

Plus<sup>+</sup>

**NEW BRAND**  
ASAI Hotels in the  
spotlight

**NEW BUSINESS**  
All you need to know  
about Dusit Foods

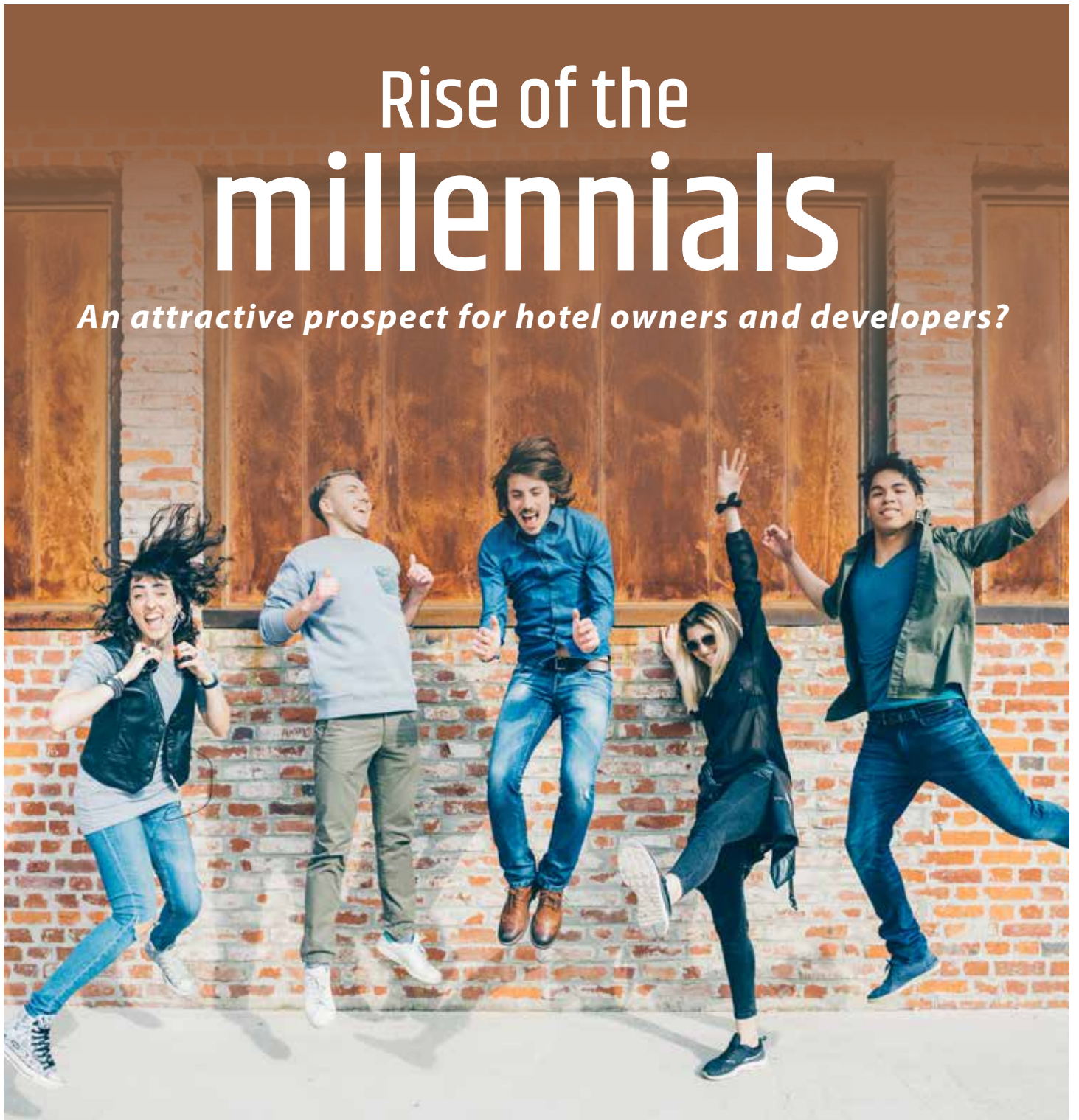
**NEW HOTELS**  
A handy round up of  
the latest signings

# Dusit Pulse

Essential updates from the heart of our business

## Rise of the millennials

*An attractive prospect for hotel owners and developers?*





Celebrating 60 in style with  
*Elite Havens*

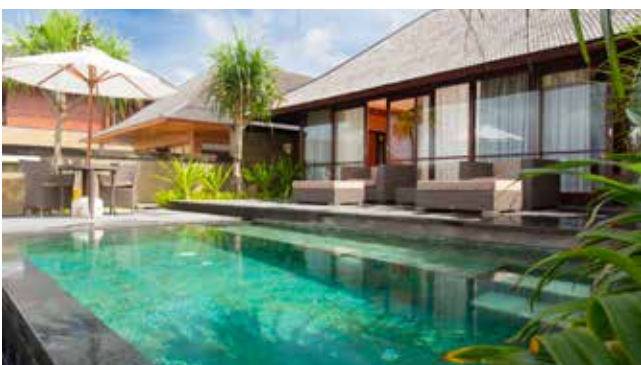
*Jon Stonham, CEO of Elite Havens, looks back on a weekend of special celebrations in Bali which highlighted everything the luxury villa rental company has to offer – including bespoke accommodation and personalised experiences designed to delight every guest.*





**B**y the time you turn 60, you have clocked up a few milestone celebrations. Your 20th – possibly iconic, but have no recollection; the 30th – some intoxicating weekend in some capital city, details sketchy; 40th – a civilised restaurant, good wine, great company, and a night that falls away as stamina, partners and kids permit; the BIG 50 – fine dining, fine wines, and close friends for an evening of anecdotes and memories. But, what about your 60th? That slippery slope celebration around retirement, where friends are dispersing globally, and getting together requires more than a week’s notice.

The problem was recently posed to me by my Black and White Movie Club (there’s an age giveaway!) where four members were reaching the magic number around the same time. The core group is based in Singapore, with other important members scattered across Australia, Hong Kong, the UK and France. The trick to entice everyone? An extended weekend in Bali, getting pampered in a luxury villa – in this case, the 9-bedroom **Villa Bayu Gita Beachfront and Residences in Sanur, managed by Elite Havens**.



Calendars were synced, and we all landed for the legendary weekend – a group of 12, a blend of couples and divorcees; with varying fitness levels, expecting to be greeted with a well-planned itinerary to keep the weekend exciting.



Up stepped **Andy Grant**, Head of the Elite Concierge and miracle worker for the 70,000 guests that the company handles each year, and his little black book had all the answers – VIP section at the best beach club, a special table at a famous restaurant, perhaps even a Harley Davidson

tour or a jewellery demonstration within the villa, or just some special ayurvedic treatments to get us into holiday mode. And to top it all off, he had managed to keep the expected arrival of the overseas members a complete surprise. The unmistakable joy of meeting long lost friends is a memory that is sure to linger.

So, how did Andy keep such a diverse group happy? It wasn’t easy. But here’s a sneak peek of what transpired that weekend:

## Thursday

VIP airport pickups with military precision (seven different arrival times). Golf for those so inclined; a poolside spa afternoon for those not. Dinner – an exquisite alfresco BBQ, crafted and magically presented by Budi, the in-villa chef. Tiger prawns, expertly filleted fish and succulent tenderloin washed down with a drop (or more) of Shiraz – a fine evening to catch up with old friends.



## Friday

A slow start, and mid-morning departure for Benoa Harbour to board M/V Haruku, a 72ft luxury catamaran, to speed the group over to Penida Island. Some drift snorkelling, fish feeding, and a spot of water-skiing, only interrupted by a fine lunch spread of Indonesian specialities prepared by the on-board chef – two delicious baked snappers being the highlight. As the sun drifted over the horizon, the crew appeared with champagne and a nautical-themed cake to end the glorious day.

## Saturday

The active ones were now ready for some adventure. Away from the tourist glare and unknown to many, the eastern part of Bali offers a rare insight into local life. Andy had arranged for the services of Bali Asli, which can arrange several activities to delve into this mystical island's DNA. For the strenuous, a trek led by Mudi, a local guide, through jungles, villages and temples, culminating in a delicious lunch of local fare; a real first-hand experience of the spiritual side of Bali.

For those seeking a slower pace – a trip to the wet market with the resident chef, passionate about local produce and traditional cooking methods. A pleasurable morning spent crushing, cutting, folding and carving, to produce a spread of delectable local dishes, enjoyed by the group at lunch.

Bali is blessed with world-class restaurants, but why venture out if you can bring the chef to you? Andy managed to convince prized celebrity chef Will Merrick to step out of his kitchens at Sarong and Mama San and treat us to a private dinner at the villa. Evening cocktails ranging from a smoking (literally) Dirty Mule to a divine rum and passion fruit concoction preceded an extravagant seven-course dinner served with flair by Will's team from Sarong. The talented chef described each dish and its local ingredients in detail. An evening never to be forgotten, and a grand way to cap off the celebratory weekend.







## Sunday

The last day had a blissfully slow start, with a casual breakfast, copious amounts of coffee, and a chance for a last chinwag before heading back to the airport, VIP style again of course.

The experience, even for this well-travelled group, was exceptional, and the group messages and Facebook albums did not do justice to capture a weekend of reigniting friendships, enjoying good company and making yet more lasting memories. The group is now searching for an acceptable excuse for another reunion, and the perfect villa of course.



### About Jon

*Jon Stonham, CEO of Elite Havens  
Member of the Singapore Black and  
White Movie Club*

*Fast approaching 55 (and planning  
to stay there for a few years)*

## Elite Havens in Focus

Acquired by Dusit in September 2018, Elite Havens is the leading provider of high-end vacation rentals in Asia. Established in 1998, the company performs integrated marketing, reservations, concierge and management services for bespoke luxury villas and currently maintains a network of more than 200 fully staffed properties across Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, and the Maldives. Curated spaces, exotic sought-after locations, and high levels of personal service from gourmet chefs and professional butlers are hallmarks of the Elite Havens experience.

Dusit's acquisition of Elite Havens follows the company's three-pronged strategy for sustainable and profitable growth, which includes balance, diversification, and expansion, particularly into new market segments, which will enhance Dusit's capacity to provide integrated services and drive revenue growth.

"While the integrated luxury villa management business is new to us, Elite Havens has an impressive track record in this segment, successfully expanding from a small enterprise to the leading company of its kind in Asia," said Ms Suphajee Suthumpun, Group CEO, Dusit International. "We are confident that our 70 years of experience in operating upper-upscale and luxury hotels will only enhance these operations further, allowing the dynamic Elite Havens team to leverage our own capabilities to continue providing exceptional services for luxury consumers while simultaneously expanding the brand's reach in more dream destinations throughout Asia and other key regions."

A recent synergy is the inclusion of Elite Havens in Dusit's guest recognition programme, Dusit Gold. As part of the programme, Elite Havens now offers discounts on best available rates to Dusit Gold members (including 10% off for Premier and Executive members, and 15% off for Elite members), and more exclusive privileges.

For more information, please visit [elitehavens.com](http://elitehavens.com)