

A place to just be

by Maricris Encarnacion

photos by Erwin Lim

Abacá in Cebu is the perfect place to bond, to be quiet and be pampered

He is an executive for one of Cebu's top furniture exporters, Detalia Aurora. She is a partner in Al Amizade, Cebu's distributor of Havaianas. Together, they are parents to Lucas, an active toddler who is almost all of two years old. Marko and Aimil Sarmiento paint a pretty picture of an upwardly mobile young couple striving to balance work and play, family time, and partying with friends. And once in a while, they do stop to take a break just to be alone with just each other.

Cebu's newest and most exclusive boutique resort Abacá is the perfect setting for that. It is a place to bond, to be quiet and to be pampered. The entire resort only has nine all-suite deluxe rooms with six that have balconies facing the ocean and three with gardens and individual dipping pools that are the ultimate in privacy. Considering its size, there's never a crowd to jostle with for space in the gorgeous eternity pool. Service is always impeccable and personal.

Abacá's suites are furnished with pieces from some of Cebu's top furniture designers and manufacturers, in a style that is distinctly Asian and modern. Space is generous and the feel is tropical. Hardwood floors in American walnut give the impression of being at home in elegant surroundings. Solid wooden doors open up to oversized spa-style bathrooms with showers in black Italian granite and fittings by Blu Bathworks of Canada. Guests whose idea of getting away includes staying connected will be happy to find free high-speed wireless Web connection. The latest electronic amenities that are part of a modern lifestyle are standard in all rooms—an awesome MacBook, slim LCD satellite television and sleek clock radio with iPod dock. Basic creature comforts come in a king-sized bed with a custom-designed pillowtop mattress, three high-thread count 100% cotton sheets, down-blanket for tropical weather, comforter and duvet together with a choice of goosedown or hypoallergenic pillows.





Marko and Aimil Sarmiento enjoy a relaxing afternoon dip in Abacá's gorgeous black-tiled eternity pool.



Outdoor furniture by Hein Chrispin for Metamorfose lend a modern Asian touch to the resort.



Oversized spa-style bathrooms are provided with personalized bath oils and handmade botanical bath soaps.



The suites showcase that Cebu has to offer and side tables by Cordaro for Fil-Vener accessories by C

Full spa services are offered to guests either in-room, at the beachfront cabanas or in the climate-controlled spa rooms at the boutique spa. One of the partners, Anna Hyatt, is a blending specialist whose business it is to make only the best essential oils and ingredients.

Food takes equal billing in the list of offerings that the resort makes. Its commitment to quality of ingredients, taste and presentation is steady and meets expectations. Bread is baked in the restaurant's wood-burning oven every morning—crisp and crusty on the outside, chewy and tender on the inside. All desserts—from sorbets to cookies to puddings are all made in-house. Menus are prepared and printed daily to accommodate what's fresh and available in the market. The resort is small enough to allow flexibility

—breakfast at the balcony, lunch at the cabana, Krug champagne at the poolside bar, a picnic basket for the boat trip, cocktails on the deck, dinner at the restaurant.

It has been a year since chef-owner Jason Hyatt changed the face of Cebu dining. Jason, together with wife Anna and Hong Kong/Canada-based partners Marc and Jeni Compagnon, brings to Cebu a totally different resort experience. MS

Abaca Boutique Resort and Restaurant is located at Punta Engaño Road, Macapagal Island, Cebu. Tels. (32) 495-8456, 342-8905, Fax (32) 495-1378, email them at relax@abacaresort.com.



Soak in luxurious milk baths and skin-softening sea salts in your private tub while enjoying a view of the ocean.



Relax with a massage at the poolside cabana, lulled to sleep by the sound of the sea and cool ocean breeze.

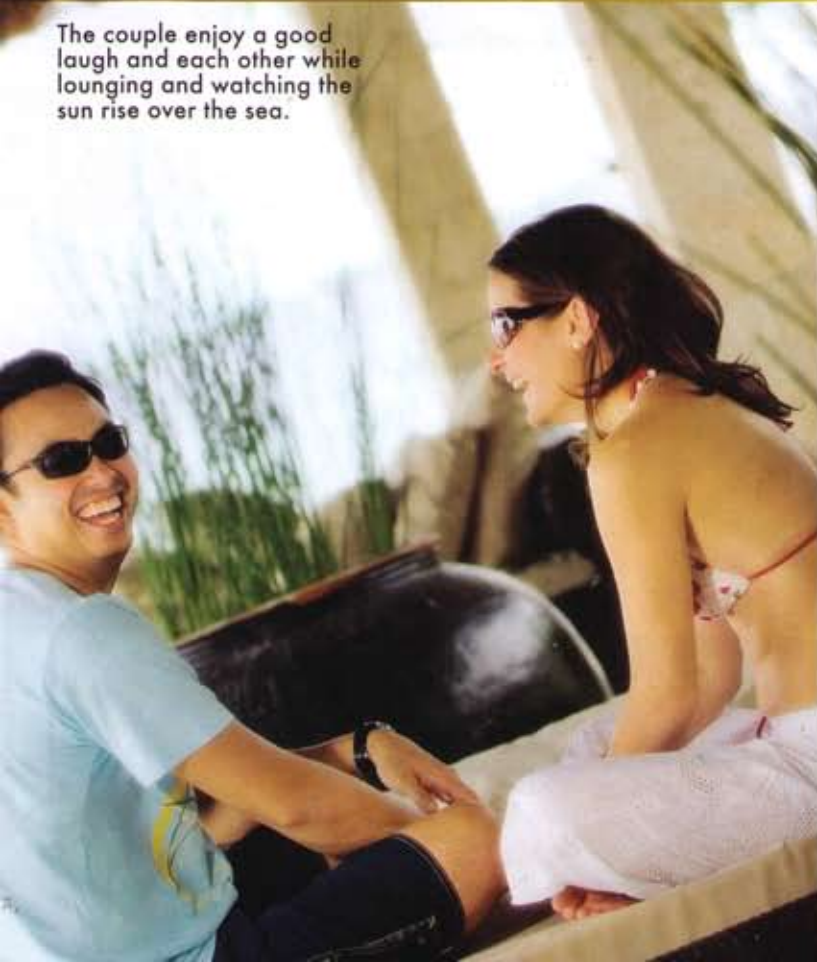


'Matilda' armchairs by Kenneth Cobonpue in the sitting area of the bedrooms

The entire resort is lit to define moods and create an atmosphere of calm and tranquility.



The couple enjoy a good laugh and each other while lounging and watching the sun rise over the sea.



Asian antiques lend elegance to the resort.





Soft lights and cocktails at the poolside bar for Aimil and Marko, a fitting end to a day of serendipity.