



THE DATAI Langkawi, Malaysia

When children are ready to venture beyond Europe but are not quite old enough for the wilds of Africa, bring them here. It's the perfect stepping-stone. Few places are more thrillingly tropical; the sea is as warm as bath water and the creamy beach is lined with palms. The jungle backdrop buzzes with brightly coloured birds and the odd cheeky monkey. Bag a two-bedroom, open-plan beach villa or, if you're travelling in an extra large pack, go for the four-bedroom Villa Hutan Datai on stilts that comes with a leafy garden, huge private pool and a mass of space in the living and dining room. There's no kids' club as such; but that doesn't matter a jot: the local nannies are charming, plus there's plenty of make-your-own fun to be had in the jungle and down by the water. There are guided nature walks through the trees, mangrove tours and organised family treks (this place isn't really suitable for under fours because the majority of the activities are so nature focused). Little ones will spend hours collecting smooth shells from the water's edge or counting the fat frogs in the miniature ponds by the bar; teens will exhaust themselves kayaking, swimming and taking watersports lessons or learning about traditional batik. But what really makes this place sing are the staff, who whizz around in the sapping heat in smart khaki shorts and crisp white shirts. They'll know everyone's name from day one – even Henry the hamster who you had to leave at home. Grab time in the spa, which is set on the banks of a stream, and in the awesome shop where you will want to buy everything you see. Then tempt children's tastebuds with mild, warming curries or fresh fish at the laid-back, low-key Beach Club. At breakfast, the sweet mango lassi will become a family addiction. This is a *Treasure Island*-style adventure with whirring-fan colonial undertones. No wonder it's one of the most loved hotels in Asia.

JOURNEY TIME A 14-hour flight with a stop in Kuala Lumpur, then a 30-minute drive
TIME DIFFERENCE +8 hours

INSIDER TIP Children can join the Young Explorers Club at the neighbouring Andaman hotel for hermit-crab hunts, forest foraging and games of kayak tug-of-war: brilliant when they need a change of scene.

BOOK IT Cleveland Collection (+44 20 7843 3531; www.clevelandcollection.co.uk) offers seven nights from £1,422 per person, based on two adults and one child, including breakfast, flights and transfers.