

# Sabah's Man of Steele

**Andrew Steele** *General Manager of Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa*

**Y**ou can take the man out of Sabah but with Andrew Steele, it seems like you can never take Sabah out of the man. Having been in Sabah between 2003 to early 2005, Andrew is back on our shores and could not be happier. "I love this place. I have always had a strong affinity for Sabah. In fact, I was probably a Sabahan in my previous life!"

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Now serving as the General Manager of Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort and Spa (STARs), Andrew's career of almost 20 years literally spans the globe. Hong Kong, Shanghai, Xi'an, Taipei, Koh Samui, Hayman Island, Jakarta and New Delhi are just some of the locations Andrew has found himself in, but he asserts none of them quite live up to Kota Kinabalu. "They say you don't know heaven if you've never been to hell and Sabah is definitely heaven! Some of my postings have been hellish and emotionally confronting, so being back here is a breath of fresh air," he says.

Andrew is impressed with the changes he sees here in Sabah. "From the Waterfront to 1Borneo, it is apparent that KK continues to grow and prosper. But more importantly, I am impressed at how the City is really starting to 'clean up'. And for this, I give credit to the Mayor for all his efforts," he says, adding that Datuk Ilyas Ibrahim's background as the former Commissioner of Police gives him the discipline, dedication and motivation to turn KK into the city it is today. "Our next big challenge is cleaning up the sea and rivers which are often littered with plastic bags and the like," says Andrew, who is also the Chairperson for the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) Safety, Security and Environment Committee. In fact, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), STARs 'adopts' schools in Kota



Kinabalu to be part of the environmental awareness programmes, and clean-up sessions or gotong-royong are organised at Tanjung Aru's First Beach. "We work hand in hand with local communities and assist in education efforts," he adds. The resort also adopts four children from the Sri Mengasih School, a school for children with special needs, sponsoring their education for a year.

Andrew cannot stress enough how he loves all things Sabah. "You have such a diversification of offerings. From dive sites to Mount Kinabalu and your rainforests are amazing. But most of all, you have the most wonderful people. With all this, other destinations pale in comparison with what Sabah has to offer," he enthuses, adding that his recent trip to Danum Valley was one of the most unforgettable experiences during his time here. His passion for Sabah has led him together with their sister resort, Shangri-La's Rasa Ria Resort in Tuaran, to team up and package the best of Sabah. "The General Manager of Rasa Ria, Timothy Wright, is simply excellent to work with. We are coming up with packages that allow visitors to have the complete Borneo Experience. For example, they can enjoy the sun, sea and city life during a 3-night stay in STARs and get up close with the Orang Utan and other wildlife at Rasa Ria for another 3 nights. It's the best of both worlds," he explains. He also mentions plans to work together with Yayasan Sabah to bring guests to Danum Valley as part of this package.

"We don't want visitors to come to Sabah and laze by the pool every day! We want them to get out there, visit the islands, trek the rainforests and meet the wonderful people so that they get a real feel of Sabah," he says.

Andrew concludes by saying apart from their goal to be positioned as a premier resort in the state alongside with Rasa Ria, he sincerely hopes to play a part in putting Sabah where she belongs: as one of the top 10 destinations in the world. "We want Sabah to be on everyone Bucket List – a place where you MUST go at least once in your life," he explains. "But once you're here I urge you to get out, explore and even walk into a coffee shop and you will be surprised at how open and friendly Sabahans are," he adds. Andrew's dedication also lies in continually improving the environment, "Sabah is truly beautiful, but paradise remains paradise provided its taken care of." He ends the interview with a smile, "I think Marco Polo got it wrong when he said Hangzhou was heaven. That title belongs to Sabah."