



ABOVE, PHU MY HUNG AT DUSK; BELOW, LANTERNS LIGHT UP HOI AN AND, FAR LEFT, BANYAN TREE LANG CO'S BLISSFUL SPA



architecture and lakes of lotus flowers.

The hour-long drive to and from Hué was almost as fascinating as the palace itself: I watched farmers spread bags of rice over the road to bake in the sun, water buffalo roam acres of paddy fields, I even saw a dentist pulling teeth in a roadside surgery – one authentic Vietnamese experience I would not be trying.

Back at the resort, a late afternoon massage at the incredible Balinese spa beckoned. As *InStyle's* beauty writer, I've sampled a fair few massages in my time (what? It's my job!) and I can honestly say this is one of the best I've ever had. My therapist intuitively knew what muscles to work on and applied the perfect amount of pressure. The pre-massage, footbath and beautifully decorated treatment room – think dark wood and granite – all added to the experience. Plus bliss.



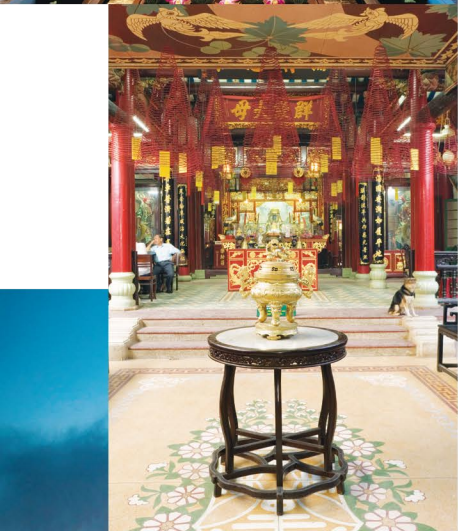
An. This ancient trading port dates back to the 1400s and is living proof of its rich cultural history – Chinese, Japanese, Dutch and Indian settlers have all made their mark on Hoi An, which earned World Heritage status in 1999. Now a buzzing, vibrant market town, you'll find the usual tourist tack lining the main streets, but dig a little deeper and you'll discover high-quality tailors, artists, cobblers, silk traders, jewellers and potters selling their wares off the beaten track. I picked up a set of six beautiful porcelain plates for about £2.

Visit in the early evening, as darkness descends, and you'll see hundreds of lanterns light the streets in a rainbow of colours. I ate riverside at the newly opened Seedlings restaurant and watched the lanterns' reflections bob in the Thu Bon River as I tucked into chilli squid and lotus-seed pudding – a true taste of Vietnam. ▷



hoi an

Shopaholics, listen up – if you visit one place in Vietnam, make it Hoi



ABOVE AND RIGHT, THE DIVERSE ARCHITECTURE OF HOI AN; BELOW, A RICE PADDY



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