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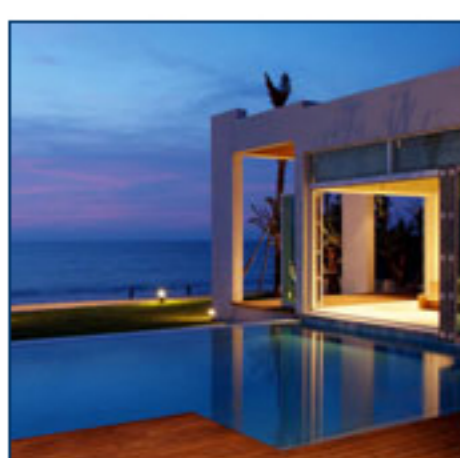
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Travel
Asia's Sumptuous Resort Spots

Lauren Sherman 02.21.08, 6:00 PM ET



While flying coach and eating a continental breakfast might satisfy the average traveler, those seeking an exceptional experience want much more. This includes seemingly infinite vistas, impeccable service and lavish living spaces.

In other words, they expect nothing but the best.

That's why Asia has become a stomping ground for top-tier resort-goers. From hilltop suites to stilted villas above blue lagoons, there's a wide range of luxurious accommodations to satisfy those looking to escape as well as those in search of one-of-a-kind experiences.

In Pictures: Asia's Sumptuous Resort Spots

"Asian resorts set the standard years ago for what the luxury traveler wants," says Ken Fish, CEO of New York City-based luxury consultancy Absolute Travel. "Even if they're visiting a remote destination, they expect the accommodations to be deluxe, never adequate."

The newest entrant to the luxury club might be the **Banyan Tree resort** on the island of Hainan, which is set to open in April. Its guests will not only enjoy typical amenities—like a gourmet restaurant, plasma televisions and a full-service spa—they'll also get to sleep in the first resort in the country to feature only villas with private pools. That means that each of the private 49 villas has its own swimming pool, as well as a garden and an outdoor terrace for dining. What's more, guests will have the opportunity to sample the local culture of Sanya, known as "Oriental Hawaii."

Travelers looking for other beachfront accommodations are returning to Indonesia. Ashley Isaacs Ganz, founder of and president of Artisans of Leisure, a New York-based luxury tour operator, says four years after the disastrous tsunami that took the lives of 225,000 people, travelers are beginning to feel comfortable returning to those places affected, including Bali.

And along with rich culture, beautiful beaches and pristine accommodations, Indonesian resorts offer decadent dining.

"Almost everyone who books through us considers themselves a foodie," says Ganz. "They choose destinations—like Indonesia—where they can experience five-star restaurants, take cooking classes and learn about the culture through the food."

Succulent Spots
 At Alila Manggis in Bali, guests participate in half-, two- or five-day sessions, half of which is spent cooking—preparing satays, sambals and traditional sweets—and the other half is spent learning the cultural and

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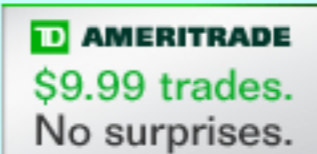
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Attention to all things culinary is also important in Japan. Windsor Toya guests might be blown away by the resort's magnificent hilltop views, two 18-hole golf courses, full-service spa and mineral hot springs. But what they're usually raving about are the property's 12 restaurants, which range from modern Japanese to French, Italian and East Asian, all prepared with local ingredients.

It's these kinds of experiences that make Asia's luxury resorts exceptional. From a yoga resort in the hills of Bhutan to a spa in a Vietnamese village, it's easy to find what you're looking for.

"The world is a much smaller place now," says Bradley Cocks, a senior vice president of Asia-Pacific travel at the Kiwi Collection, a Vancouver-based travel Web site with satellite offices in London and Sydney. "Asia has the history and culture that frequent travelers crave."

In Pictures: Asia's Sumptuous Resort Spots



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