

Travel

Top luxury beach resorts

From a magical honeymoon destination to a favourite Hollywood haunt

APRIL 20, 2017 by: **Joanne O'Connor**

1 — North Island, Seychelles



It's the honeymoon destination of choice for A-listers and royalty, with its promise of pampered privacy in a magical Indian Ocean setting. Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge and George Clooney and Amal Alamuddin are among the high-profile couples to have sought sanctuary on North Island. It's no surprise, then, that this exclusive retreat earned more recommendations from our expert panel than anywhere else.

Eleven beachfront villas set the standard for "barefoot luxury", with thatched roofs, carved banua-wood beds, sunken marble baths and walls that slide open to catch the sea breezes. The resort is rightly proud of its conservation programme, which seeks to

restore the island's biodiversity by eliminating harmful non-indigenous wildlife and replacing it with endangered native species such as giant tortoises and fruit bats.

But what really sets this place apart is the highly personalised service, achieved through a ratio of two staff to every guest. Our experts particularly liked North Island's "no menu" policy, with meals being cooked to order. "A questionnaire ensures all your favourite foods and drinks are on site for your arrival: the best caviar, the finest champagne, even your own in-room larder," says Frances Geoghegan of Cleveland Collection. "It's the ultimate in luxury."

From £5,065 for a one-bedroom villa, all inclusive; [north-island.com](http://www.north-island.com/) (<http://www.north-island.com/>)

2 — Cheval Blanc St-Barth, Isle de France, St Barths



© Pierre Carreau

There's a distinctly Gallic flavour to this intimate hotel on one of the most glamorous islands in the French West Indies. Vintage French linens and furniture adorn the guest rooms, there's a Guerlain spa, and the acclaimed restaurant La Case de l'Isle specialises in French-influenced cuisine.

A few years ago the hotel was taken over by LVMH, the luxury goods group that also owns the Cheval Blanc Randheli in the Maldives and the Cheval Blanc Courchevel, but the verdict from regulars is that it has emerged from the transition in finer form than ever. Philippe Brown of Brown + Hudson applauds the “picture-perfect setting and impeccable attention to detail”. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the 40 elegant rooms, suites and bungalows, some of which have private pools, home cinema rooms and fitness suites.

From €660 for a Garden Room; stbarthisledefrance.chevalblanc.com (<http://stbarthisledefrance.chevalblanc.com/en>)

3 — La Co(o)rniche, France



© Vincent Bengold

This former hunting lodge was built on the Bay of Arcachon in the 1930s to cater for the French upper classes who flocked here for the health benefits of sea air and salt water. There's more than enough of both to go round at this characterful hotel, which sits on a strip of soft sand between pine forest and Atlantic Ocean, overlooking the Dune of Pyla, the highest in Europe. In 2010 designer Philippe Starck was enlisted to breathe new life into the hotel, and the result is as playful as you would expect, with modern sculptures, colourful flashes of Murano glass, a giant chess set and asymmetric mirrors — although

guest rooms are pleasingly understated. Norman Howe of Butterfield & Robinson praises the restaurant, which has “one of the most dramatic patios overlooking the sea that you will ever have the good fortune to dine on”.

Near Arcachon, Aquitaine; doubles from €275; [lacoorniche-pyla.com](http://www.lacoorniche-pyla.com/) (<http://www.lacoorniche-pyla.com/>)

4 — Laucala Island, Fiji

Owned by Red Bull billionaire Dietrich Mateschitz, this private island retreat has 25 plantation-style villas set among coconut groves and on coral sand beaches — and one of the highest staff-to-guest ratios in the world (350 employees to 80 visitors).

From \$6,000 for a one-bedroom villa, all inclusive; [laucala.com](http://www.laucala.com/) (<http://www.laucala.com/>)

5 — Amanpulo, Philippines

“This is the place to live out luxury desert island fantasies,” says James Jayasundera of Ampersand Travel. From the moment the private plane touches down on the island’s airstrip, you know you’re in for something special. Spend days windsurfing, sailing or scuba diving, relaxing in the spa or taking it easy in the hammock of your luxury casita.

From \$1,100 for a one-bedroom casita; [amanpulo.com](https://www.aman.com/resorts/amanpulo) (<https://www.aman.com/resorts/amanpulo>)

6 — Il Pellicano, Italy

Il Pellicano was a favourite haunt of Hollywood film stars in the 1960s, playing host to everyone from Charlie Chaplin to Henry Fonda. The hotel recently celebrated its 50th birthday and still retains an air of old-school glamour, with 50 elegant guest rooms and suites, a Michelin-starred restaurant and a beach club with heated seawater pool overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Near Porto Ercole, Tuscany; doubles from €450; [pellicanohotels.com](http://www.pellicanohotels.com/) (<http://www.pellicanohotels.com/>)

7 — Soneva Jani, Maldives

Jarrold Kyte of Steppes Travel is in no doubt that the newest addition to the Soneva stable of luxury beach retreats is set to make a big splash: “Kayak to the spa and cinema, watch the stars from the revolving roof of your villa by night, and in the morning wake up by whooshing down your own private slide into the Indian Ocean,” he says.

From \$1,870 for a one-bedroom Water Retreat; [soneva.com \(http://www.soneva.com/\)](http://www.soneva.com/)

8 — Xanadu Villas, Zanzibar

Sunset dhow cruises, snorkelling and paddle boarding are just a few of the laidback activities on offer at Xanadu Villas, which opened last summer on Zanzibar’s east coast. Six light and airy villas with private plunge pools are set in tropical gardens around a central pool and dining area, just steps away from a white-sand beach.

Near Dongwe; from \$600 for a one-bedroom villa; [xanadu-villas.com \(http://xanadu-villas.com/\)](http://xanadu-villas.com/)

9 — Birkenhead House, South Africa

The chance to spot whales from the balcony of your bedroom (between June and October) is just one of many reasons to check out this stylish family-run hotel on the outskirts of Hermanus. The atmosphere is relaxed, and the 11 suites have been designed with flair, combining contemporary art with antique furnishings.

Hermanus, Western Cape; from ZAR3,300 (£212) per person for a double room, all inclusive; [birkenheadhouse.com \(http://www.theroyalportfolio.com/birkenhead-house/overview/\)](http://www.theroyalportfolio.com/birkenhead-house/overview/)

10 — Lizard Island, Australia

Lizard Island is a national park that sits on Queensland’s Great Barrier Reef and can only be reached by private charter flight from Cairns. There are just 40 rooms and suites here,

and with a total of 24 white-sand beaches to choose from there's a good chance of finding a secluded spot for a gourmet picnic or some snorkelling.

150 miles north of Cairns; from A\$1,800 (£1,097) for a garden-view room, full board; [lizardisland.com.au](https://www.lizardisland.com.au/) (<https://www.lizardisland.com.au/>)

Photographs: Pierre Carreau; Vincent Bengold

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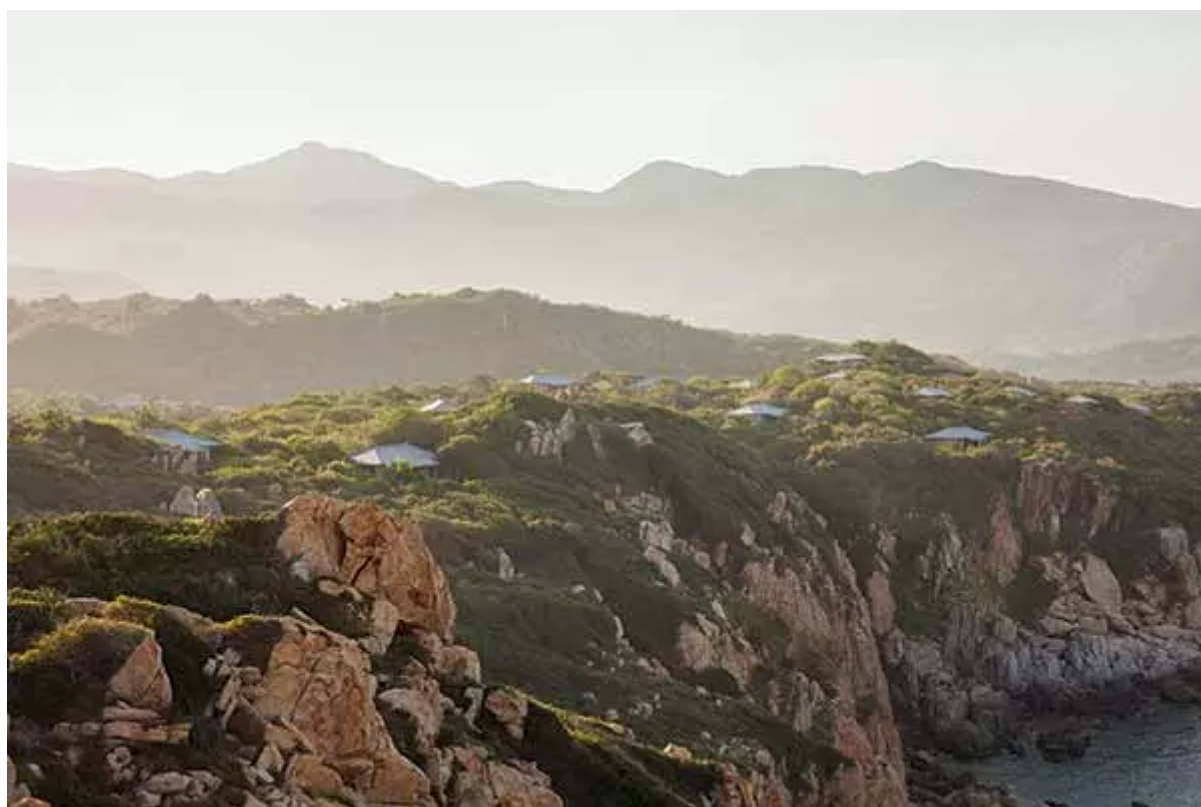
1 — Azura Quilalea, Mozambique

“Azura Quilalea is a destination where you arrive, unpack and instantly unwind,” says George Morgan-Grenville of Red Savannah. “Your private butler will organise a hammock for you under the most suitably shady tree, the spa team will pamper you with their unique African treatments, while the chefs serve the freshest seafood to you in stunning island locations.”

There are just nine villas on this beautiful private island in Mozambique’s Quirimbas Archipelago, including the secluded Villa Quilalea, perched on a clifftop, which has its own infinity pool and a step ladder down to the beach. The use of natural materials such as wood, rattan and stone creates a relaxed “castaway” vibe, but the service levels rival those of the most sophisticated five-star hotel.

Quilalea Island lies within a protected marine reserve, and the coral reef, just 20 metres offshore, offers “the most incredible snorkelling and scuba diving to be found anywhere in the Indian Ocean”, says Morgan-Grenville. There are no motorised water sports here but guests can enjoy kayaking in the mangroves or fishing and sailing in a traditional dhow.

Quilalea is a 25-minute helicopter transfer from Pemba; doubles from \$825 per person all inclusive; [azura-retreats.com \(http://www.azura-retreats.com/\)](http://www.azura-retreats.com/)



2 — Amanoi, Vietnam

Aman Resorts is renowned for its sleek design and polished service, and this remote outpost in the south of Vietnam is no exception. Elegant guest villas and pavilions with pagoda-style roofs are hidden among the trees above Vinh Hy Bay, against the mountainous backdrop of the Nui Chua national park. “It’s probably the best beach location in Vietnam,” says Christopher Wilmot-Sitwell of Cazenove + Loyd. “Lots to do or nothing at all.”

At the heart of the resort is the show-stealing infinity pool, seemingly jutting into the Eastern Sea, and the tranquil spa that sits on the edge of a lotus-filled lake and makes use of Vietnamese ingredients such as herbs, rice and coffee in its treatments. Guests can

book one of the two Spa Houses, which come with private treatment facilities including a banya and hammam.

Ninh Thuan Province; doubles from \$816, including airport transfers; [amanoi.com \(https://www.aman.com/resorts/amanoi\)](https://www.aman.com/resorts/amanoi)



3 — Onar, Andros, Greece

“Andros is perhaps my favourite Greek island,” says Michael Cullen of i-escape.com. “It’s off the standard island-hopping route, but just a two-hour ferry ride from Athens, and with a fabulous landscape of soaring mountains, deep valleys and untouched beaches.”

It’s on one of those beaches that Onar sits, hidden away from the rest of the world at the end of a long, bumpy track and surrounded by the lush Ahla wetlands.

Fifteen stone cottages and villas have been built in traditional Cycladic style, with simple rustic interiors, open fireplaces and private patios. The style is low-key and informal: there’s no pool or reception area, and meals are taken communally in the shade of a plane tree, with fruit and veg from Onar’s organic garden. Yoga sessions, boat trips and hikes into the surrounding hills can be organised.

From €170 for a one-bedroom cottage; [onar-andros.gr \(http://onar-andros.gr/el/\)](http://onar-andros.gr/el/)

4 — Song Saa, Cambodia

This pair of private islands in Cambodia's unspoilt Koh Rong archipelago was "Cambodia's first genuine luxury beach resort", according to Steve Kimber of Carrier. There are 24 villas dotted around the rainforest, on the beach and — the pick of the crop — on stilts over the ocean.

Song Saa is a 45-minute speedboat transfer from Sihanoukville; doubles from \$1,777, all-inclusive; [songsaa.com \(https://songsaa.com/\)](https://songsaa.com/)

5 — Pelican Point Lodge, Namibia

Spot seals, dolphins and flocks of flamingos from the private deck of your room in the former harbour control building at the tip of the remote Pelican Point peninsula. It's an unforgettable location, at the foot of a lighthouse, with the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the dunes of the Namibian desert on the other.

32km from Walvis Bay; doubles from NAD\$8,863 (£567), including dinner and breakfast; [pelicanpoint-lodge.com \(http://www.pelicanpoint-lodge.com/\)](http://www.pelicanpoint-lodge.com/)

6 — Fogo Island Inn, Newfoundland

Perched on stilts overlooking the Labrador Sound (aka "Iceberg Alley"), the Fogo Island Inn makes a bold design statement while offering a cosy retreat from the North Atlantic elements. With a cinema, art gallery, library and restaurant, it's also a real hub for the community on this rugged little isle off the coast of Newfoundland.

Closest international airport is Gander; doubles from C\$1,575 (£944) full-board; [fogoislandinn.ca \(http://fogoislandinn.ca/\)](http://fogoislandinn.ca/)

7 — Lupita Island, Tanzania

"Raw Africa in luxury on remotest Lake Tanganyika," is how Christopher Wilmot-Sitwell of Cazenove + Loyd describes this collection of 13 beautifully crafted cottages overlooking Africa's deepest lake. Snorkelling, fishing, beach picnics and boat trips are

among the activities on offer. “One for the intrepid,” says Wilmot-Sitwell, “and ideal for some R&R after a wild safari.”

Kipili, Lake Tanganyika; doubles from \$495 per person, full-board; lupitaisland.com (<https://lupitaisland.com/>)

8 — Hôtel & Spa des Pêcheurs, Corsica

The tiny private island of Cavallo lies off the coast of Corsica and is home to this chic retreat, with 50 bright and airy guest rooms, a spa with thalassotherapy pool, and a powdery white-sand beach. “This is an idyllic get-away-from-it-all beach resort,” says George Morgan-Grenville of Red Savannah.

Cavallo is a 15-minute boat transfer from Piantarella, Corsica; the hotel is open between May and September; doubles from €263; hoteldespecheurs.com (<http://hoteldespecheurs.com/>)

9 — Constance Tsarabanjina, Madagascar

The tiny volcanic island of Tsarabanjina is seriously off the beaten track, but those who make the effort to get there will be rewarded with total seclusion at a Robinson Crusoe-style hideaway with just 25 thatched bungalows and world-class diving. “It has rainbow reefs, and some of the most beautiful coral in the world,” says Frances Geoghegan of Cleveland Collection.

Tsarabanjina is a 90-minute speedboat transfer from the island of Nosy Be, which has a domestic airport; from €400 for a one-bedroom villa; [constancehotels.com](https://www.constancehotels.com/en/) (<https://www.constancehotels.com/en/>)

10 — Capella Lodge, Australia

Lord Howe Island is a tiny, crescent-shaped isle in the Tasman Sea, famed for its twin peaks, crystal-clear waters and great fishing and snorkelling. The best place to stay on the island is Capella Lodge, a contemporary beach-house haven of clean lines, bleached wood and floor-to-ceiling windows.

Travel

Best destinations for the family

From Nicaragua to Indonesia, these child-friendly resorts offer fun on-site activities



APRIL 20, 2017 by: **Joanne O'Connor**

1 — Mukul Resort, Nicaragua

Mukul put Nicaragua on the luxury travel map when it opened on the Costa Esmeralda four years ago, and it's now "arguably the best property in Central America", according to Philippe Brown of Brown + Hudson. "The beachfront villas with pools are perfect for families, along with an endless array of local adventures and an excellent kids' club," he adds.

Kul Kids runs an imaginative programme of events geared towards putting children in touch with the natural environment. Activities might include a hike through the rainforest to spot monkeys, collecting shells on the beach, releasing turtles back into their habitat or making Nicaraguan-style folk art. While the children are occupied, parents can take advantage of Mukul's impressive spa or 18-hole golf course.

There's accommodation to suit different budgets, from the charming wooden bohios, which take their inspiration from treehouses, to the spacious villas, which have kitchens, private pools and direct access to the stunning Manzanillo beach.

Near Tola, a 20-minute flight from Managua; from \$508 for a bohio sleeping two; from \$1,676 for a two-bedroom ocean-view villa sleeping four; [mukulresort.com](http://www.mukulresort.com/) (<http://www.mukulresort.com/>)



The adventure begins as soon as the floatplane touches down on a tranquil fiord off the west coast of Vancouver Island. This is the spectacular setting for the Clayoquot Wilderness Resort, a safari-style encampment of white “prospector” tents surrounded by rainforest, rocky beaches and rivers. From kayaking to horse riding, bear watching to rock climbing, the list of activities here is endless, and can be adapted for younger guests (minimum age is six). The encampment also includes a wooden cookhouse, spa tent, outdoor lounges with open fires and armchairs, trampoline, games and billiards tents, as well as a s’mores pit for after-dinner treats. In the guest tents, wooden floors, proper beds and vintage furnishings ensure that this never feels like roughing it.

Near Tofino; from C\$5,400 (£3,240) per adult and C\$2,700 (£1,620) per child for a three-night all-inclusive package in a tent sleeping four, including seaplane transfer from Vancouver; [wildretreat.com \(https://wildretreat.com/\)](https://wildretreat.com/)



3 — Nihiwatu, Indonesia

Nihiwatu was opened in 1988 by an American surfer to cater for the handful of intrepid travellers who came to the remote island of Sumba in search of the perfect wave. Almost 30 years on, and now under new ownership, the resort has evolved from rustic surf lodge to luxury retreat, with 28 thatched villas (all with plunge pool), a jungle spa, beachfront restaurant, equestrian centre and a boathouse offering a range of water sports.

There's no dedicated children's club but families are made to feel welcome, and adventurous younger guests will find plenty to keep themselves entertained. "Kids' surfing lessons, horse riding on the beach, sandcastle-building competitions and visits to the local turtle hatchery mean little ones are free to explore for their entire stay," says Tom Marchant of Black Tomato.

Sumba is a one-hour flight from Bali; from \$750 for a one-bedroom villa and \$950 for a two-bedroom villa, all inclusive; [nihiwatu.com \(http://www.nihiwatu.com/\)](http://www.nihiwatu.com/)

4 — Soneva Fushi, Maldives

Soneva Fushi was one of the pioneers of "barefoot luxury" in the Indian Ocean, and is now leading the field when it comes to catering for families with The Den, which George Morgan-Grenville of Red Savannah describes as "the best kids' club in the Maldives". The natural playground includes a pirate ship, two swimming pools, a Lego room, dress-up area, cinema and music room.

From \$1,410 for a one-bedroom villa; from \$1,534 for a villa sleeping four; [soneva.com/soneva-fushi \(http://www.soneva.com/soneva-fushi/\)](http://www.soneva.com/soneva-fushi)

5 — Martinhal, Portugal

This resort on a wild stretch of beach in the far west of the Algarve was designed with families in mind: there are play areas and child-friendly menus in the restaurants, and imaginative activities such as windsurfing and T-shirt designing for older children. Stay in a family room in the hotel or in a stylish self-catering house.

Near Sagres; from €185 for a double room and from €151 for a one-bedroom self-catering Garden House sleeping four; [martinhal.com \(https://www.martinhal.com/\)](https://www.martinhal.com/)

6 — Kinondo Kwetu, Kenya

"The owners' children live on site, so the property is nicely geared towards keeping children entertained," says Jarrod Kyte of Steppes Travel. Families staying at this small, family-run resort on the south coast of Kenya can take horseriding excursions on the

beach, try a kitesurfing lesson or visit the local skate park, which has been set up by the Swedish owners for local children.

Diani Beach; doubles from \$280 per person; family villa from \$210 per person, all inclusive; [kinondo-kwetu.com \(http://www.kinondo-kwetu.com/\)](http://www.kinondo-kwetu.com/)

7 — Daios Cove, Crete

Overlooking a private sandy bay in the north-east of Crete, this collection of stone-built villas straddles the line between stylish minimalism and family-friendly. In addition to a babysitting service, there's a crèche and kids' club, as well as supervised children's meal times. The resort recently opened 10 new sea-view suites, each sleeping up to five people.

Near Agios Nikolaos; from €271, based on two adults and one child sharing a Deluxe Sea View Room on B&B basis; [daioscovecrete.com \(http://www.daioscovecrete.com/\)](http://www.daioscovecrete.com/)

8 — Jumby Bay, Antigua

"Jumby Bay is the original luxury family resort in the Caribbean and still leading the field," says George Morgan-Grenville of Red Savannah. Accessible only by boat from Antigua, the car-free island features just 40 guest rooms and private villas, spread over 300 acres. Families can enjoy water sports, sailing and tennis on tap, as well as a kids' club providing age-tailored programmes.

Doubles from \$1,150, all inclusive; from \$120 per child (aged two to 12) sharing a room; [jumbybayisland.com \(http://jumbybayisland.com/\)](http://jumbybayisland.com/)

9 — Verdura Resort, Sicily

There's no chance of boredom setting in at this all-action resort, with its three golf courses, 60-metre infinity pool, cycle trails, water sports, tennis academy and acclaimed Juventus Summer Training Experience, which Jarrod Kyte of Steppes Travel describes as the "ultimate activity for football-obsessed children".

Near Sciacca; from £225 for a double and from £382 for a family suite; [rocfortehotels.com/verdura \(https://www.rocfortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/](https://www.rocfortehotels.com/verdura)

10 — Rocktail Beach Camp, South Africa

The extraordinary marine life of KwaZulu Natal is the main attraction at this laid-back camp, which has 17 luxurious tented rooms. Snorkelling and scuba diving, the chance to see turtles lay eggs in the sand and boat trips to spot dolphins, manta rays and whale sharks (October to March) are just some of the activities on offer.

Maputaland Forest; from ZAR2,900 (£185) per person, all inclusive; [wilderness-safaris.com/camps/rocktail-beach-camp](http://www.wilderness-safaris.com/camps/rocktail-beach-camp) (<http://www.wilderness-safaris.com/camps/rocktail-beach-camp>)

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1 — Hell Bay, Isles of Scilly

On a beautiful cove overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, Hell Bay is equally suited to a romantic escape or a family bucket-and-spade holiday. It's the only hotel on Bryher, the smallest and most rugged of the inhabited Isles of Scilly, an archipelago that lies some 30 miles off the tip of Cornwall.

The 25 suites are decorated in a breezy New England style in seaside shades of cream and blue, with Lloyd Loom furniture and contemporary artworks from some of Cornwall's leading artists. Most have sea views. One of the highlights of a stay here is the chance to dine on locally caught seafood in the hotel restaurant or rustic Crab Shack, which serves just three dishes: Bryher crab, mussels and scallops.

“The Isles of Scilly are vastly underrated and Hell Bay provides an incredibly relaxed ‘home away from home’ to explore these unusual islands,” says James Jayasundera of Ampersand. “There are probably only a handful of other properties in the UK that have such a picturesque setting but are as family-friendly and easy-going as Hell Bay.”

From £220 per person, half-board; [hellbay.co.uk](http://www.hellbay.co.uk/) (<http://www.hellbay.co.uk/>)



2 — The Colonsay Hotel, Inner Hebrides

This harbourside inn has been welcoming visitors to the Hebridean island of Colonsay for more than 250 years. The bar, with its open fires, deep sofas and array of malt whiskies, is still very much at the heart of local life, hosting occasional musical evenings when the islanders bring their instruments to play.

Locally caught seafood features prominently on the menu in the informal restaurant, which has harbour views and a wood-burning stove. The nine immaculate guest rooms are comfortable and homely, and many have views across to neighbouring Jura. Colonsay is famed for its beautiful white-sand beaches, the nearest of which is just a few minutes’ walk from the hotel.

*Colonsay is two hours and 15 minutes by ferry from Oban; doubles from £90;
[colonsayholidays.co.uk](http://www.colonsayholidays.co.uk) (<http://www.colonsayholidays.co.uk/>)*



3 — Tresanton, Cornwall

A stylishly converted cluster of houses on the edge of the pretty fishing village of St Mawes, Olga Polizzi's chic seaside retreat was a popular choice among our panel of experts. Most of the 30 rooms and suites have sea views, but the star of the show is the Forte Suite in Rock Cottage, which has a crow's nest terrace overlooking St Anthony's lighthouse.

The hotel prides itself on its relaxed, inclusive ambience, so there's a playroom, cinema and garden for children, as well as the Dogs' Bar, with open fire and board games, where dogs are welcome. Jarrod Kyte of Steppes Travel recommends signing up for one of the hotel's occasional nature retreats, run in collaboration with wildlife expert Fergus Beeley.

Doubles from £210; tresanton.com (<http://tresanton.com/>)

4 — Portmeirion, Wales

This private village on the Llyn Peninsula is known for its flamboyant Italianate architecture. Enjoy it after the day-trippers have left by checking into one of the two hotels or various self-catering cottages dotted around the village. Castell Deudraeth is the

slicker, more contemporary hotel, but for colourful exuberance and views of the Dwyryd Estuary, the Portmeirion Hotel is hard to beat.

Doubles from £104; [portmeirion-village.com](http://www.portmeirion-village.com/) (<http://www.portmeirion-village.com/>)

5 — Polurrian Bay Hotel, Cornwall

“This imposing Edwardian building has the trump card of a sandy, cliff-ringed cove at its feet, big enough for a game of football at low tide,” says Michael Cullen of i-escape.com. “There’s no road access, so you’ll often be sharing it with just the hotel guests.” The hotel is geared towards families, with free childcare and children’s activities.

Doubles from £105; [polurrianhotel.com](https://www.polurrianhotel.com/) (<https://www.polurrianhotel.com/>)

6 — The Three Chimneys, Skye

The formula at this renowned restaurant-with-rooms is deceptively simple: a menu that celebrates the produce of the Scottish isles, a handful of beautifully appointed suites with sea views, and a stunning setting on the shores of Loch Dunvegan.

Doubles from £345; [threechimneys.co.uk](http://www.threechimneys.co.uk/) (<http://www.threechimneys.co.uk/>)

7 — South Sands, Devon

Proof that “child-friendly” and “stylish” don’t have to be mutually exclusive, this boutique hotel on a beautiful sandy bay near Salcombe is the perfect base for a stress-free seaside holiday.

Doubles from £215; [southsands.com](http://www.southsands.com/) (<http://www.southsands.com/>)

8 — Blakeney Hotel, Norfolk

Watch the boats sailing by from the quayside terrace of this family-run hotel in one of Norfolk’s most popular coastal villages. Bedrooms are classic, with crisp white bed linen, antiques and views across the salt marshes to Blakeney Point. Children will love the games room and indoor pool.

Doubles from £180; [blakeney-hotel.co.uk](http://www.blakeney-hotel.co.uk) (<http://www.blakeney-hotel.co.uk/>)

9 — Hix Townhouse, Dorset

This eight-bedroom hideaway, the first hotel from chef Mark Hix, is a stone's throw from the seafront in Lyme Regis in his native Dorset. Decor is eclectic and colourful, and the luxury breakfast hampers come from the Hix Oyster & Fish House, a short walk away.

Doubles from £135; guests receive a 10 per cent discount at the Hix Oyster & Fish House; [hixrestaurants.co.uk](http://www.hixrestaurants.co.uk) (<http://www.hixrestaurants.co.uk/>)

10 — The Nare, Cornwall

The Nare describes itself as a “country house hotel by the sea” and prides itself on its “old-fashioned service”, which sees loyal guests returning year after year to this beautiful stretch of coastline on the Roseland Peninsula.

Doubles from £290; [narehotel.co.uk](http://www.narehotel.co.uk/welcome) (<http://www.narehotel.co.uk/welcome>)

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1 — Soori, Indonesia

“A sublimely accomplished architectural creation in a wild natural setting,” is James Jayasundera of Ampersand Travel’s verdict on this contemporary collection of 48 villas with private pools in south-west Bali.

Designed, owned and operated by renowned Singaporean architect Soo K. Chan and his wife Ling Fu, the resort deftly fuses local materials such as volcanic lava stone with a clean, contemporary aesthetic, and aspires to be as environmentally sensitive as possible. Villas are clad in cool grey sandstone, with sliding glass doors to frame views of the black-sand beach and the terraced rice fields. Reflective ponds and wooden screens create a serene, temple-like atmosphere.

There's an infinity pool, a spa offering meditation and acupuncture treatments, and two restaurants serving Indonesian and European-influenced food. Guests can choose from an innovative selection of "journeys", which include craft workshops, Balinese dancing lessons, horse riding on the beach and visits to food markets and temples, including the spectacular Tanah Lot, a 16th-century Hindu sanctuary built on a rocky outcrop a 20-minute drive from the resort.

Kerambitan, Tabanan; villas from \$655; [sooribali.com \(http://sooribali.com/\)](http://sooribali.com/)

2 — Playa Vik and Bahia Vik, Uruguay



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The once sleepy fishing village of José Ignacio has been Latin America's epicentre of cool for several years now, thanks largely to the efforts of financier and art collector Alexander Vik, whose trio of hip hotels has become the destination of choice for the A-list crowd. His two architecturally avant-garde beach properties, Playa Vik and Bahia Vik, were personally recommended by no fewer than five members of our panel.

"The central building of Playa Vik is aptly nicknamed 'The Sculpture' for its gravity-defying structure comprising titanium and floor-to-ceiling glass that captures José Ignacio's magnificent coastline," says Tom Marchant of Black Tomato.

Meanwhile Frances Geoghegan of Cleveland Collection praises sister property Bahia Vik, which opened three years ago: “Not only is the wild rugged beach a knockout, the property is spectacular — lots of glass and wood to bring the outside in, and all rooms are individually designed.”

Playa Vik (pictured above) doubles from \$600; Bahia Vik doubles from \$550;
[vikretreats.com \(http://vikretreats.com/\)](http://vikretreats.com/)

3 — Tri, Sri Lanka



This tranquil resort set a new benchmark for design and sustainability in Sri Lanka when it opened just over a year ago on the shores of the beautiful Lake Koggala. The creation of British photographer Robert Drummond and his wife Lara Baumann, a yoga instructor, it combines the passions and expertise of both, with a strong emphasis on visual harmony and wellbeing.

At the hub of the resort is a water tower encircled by 11 suites, many of which have a private garden or plunge pool. Innovative use has been made of local materials, from granite to cinnamon sticks, and there's a strong ecological slant, with living walls, green roofs and solar panels. Guests can try their hand at water sports on the lake, take a trip into the nearby colonial town of Galle, or book a yoga session or Ayurvedic treatment.

Near Galle; doubles from \$270, half-board; trilanka.com (<http://trilanka.com/>)

4 — Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo Island, Australia

On a secluded clifftop overlooking a rugged stretch of coast, this sleek retreat “looks like it could be the lair of a James Bond villain”, says Norman Howe of Butterfield & Robinson. However, with its strong commitment to preserving the natural environment of an island nicknamed the “Australian Galápagos”, this resort is definitely on the side of the good guys.

Kingscote, Kangaroo Island, South Australia; doubles from AUS\$1,200 (£670) per person; southernoceanlodge.com.au (<http://southernoceanlodge.com.au/>)

5 — Keemala, Phuket, Thailand

The Bird’s Nest Pool Villas at this lush, restorative eco-retreat are the ultimate escapist fantasy: cocoon-like structures that seem to perch in the rainforest canopy above Kamala beach. Similar flair has been brought to the design of the canopied Tent Pool Villas and Clay Pool Cottages. The bright lights of Patong are just a 15-minute drive away.

Near Patong beach; from THB15,575 (£360) for a one-bedroom cottage; [keemala.com](https://www.keemala.com/) (<https://www.keemala.com/>)

6 — The Nam Hai, Vietnam

Recently taken over by Four Seasons, this resort offers a serene, contemporary design, which takes its inspiration from Vietnamese temples, and one of the most spectacular beaches in Southeast Asia. The cultural highlights of Hoi An, the imperial city of Hue and the temple complex of My Son are within easy striking distance.

Near Hoi An; from \$574 for a one-bedroom villa; [fourseasons.com/hoian](http://www.fourseasons.com/hoian) (<http://www.fourseasons.com/hoian/>)

7 — Borgo Egnazia, Italy

There's a movie-set quality to this collection of white-stone villas and town houses, built to resemble an authentic Apulian village rising from the olive groves. Choose between an elegant suite in La Corte (the main hotel), a smart house in Il Borgo (the village) or an outlying villa with pool. There are two beach clubs and a spa, and the prestigious San Domenico golf course next door.

53km from Brindisi, Puglia; doubles from €190; borgoegnazia.com (<http://borgoegnazia.com/>)

8 — Faena Hotel, US

Gilded columns, floor-to-ceiling murals, elaborate chandeliers and red velvet drapes set the tone at this bold and theatrical hotel, which has brought new life to a once neglected neighbourhood of Miami Beach. A huge spa, gym, cabaret theatre, Argentine-style steak restaurant and the recently completed Faena Forum arts and performance centre, designed by Rem Koolhaas, have made the district a destination in its own right.

Miami Beach; doubles from \$500; [faena.com/miami-beach/](http://www.faena.com/miami-beach/) (<http://www.faena.com/miami-beach/>)

9 — Halcyon House, Australia

This former surfer motel in Cabarita Beach has been reinvented as a breezy and colourful boutique hotel. James Lohan of Mr and Mrs Smith praises the “innate sense of nostalgia, which begins at check-in, when guests are greeted with a scoop of home-made ice cream, and carries through to the interiors of 1960s patterned prints and unique retro furniture”.

Cabarita Beach, New South Wales; doubles from AUS\$550 (£335); halcyonhouse.com.au (<https://halcyonhouse.com.au/>)

10 — Annandale, New Zealand

There are just four luxury houses to choose from at this working coastal farm overlooking the Pacific Ocean, ranging from the cosy Shepherd's Cottage to the spacious 19th-century Homestead. But the star of the show is Seascape, which George Morgan-

Grenville of Red Savannah describes as “a sexy and secluded glass-panelled waterfront hideaway for two, which overlooks a private bay”.

Near Christchurch, South Island; Seascape from NZ\$3,395 (£1,905); [annandale.com \(http://www.annandale.com/\)](http://www.annandale.com/)

Photograph: Cristobal Palma

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Pink Sand 2017: the panel

The tour operators and travel agents who chose our 50 best beach hotels and resorts



APRIL 20, 2017

The 50 beach hotels and resorts featured in our [Pink Sand guide 2017 \(https://www.ft.com/pinksand\)](https://www.ft.com/pinksand) were suggested by an expert panel of leading tour operators and travel agents, who were selected by the FT's travel editor, **Tom Robbins**, and are detailed below.

Their picks are entirely based on personal experience – no hotel paid to be included. Prices given are per night unless otherwise stated, and based on double occupancy.

Philippe Brown

Founder of Brown + Hudson
brownandhudson.com

Michael Cullen

Director of hotels at i-escape
i-escape.com

Andrew Dunn

Founder of Scott Dunn

scottdunn.com

Frances Geoghegan

Owner of Cleveland Collection and Africa Travel

clevelandcollection.co.uk; africatravel.com

Norman Howe

Chief executive of Butterfield & Robinson

butterfield.com

James Jayasundera

Founder of Ampersand Travel

ampersandtravel.com

Steve Kimber

Managing director of Carrier

carrier.co.uk

Jarrold Kyte

Product director of Steppes Travel

steppestravel.co.uk

James Lohan

Co-founder of Mr and Mrs Smith

mrandmrssmith.com

Tom Marchant

Co-founder of Black Tomato

blacktomato.com

George Morgan-Grenville

Founder of Red Savannah

redsavannah.com

Christopher Wilmot-Sitwell

Co-owner of Cazenove + Loyd

cazloyd.com