

DestinAsian

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THE 2022
**LUXE
LIST**

THE BEST NEW HOTELS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

LUXE LIST

AUSTRALIA

SILKY OAKS LODGE

Australia has long done beach and outback luxury well. Yet despite being home to the world's oldest rain forest—Daintree National Park in Queensland—stylish jungle lodgings have been wanting. Until now. Fresh from a US\$14 million renovation, the decades-old Silky Oaks Lodge has been reinvented as an ode to the World Heritage-listed Wet Tropics, its 40 treehouse-like suites strung along a curve of the Mossman River 80 kilometers north of Cairns. First glimpse is the polished-wood main lodge, its seven-meter-high cathedral ceilings framing a canopy of figs and gnarly vines. This is also where meals are served: tempura reef fish, perhaps, or barbecued tiger prawns with mango-avocado salsa. Whether it's the tropical temperatures or meditative insect chorus, days here feel luxuriously languid; it helps that there's a hammock on every balcony—the two-bedroom Daintree Pavilion has its own infinity pool. There's also a spa that pays homage to the



region's rich indigenous culture, which you can also explore on guided Dreamtime walks with Kuku Yalanji traditional landowners. Silky Oaks' reboot comes courtesy of Baillie Lodges, whose remarkable portfolio (Longitude 131° at Uluru; Capella Lodge on Lord Howe Island) is a perfect fit for this immersive property (silkyoakslodge.com.au; doubles from about US\$925, minimum two-night stay). —**Natasha Dragun**

GREEN ZONE

Above: A forest boardwalk shaded by cedarwoods and figs leads to Silky Oaks Lodge's reception pavilion. Below: The sunken living room at Else in Kuala Lumpur.



MALAYSIA

ELSE

New hospitality brand Else Retreats is off to a fine start with its inaugural property, which occupies the revamped Lee Rubber Building in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown. Local design firm Studio Bikin is behind the understated look of hotel, whose 49 rooms and suites—all muted tones and wood and wicker elements—are spread between the original art deco structure and a new three-story rooftop extension. Contemporary style and 1930s architecture meld at street-level restaurant Raw Kitchen Hall, where the eclectic menu of global comfort food recalls that of its sister venue in Singapore; the bar here is backdropped by vintage ornamental pillars sourced from Penang. Upstairs, on the same floor as an inviting pool terrace, Yellow Fin Horse dishes out wood-fired specialties. While there's no spa, Else has meditation pods, a "gratitude space" for self-reflection, and a gym. It's proof that good things do come in small packages (elseretreats.com; doubles from US\$125). —**Nicholas Ng**