming to be surrounded by water.

**THE SPA**

Satisfied with food, I take a walk around the resort, and then head to Spa InterContinental, hoping that a relaxing treatment will cure my persisting jetlag. I choose the Oriental Massage, one of the signature massages, that is a combination of Swedish, Shiatsu and Balinese techniques. It is so good that I fall asleep while my therapist, Bow, applies soft pressure to knead away all the tiredness.

**THE OPENING NIGHT**

The next day, there is an air of expectancy as everyone waits for what turns out to be a spectacular gala opening. The theme for the evening is the 1920s, to celebrate the decade when the Summer Palace was built. Thailand's Who's Who arrive dressed in elaborate dresses that went back almost a century and set the mood for the party.

The evening gets going with a champagne reception, followed by a formal sit-down dinner where chefs from their international restaurants,

NOBU and SPOON by Alain Ducasse, both in Hong Kong, dish out an exotic menu. For starters I try seared scallop with Brussels sprout and jalapeno dressing followed by sea bass fillet with shellfish in butter sauce. Both these are bursting with flavours.

Adding more glamour to the evening is Canadian singer Paul Anka who belts out popular pop numbers like *My Way* and *She's a Lady* and gets the party swinging into the wee hours of the night with fireworks later.

**THE TOWN**

I and my fellow travellers manage to spend some time soaking in the sights and sounds of Hua Hin. The tiny railway station, designed like the Maruekhathaiyawan Palace, is a must-see. The Royal Waiting Room

was built in the 1920s to welcome the king when he used to visit.

**THE HUA HIN NIGHT MARKET**

No town in Thailand is complete without its night market. At this one I spend hours browsing through Thai souvenirs, junk jewellery, bags, and lamps and finally leave when my feet start throbbing with pain. Never mind, there is more luxury in store. When I'm ready to leave, the resort's private eight-seater jet takes me back to Bangkok, where I board the flight with images of Hua Hin and the resort still fresh in my mind.

*What:* A seaside resort  
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[www.ichotelsgroup.com](http://www.ichotelsgroup.com)

1. The large pool with the hotel facade at the backdrop 2. The beautifully appointed spa 3. Seating by the water at Pirom restaurant 4. Room with a view 5. At the Fireside restaurant by the beach

