

Time out at Tamarind



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At Spicers Tamarind, the food experiences and the sense of peace are as reinvigorating as the fresh mountain air.

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When you step out of a chaotic business environment and get back to nature, there's often that simple moment when you take a deep breath, marvel at the sense of peace, and think: everything is okay. Stepping onto the Spicer's Tamarind property, which is hidden in the Sunshine Coast hinterland rainforest, everything is more than okay—it's beautiful.

When we turn into the drive of Tamarind and make our way to the log cabin-style reception area, the ground is still wet from recent rain—the scent of damp bark chips, fresh flowers, and honeysuckle permeating the air. We pick up our key and are handed walking maps (including how to reach the property's stream and string of waterfalls), a list of all happenings on the property—Thai cooking lessons, cocktails in the evenings, and opening times for Spa Anise—and the all-important times for breakfast and dinner, which involve delectable degustations created by the resident two-hatted chef Daniel Jarrett. >>



As we walk along one of the property's trails, the sun comes out in all of her glory, and everything is so rich and bountiful—it's as though a colour-enhancing filter has bathed the forest.



Checking into our suite, which looks as though it's always been there tucked into the bushland, we marvel at the quietness of our surrounds. It's perfectly silent—until a water dragon rustles through the undergrowth, spots us, and runs off in a dance-like jig with his little head held high. The suites at Tamarind are expansive, modern, and stylish, but are designed to feel as homely as possible, with décor in warm, pale greys and green, and floors and bedding in soothing creams and pale browns. The bathrooms are an oasis within an oasis, as the bi-fold doors beside the freestanding stone baths open onto a lush tropical garden, with seating to take in the sense of peace.

We're in time for lunch, so stroll down to the restaurant, and are led out onto a wooden balcony with views of a country road winding its way over gentle hills, with the rainforest rising majestically behind it. We dine on a Thai-inspired degustation that is as fresh and



tasty as it is beautiful. Freshly shucked oysters dressed with chilli, lime, and cucumber are followed by pickled melon with finger lime, crispy pigs' ears, and pork floss. Next comes confit salmon with ponzu, pickled ginger, miso, quinoa, furikake and wakame, followed by a mouthwatering black vinegar-braised pork belly with scallop toast, and a radish and celery salad. As if that wasn't enough to have us swooning, oven-roasted beef with dashi potatoes, fried oyster mushroom, miso mustard, and pickled onion and miso ranch dressing was the pièce de résistance, followed by a dessert of Valrhona chocolate torte, with salted caramel, chilli chocolate ice cream, lychee, and raspberry chilli jam.

To learn some of the tricks of the trade, the Tamarind Cooking School on the grounds has top chefs sharing their wisdom in a state-of-the-art cooking school, with the long-course cooking classes running for four hours, and short demonstrations for two.

After lunch, we sit on the deck enjoying a glass of wine, while some cheeky resident birds—a friendly magpie and a tiny sparrow—hop around on the balcony rail eyeing off the continual procession of delicious dishes. Then we take out the map and decide on a route to the property's waterfall.

There's a good reason why getting fresh mountain air into your system makes you feel like a different person, and even more reasons why being in or close to a waterfall can completely alter your state of being. Negative ions, in laymen's terms, are oxygen ions with an extra electron attached, produced through water molecules. This is why they're abundant near fresh, flowing water, be it a river, stream, sea, or waterfall. In fact, the air around waterfalls, for example, can contain anywhere from 30,000 to 100,000 negative ions per cubic centimetre.

It's been raining for a week on the day we arrive at Tamarind, which has intensified the intoxicating rainforest smells—the pine-needle scent is sharper, the freshly sprouting fungi aroma more earthy, and the magnolia trees are like microperfumeries. As we walk along one of the property's trails, the sun comes out in all of her glory, and everything is so rich and bountiful—it's as though a colour-enhancing filter has bathed the forest.



We reach the stream and watch the gushing currents. It's deafening, but we can still hear the happy calls of bellbirds. The cold, clear water is rushing by so fast and so heavily that you wouldn't risk swimming in the rapids. From the enormous, ancient boulders to the piles of strewn rocks and the scatterings of glistening pebbles, everything seems so shiny and fresh. Mist, created by the excited oxygen ions, rises from the waterfalls. We both stand there, the rainforest behind us and the waterfalls before us.

Everything is definitely okay. Everything is beautiful. ■

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Top image The abundantly fertile, sweeping grounds of Spicers Tamarind. **Above, left to right** One of Daniel Jarrett's Thai-inspired dishes; The Tamarind bar and restaurant; Chilling out by one of the stylish, cosy bungalows.