

# COMO HOTELS AND RESORTS

**PRESS RELEASE: January 2012**

## **COMO Hotels and Resorts opens Uma Punakha in Bhutan**

*COMO Hotels and Resorts announces it will open a sister lodge to its Uma Paro property in Bhutan to create a new two-centre opportunity for those seeking cultural discovery and physical adventure in this remote Himalayan region.*

The intimate, 11-room Uma Punakha, a new lodge opening September 2012, will give guests the opportunity to explore the enigmatic kingdom of Bhutan at a deeper level while enjoying the same understated luxury they have come to appreciate at Uma Paro.

Uma Punakha will offer a COMO Shambhala Retreat featuring 2 treatment rooms, one with a hot stone bath, a traditional Bhutanese therapy.

The hotel is situated on a hillside in the verdant Punakha Valley a five-hour drive from Paro. This new pairing opens up the country yet further to COMO guests who seek to combine the company's luxury hotel at Paro with Uma's trekking itineraries.

Punakha is one of the most precious valleys to the Bhutanese for it sequesters two of the country's great historical attractions: the Temple of the Divine Madman—a 14<sup>th</sup>-century fertility temple dedicated to the Tibetan Buddhist Saint Drukpa Kuenley—and the Punakha Dzong, a fortress temple and one of the Kingdom's administrative centres where the current King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk and his bride Jetsun Pema were recently married. Uma Punakha therefore offers a gateway to this important cultural region, as well as opportunities for white-water rafting, hiking and cycling under the expert supervision of Uma's qualified English-speaking guides.

As to the lodge itself, the location towards the head of the valley is exceptionally peaceful—and an ideal place to practice yoga. Steep vehicular access to Uma Punakha is rewarded with bird's-eye views. Bright green terraced fields spread out below, graduating down towards a dramatic bend in the river, the Mo Chu. Comprised of pale blue glacial waters, the Mo Chu (female river) joins the Po Chu (male river) a few miles downstream, the confluence marked by the Punakha Dzong. Only a few local-style houses are in the viewshed, along with spreading jacaranda trees and orchards laden with apples.

The design of Uma Punakha is by Cheong Yew Kuan, a Singapore-born, Bali-based architect who was also responsible for COMO Shambhala Estate and Uma Ubud resort in Ubud, Bali, some of the villas at Parrot Cay in the Turks and Caicos—both of which are part of COMO Hotels and Resorts—and the new Four Seasons Resort in the Seychelles. True to Yew Kuan's style, simplicity prevails, with natural light flooding interiors. There are eleven rooms in total, including nine deluxe and two one-bedroom villas with interconnecting doors to one of the deluxe rooms, making them standalone two-bedroom villas when required. The look complements the established pared-back, traditionally-influenced luxury of Uma Paro: over-size beds, wood-burning stoves and calming neutral colour schemes, punctuated with colourful flourishes of traditional handpainted Bhutanese wall designs.

Uma Punakha's open plan restaurant and lounge bar will showcase the best local ingredients and Bhutanese delicacies alongside a varied international menu. This is in line with Uma Paro's Bukhari restaurant, which is popular with in-house guests as well as some of Bhutan's royal family.

Gabriela Henrichwark, Group Marketing Director at COMO Hotels and Resorts said: 'The COMO Group was one of the first luxury hotel companies to go into the Kingdom of Bhutan, opening Uma Paro in 2004. To be able to now share the Punakha Valley with our guests reminds us what a privilege it is to operate in a place that has been so carefully preserved for future generations. We therefore want to make sure that we really get under the skin of Bhutan with our joint packages between Uma Paro and Uma Punakha.'

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#### **Editor's Notes:**

#### **About The COMO Group and COMO Hotels and Resorts**

Headquartered in Singapore, **The COMO Group** represents Christina Ong's unique vision of contemporary living. This encompasses the hospitality collection known as COMO Hotels and Resorts, the international luxury fashion retailer Club 21, the award-winning wellness concept COMO Shambhala and the philanthropic COMO Foundation.

Founded by Christina Ong, **COMO Hotels and Resorts** develops and manages handpicked, and individually curated properties, including The Halkin in London, two Metropolitan hotels in London and Bangkok, Parrot Cay in the Turks and Caicos, Cocoa Island in the Maldives, and two Uma experience resorts in Bali and Bhutan. It also manages, in partnership with its sister brand in wellness, the COMO Shambhala Estate in Bali. COMO Shambhala is also promotes health, relaxation and learning through its products, services, cuisine, treatments, and spa facilities within each COMO property.

Accurate and intuitive service, sympathetic and elegant design befitting each location, and outstanding cuisine are hallmarks of the COMO experience. Restaurants within COMO's properties include the Michelin-starred Thai restaurant nahm in London and Bangkok, and the internationally-renowned Nobu restaurant in London.

*Urban Hotels:* COMO Hotels and Resorts' urban properties include the Halkin in London's Belgravia, and the Metropolitan hotels in London and Bangkok. All three properties feature Michelin-starred chefs and a contemporary aesthetic and exceptional service. The lively Metropolitan hotels also house the world-famous Met Bars.

*Island Resorts:* COMO's private resorts offer powder-white beaches and some of the world's best diving. The understated style and laid-back nature of Parrot Cay in the Turks and Caicos and Cocoa Island in the Maldives belie the exacting service that has become a COMO hallmark. World-class cuisine and comprehensive wellness treatments and activities at COMO Shambhala Retreats complete COMO's approach to a perfect beach holiday.

*Adventure Retreats:* The Uma properties in Paro and Punakha in Bhutan as well as in Ubud in Bali unveil local culture, nature, and religious and folkloric traditions. Specialist guiding, treks and tours, physical activities and tailor-made programmes ensure memorable insights into some of the world's most unique locations. Intimate and relaxed, the Uma properties reference local design and cuisine while providing an unmistakably COMO experience.

*Wellness Resorts:* COMO Shambhala Estate in Bali is a sanctuary for holistic wellness. Expert staff are goal-oriented, relevant and realistic in their consultative approach. Each guest's individual needs and ambitions determine the programme of nutrition, exercise, therapies and activities. Facilities and tropical villa-style accommodation are impeccably appointed.

For more information, visit [www.como.bz](http://www.como.bz)