

# A right royal pursuit

**Tengku Zatahah, daughter of the Sultan of Selangor, and her French husband, Aubry Rahim Mennesson, have left Paris, their home for the last five years, in search of adventure in Malaysia.**

By KEE HUA CHEE

**Y**ou need very good reason to abandon Paris and the euro for Kuala Lumpur and the ringgit. So why did Tengku Datin Paduka Setia Zatahah Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah and her husband Aubry Rahim Mennesson decide to relocate to Malaysia?

"We just wish to pursue our dream of working together by building our own business. We make a great team!" enthuses Tengku Zatahah.

"We share the same vision and passion in life but have different skills that complement each other. Aubry is more visionary, creative and strategic, and I'm more operational, quick-thinking and organised," she says.

Surely they can start their own business in Paris?

"The first time I came to Malaysia, I fell absolutely in love with this country. I always say I have fallen in love twice in my life: once with my wife, and the second time with Malaysia," says Mennesson.

According to this entrepreneurial couple, Malaysia is a land of opportunity and potential.

"In the olden days, the Malay peninsula was called the Golden Chersonese and for good reason!" grins Mennesson, proving he has done his homework.

The question is: What are they going to do here?

"We bandied many ideas like designer concept stores but nothing really got our juices flowing. Then one day, we were browsing in FNAC (the French version Virgin Megastore selling CDs, books, DVDs, etc) and saw colourful, eye-catching rows of cute boxes. I had no idea what they were and had to find out!" admits Tengku Zatahah.

The boxes turned out to be the new trend of gift-giving in France known as "gift box experiences". They offer little luxuries like spa treatments, weekend breaks, extreme sports, dining and other pamperings. Tengku Zatahah and her husband took to the concept immediately.

"We knew straight away that we could modify and localise this new concept. It would be our perfect business to bring to Malaysia. Here, there are amazing hotels, spas and restaurants perfect for our business model. Plus, we love travelling and discovering new experiences. As the saying goes, if you work in what you love, then it's not really work," smiles Mennesson.

## The ultimate gift experience

And so Originalo – The Ultimate Gift Experience, the first gift box concept in Malaysia, came to be. It will be launched on Nov 2 at Concorde Hotel, and Tengku Zatahah's father, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, will officiate the event.

The name Originalo refers to the originality of the gifts.

"The name also has symmetry with the two O's in our logo designed by Aubry. Our logo is



Above: Tengku Zatahah and husband Mennesson have started a gift box concept business called Originalo; (below) gift boxes come with a booklet of choices. — UU BAN/The Star



Left: Tengku Zatahah says she and Mennesson make a great team, and it's their dream to build a business together.

like the figure of 8, meant to inspire infinity and prosperity. We're very much into feng shui and we want our logo and brand name to reflect this,"

explains Tengku Zatahah.

And the tagline, "The Ultimate Gift Experience"?

"We want to share the dual purpose of being the ultimate gift for the giver and ultimate experience for the recipient," says Mennesson.

Enjoying Originalo is simplicity itself. When you receive the gift box containing a booklet detailing all the choices and a voucher, you choose the gift that appeals to you, call to book and present the voucher upon arrival, be it a luxurious hotel stay, beauty treatment or spa massage.

"Let's say your friend gives you the Originalo Beach Getaways. You browse through the booklet and select one of the experiences.

"The Hard Rock Hotel Penang package, for example, is a one-night stay for two guests in a Seaview Deluxe Balcony Room and includes buffet breakfast for two and complimentary Internet access. Simply call the hotel to make your reservation, arrive with the voucher and, voila! an unforgettable experience," grins Tengku Zatahah.

Originalo is currently offering seven types of gift boxes in three categories under Spa, Escape and Luxury.

For Spa Gifts, they have Spa Beauty, Spa Indulgence and Spa Relaxation. For Escape Gifts, they offer KL City Breaks, Charming Retreats and Beach Getaways. The most coveted is the Luxury Gifts, which offers Luxury Getaways. Prices start from RM180 to RM1,800, not exactly earth-shattering.

"The beauty of this gift is you no longer have to worry about what to buy. Originalo gifts are perfect for everyone and every budget. They make ideal gifts for parents, spouses, children and lovers and for every occasion from birthdays to festive seasons," declare the two.

"From past experience, and from what friends tell us, we realise there is a niche market for a gift that is hassle-free, makes the giver look good and promises an unforgettable experience for the recipient," Tengku Zatahah says.

Adds Mennesson, "If you've ever received a gift that doesn't grab you by your jugular or don't know what to do with, you'd understand why Originalo is heaven-sent. I mean, how many vases can you receive at a wedding? Now, for the first time, the recipient is given up to a dozen choices so you're bound to enjoy one of our quality experiences!"

Currently Originalo gift boxes are available online at [www.originalo.com.my](http://www.originalo.com.my) where one can shop in just a simple click and pay securely via CIMB Merchant Services.

## Tried & tested

**E**very item in Originalo has been vetted and tested by Tengku Datin Paduka Setia Zatahah Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah and her husband.

"We travelled across Malaysia to test potential partners to see if they lived up to the standard and quality we wanted Originalo to be associated with.

"We posted our opinions on our blog, *Frog + Princess Blog 'Travel in Style'*, to the envy of our friends in France, who sniped sarcastically that we returned to Malaysia so we could be on a permanent holiday.

"We had to keep reminding them this is our job!" grins Aubry Rahim Mennesson.

Originalo has over 100 quality partners and destinations in their list range from the West Coast to East Coast, Sabah to Sarawak.

"Originalo is positioned as the next generation lifestyle gifts," asserts Tengku Zatahah.

"We select only quality partners who believe in our vision and passion. Originalo is modelled after us and is based on our personalities. We dreamed the brand, we created it and we conceptualised it from A to Z.

"In fact, we thought of naming our business AZZ, after our names, Aubry and Zatahah, but that would not be so original, no?" laughs Tengku Zatahah.

