



05 AUG, 2024

Escape to paradise JOIN THE CLUB!

NZ Womens Weekly, Auckland



TWO PALMS



Cheers!
 Anna enjoyed downtime at the adults-only Zen Pool (left).

Escape to paradise JOIN THE CLUB!

Lifestyle editor Anna Lee happily settles into resort life in tropical Phuket

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it's challenging to take a break from the daily grind, let go of the mental load and completely relax. Even when you're on holiday, there are often kids to corral, activities to be organised and meals to be cooked or booked. Enter Thailand's Club Med Phuket, where everything – and everyone – is taken care of. A 60-

minute drive from Phuket International Airport, the tropical beachside haven is complete with all the bells and whistles so you can enjoy a stress-free break. The vibrant, all-inclusive resort, which centres around a lively pool area overlooking the sparkling Andaman Sea, has recently undergone an extensive upgrade, with a stylish refresh of both communal spaces and guest suites.

A towel artfully fashioned into an elephant perched on the end of my bed welcomed me to my newly renovated room, with contemporary comforts and traditional Thai design elements interlaced throughout. After a deep sleep cocooned in the plush, cloud-like bed, a stroll along Kata Beach and a dip in the ocean before tucking into a buffet breakfast was the perfect way to start your day. With the largest offering of in-resort sports activities on the island, including Muay Thai boxing, tennis, archery, beach volleyball, yoga, water games and even foam parties, each day there is a new bounty of experiences to be enjoyed. There's no need to book – simply turn up and they take care of the rest, and you can do as much or as little as you please. Even the smallest family members are taken care of, so everyone gets the break they deserve.

The Kids Club offers several programmes for children from four months to 17 years, with exciting age-appropriate activities and friendly staff. Next year, the new Family Oasis will also open – a dedicated zone complete with comfortable rooms, a water-play zone and a snack bar, to make lasting memories that transcend generations. In holiday mode and enjoying the thrill of not having to adhere to a schedule, I wandered around the sprawling 40-acre estate, ticking off anything that tickled my fancy, including the exhilarating flying trapeze, a cooking class and a round of golf, before rejuvenation came calling. An icy cucumber-spiked water from the Detox Bar in hand, I floated along the paths weaving through the lush gardens, past Club Med Spa – lauded for its traditional Thai massages



Rehydrate at the refreshing Detox Bar.



The guest suites are spacious and calming.

PHOTOS: JULIAN LOVE



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Travel

'During dinner under the stars, circus performers twisted and turned'

– and found my bliss at the adults-only Zen Pool. Nestled beneath the tall palms and tucked away in a world of its own, I basked in the warm sun on the plush lounges before plunging into the infinity pool. Of course, this oasis of calm comes with the poolside Zen Bar, laden with fresh juices, smoothies and cocktails. A refreshing Kata-punch – an orange, passionfruit and lime creation topped with a splash of tequila – goes down a treat as you float.

If you can pry yourself away from the comforts of the resort (full disclosure, I

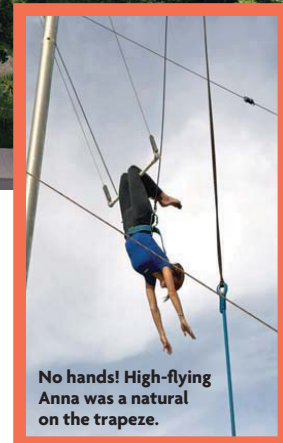
could not), there is more treasure to be found beyond the front gates. Immerse yourself in the country's rich heritage, marvel at the Great Big Buddha, which is crafted from marble and lives up to its name at a staggering 45 metres, or explore James Bond Island, where *The Man with the Golden Gun* was filmed, through one of the resort's guided excursions.

Meanwhile, back at the resort, if a culinary adventure is what you crave, the premium experience delivers in spades, with several eateries on site.

With an ever-changing, buffet-style offering, The Mamaung soon became my daily go-to, with its fresh local and international fare. For a more intimate experience, The Chu-da is brimming with local flavours with its gourmet Thai-fusion cuisine.

During dinner under the stars by the main pool, circus performers twisted and turned overhead before an explosion of fireworks rocketed into the night sky. Moments later, a pop-up, club-style party with games, singers, stilt walkers and fire dancers metamorphosed before my eyes.

As a pioneer of the all-inclusive concept, it's no



No hands! High-flying Anna was a natural on the trapeze.

surprise Club Med has thought of everything, so you don't have to think about a thing. Whether you're looking to reconnect with family, friends or even just yourself, you'll leave the Land of Smiles positively beaming.

For more information or to book your Club Med Phuket holiday, see clubmed.co.nz

PHOTOS: JULIAN LOVE

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