







# Alila Bangsar

## KUALA LUMPUR

With an inserted courtyard at its conceptual heart, Alila's first hotel in Malaysia delivers an urban oasis in the midst of a bustling metropolis.

Words: Neena Dhillon | Photography: Courtesy of Alila Hotels & Resorts

Occupying the top floors of a sleek and imposing mixed-use development at the juncture between two intriguing neighbourhoods of Kuala Lumpur, Alila Bangsar is a towering presence, hovering aloft in the sky, dominating everything in the near vicinity. On one side of the structure sits Brickfields, a former colonial district, on the other, the city's entertainment hub known as Bangsar. For Shanghai-based design practice Neri & Hu, the location immediately suggested a linkage between past and present, old and new; a relationship that emanates from the hotel architecture and interior design in the subtlest of ways.

"There is a rigid structural grid that defines this project from outside to inside, signalling its position on the façade while acting as a framework within which each function of the hotel is contained," say Lyndon Neri and Rossana Hu, founding partners of their eponymous design and research office.

The journey itself starts on the ground floor of the partially clad building, where a protective canopy leads to a lower lobby, planted with foliage and trees that usher in the idea of a serene urban oasis, complemented by delicate brass lighting fixtures and contemporary banks of seating beneath a voluminous ceiling. Unexpected but all the

more pleasing for it, the interiors are bright white, a strong contrast to the dark statement exterior. Shooting up almost 40 floors to the sky lobby and reception, elevator doors part to unveil a picture of tranquillity, the interior architecture working to keep the double-height space partially open to city breezes, ushering in natural light, akin to a lantern. The simple material palette is of grey stone, white plaster and Balau wood, slatted and injected to create textural interest, with lush greenery a burst of colour. It is a combination from which the project rarely deviates.

As guests wander through the space, they are drawn organically to an adjacent sun-bathed chamber where a theatrical flight of stairs carved out of stone cascades down to a swimming pool refreshingly open to the elements – a "stage to see and be seen" as Neri and Hu describe it. "This is the moment the boundary between interior and exterior blurs, the structural grid breaking open to form a courtyard, around which all activities within the hotel are centred," they continue. "Spanning three storeys, defined by a regular grid of columns and beams that frame views of the stunning panorama, the inserted courtyard is also protected from the metropolis beyond."

As a unifying element that weaves its way around the public spaces



**This Page:** The bathroom is inserted as a floating box allowing for free circulation around the space, while an indoor courtyard provides a private sanctuary from which to take in the views



and defines the oasis, nature is prominently inserted into architecture, a landscaping motif that reinforces the story of exterior blending into interior. Custom day beds spring from stone and timber while sparingly used crafted details are in bronze. With the far end of the courtyard affording stellar views, the resort pool plays with natural and installed light, throwing up reflections as day turns to night.

On the uppermost levels of the courtyard, Alila Bangsar's signature restaurant, cocktail bar and rooftop are similarly constrained yet sophisticated spaces. There's a hint of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century LA chic at Pacific Standard, where striated marble, bronze wall sconces, leather stools and inbuilt bar counter lamps, their green glass aglow, evoke grown-up glamour. Entier meanwhile serves as a refined setting for a French nose-to-tail culinary concept, with leather banquettes and bistro seats maximising skyline views, and artfully





**This Page:** Entier, a French nose-to-tail culinary concept, features leather banquettes and bistro seats maximising skyline views while there's a hint of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century LA chic at Pacific Standard



positioned mirrors offering coy perspectives of other diners, playing into that idea of 'see and be seen'. Lighting is an extension of ceiling architecture, the suspended glass bowls finished with bronze detailing. At the apex of the building, visitors find a tri-storey, flexible, outdoor roof space, thus far hosting events, yoga meets and a Lido Bar catering to the community on weekends.

Decidedly a more private affair, accommodation at Alila Bangsar follows the analogy of a small village albeit interpreted through a contemporary lens. Neri and Hu explain: "To define the layout, we went with two different elements. We have treated the guestrooms as the 'hut' or the indoor space where functions of daily living are enclosed, the bathroom inserted as a floating box, thereby allowing for free circulation around the space. Additionally we have inserted an indoor courtyard at the end of each room,





**Left:** The simple material palette is one of grey stone, white plaster and Balau wood, slatted and injected to create textural interest, with lush greenery a burst of colour

close to the window, to become a private sanctuary from which guests can take in beautiful views of Bangsar and more.”

Rooms are a triumph of timber, stone and white plaster minimalism. Brass again is favoured for accents and frames, take for example the rainshowers in white tiled and grey stone bathrooms. Embossed paper art over beds hints at batik traditions while each accommodation floor boasts another indicator of authentic Malaysian culture – a shared living room with 24-hour drinks and snacks, suggesting the national tendency to welcome guests in the home by plying them with regular refreshment. And it is through these gentle connections between past and present that Neri & Hu’s approach to Alila Bangsar finds its architectural *raison d’être*, of which the courtyard and interior landscaping are two essential pillars.

**EXPRESS CHECK-OUT:** 143 guestrooms | 2 restaurants | 3 bars | 3,500ft<sup>2</sup> event spaces | Swimming pool, gym | [www.alilahotels.com](http://www.alilahotels.com)  
**Owner:** UOA Developers | **Operator:** Alila Hotels & Resorts | **Exterior Architecture:** ALT Arkitek L Teh | **Interior Architecture and Design:** Neri & Hu  
**Lighting Design:** Klaasen Lighting Design | **Landscaping:** Salad Dressing | **Main Contractor:** Peak Construction Sdn Bhd