

INSPIRATION

14 ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

Ventana Big Sur, An Alila Resort

The most romantic destinations in the world – from an off-the-grid escape in French Polynesia to a lakeside cabin in Sweden

by LAURA CHUBB AND FRANCESCA SYZ



1. BIG SUR, CALIFORNIA

For the outdoorsy



mountains and crashing ocean views has drawn everyone from bohemian writers (Henry Miller) to Hollywood heavyweights (Steve McQueen), seeking isolation in its eucalyptus-scented heart. Is there anything more seductive than [hiking](#) hand-in-hand to remote, wooded waterfalls or discovering your own dramatic, deserted [beach](#)? At Alila Ventana, which sprawls across a Big Sur mountain meadow, suites have a rustic-luxe, cabin-esque vibe. When you've finished gazing over the Pacific from your balcony hammock (roomy enough for two), try a couple's treatment in a forest-facing spa cabana, plunge into the open-air Japanese baths, or take a dip in the clothing-optional communal pool.

Address: Ventana Big Sur, 48123 Highway 1, Big Sur, CA 93920, USA

Telephone: +1 831 667 2331

Website: ventanabigsur.com

Prices: Doubles from about £500



2. KYOTO, JAPAN



For city romance

From the weeping willows and paper lanterns of the historic Gion district to serene, manicured gardens and tinkling temple bells, Kyoto is a completely charming urban retreat. The antithesis of frenetic, futuristic Tokyo, it's an immersion into the romance of a bygone Japan. And that romance really ramps up when you take a boat ride along the Oi River, where city streets are slowly transposed with misty, wooded hills. This is the only way to access Hoshinoya, a singularly elegant ryokan group. Though the newer [Tokyo](#) version recently won a place in our Hot List, it's at the [Kyoto](#) outpost that you'll find the distinctive grace and tranquillity of Japan distilled. Moss-covered paths curve around sculpted maples and cedars; guest pavilions are exactly designed, with sliding paper screens opening onto peaceful forest views. Better yet, bathrooms have deep, cypress tubs, with seasonal herbs provided to infuse your soak.

Address: Hoshinoya, 11-2, Arashiyama Genrokuzancho, Nishikyo-ku, Kyoto-shi, Kyoto 616-0007, Japan

Telephone: +81 50 3786 1144

CREDIT: HOSHINO RESORTS



3. SANDAT GLAMPING, BALI

The glamping getaway

Bali's signature barefoot luxury meets whimsical romance at this tented boutique spot, set among bright-green rice fields close to Ubud. Cuddling up under canvas here is less lumpy groundsheets and roof leaks, more canopy beds and private decks. And with each tent encircled by jungly garden, couples can relax on rattan loungers by their own pool in utter privacy. Dreamy candlelit dinners are served here, too, under the stars and away from prying eyes. A daily-changing Indonesian menu makes the most of regional ingredients, paired with wines and Champagne. Mornings might begin with sun salutations at the on-site bamboo yoga pavilion and afternoons should most definitely involve the bar's signature Italian Spritz.



Telephone: +62 361 9083 222

Website: glampingsandat.com

Prices: Tents from about £199

CREDIT: STEFANO SCATÀ



4. HAMILTON ISLAND, AUSTRALIA



right beside Heart Reef (exactly as it sounds: a perfectly heart-shaped coral reef). Because Hamilton Island isn't for your typical doe-eyed duo – more for those possessing an affinity with the Australian fixation for flinging yourself into adrenalin-pumping stuff. The immaculate waters of the Great Barrier Reef offer world-class dive sites to discover together, while the island's off-road trails provide a white-knuckle rush deep into the bush. After a thrilling helicopter ride over this insanely Eden-esque landscape, daredevils can decompress at Qualia, a smart property on its own peninsula. It has 60 secluded one-bedroom, glass-walled pavilions, with private sun decks for gazing over the water – some with their own infinity-edged pool.

Address: Qualia, Great Barrier Reef 20, Whitsunday Boulevard, Hamilton Island, Queensland 4803, Australia

Telephone: +61 2 9433 3349

Website: qualia.com.au

Prices: Pavilions from about £1,000



5. CASA MALCA, TULUM

For bohemian chic

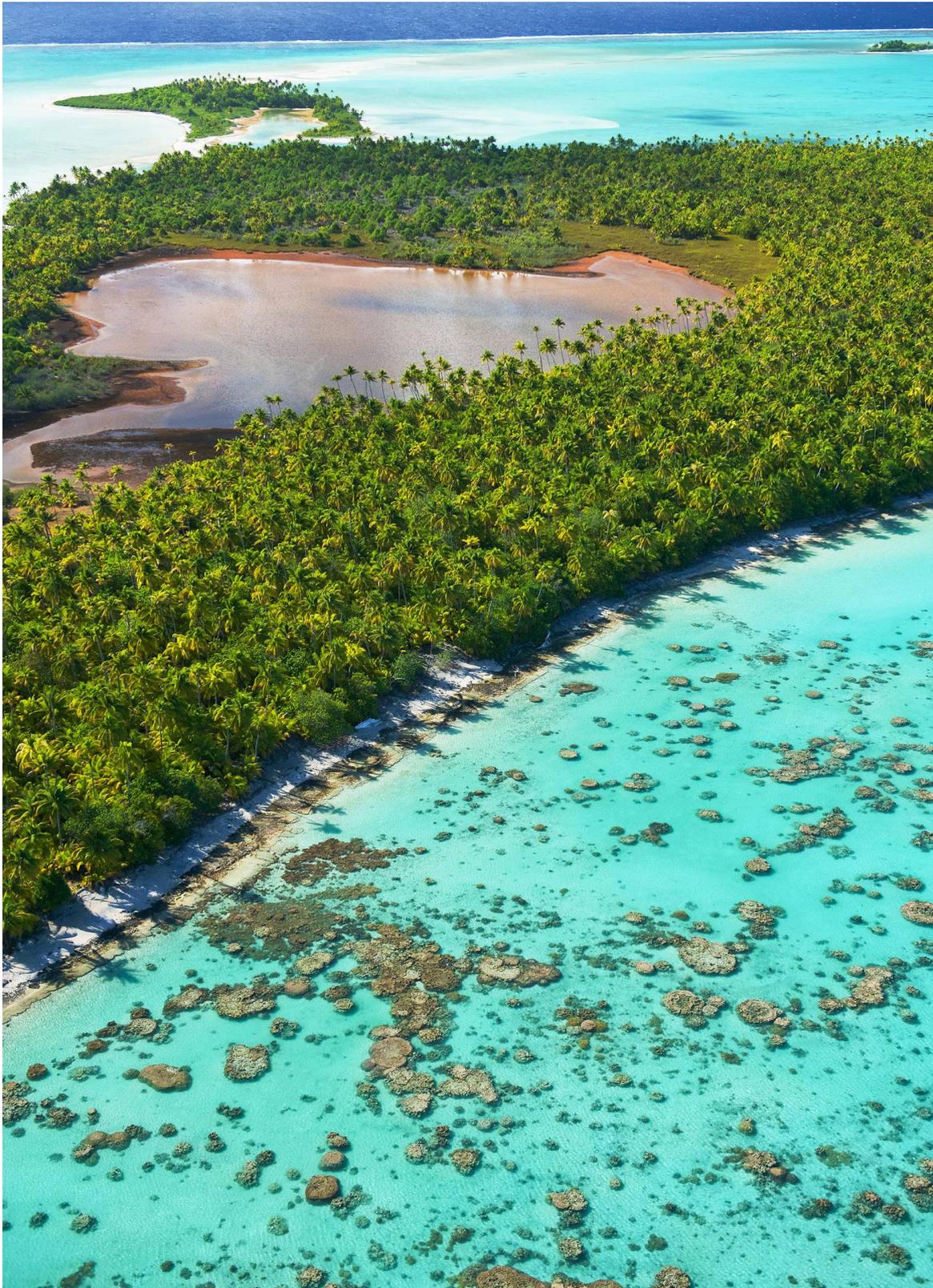
Hippie types can let their free spirits fly in [Tulum](#), promised land of designer yoga, spiritual jungle journeys and ancient-temple-fringed sands. And there isn't a more 'Tulum' place to stay than Casa Malca, a former hacienda of Pablo Escobar's, and now a [boutique hotel](#) highly curated by socialite art dealer Lio Malca. Down a dirt path and away from the scrums of man-buns and juiced-up goddesses, here beach suites face a quiet stretch of powder-white sand; all windows point to the [Caribbean](#). The hotel itself is like one giant immersive art exhibition; the entrance has a huge door carved out of tree trunks, framed by curtains stitched from vintage wedding gowns, between which dangle two swings made of antique furniture. As Lio says, it's about 'connecting with yourself and the wild' as well as 'luxury and art'.

Address: Casa Malca, Km 9,5 Carretera Tulum — Boca Paila, Tulum 77780, Mexico

Telephone: +521 984 167 7154

Website: casamalca.com





6. THE BRANDO, FRENCH POLYNESIA





exclusive hideaway on a private [South Pacific](#) island (30 miles north of Tahiti, but accessible only by six-seater plane). Marlon Brando bought Tetiaroa atoll in 1967 and, decades later, set about creating this sustainable, utopian spot, where nature alone provides both decoration and diversion. Smart, thatched dwellings tucked among coconut palms each have their own strip of sand, infinity pool and outdoor tub. The pristine lagoon and blindingly white beach are yours – all yours! – to explore. A hefty all-inclusive rate encompasses daily spa treatments, Champagne, food, excursions and more. (Be sure to make eyes at each other over French chef Guy Martin’s Michelin-grade feasts.) With only 35 villas on the entire island, intimacy comes guaranteed.

Address: Teti’aroa Private Island, Arue Tahiti

Telephone: +689 40 866 300

Website: thebrando.com

Prices: One-bedroom villas from about £2,850 (two-night minimum)



7. CAVAS WINE LODGE, ARGENTINA





Mendoza's winelands, is nothing short of nirvana. Adobe-style rooms tucked between vines could hardly be more romantic: whether lolling in your private plunge pool, getting steamy in the roll-top bath, or snuggling by the log fire on your own roof terrace, with sweeping, snow-dusted Andean views (of course). Clinking generous splashes of homegrown vintages, paired with the daily-changing, seasonal menu in the chandelier-strewn restaurant, you might think you've hit peak ostentatious. But you'd be wrong: leave that to the Moorish-Roman-style [spa](#), where both of you will be scrubbed, wrapped and bathed in lotions and potions made from regional grapes.

Address: Cavas Wine Lodge, Costaflores s/n, Cobos, 5507 Lujan de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina

Telephone: +54 261 456 1748

Website: cavaswinelodge.com

Prices: Vineyard villas from about £530



8. FJALLNAS RESERVE, SWEDEN

The winter retreat

For a truly magical [winter](#) experience, head to the Fjällnäs Reserve in the far north of [Sweden](#). The refurbished Fjällnäs hotel, built as a retreat for Swedish royalty in 1882, reopened in 2009 along with a number of new lakeside [cabins](#) and [mountain](#) huts, each a temple to the best in [Scandinavian](#) design. For deerskin-wrapped Nordic cosiness at its finest, book a beautifully furnished, contemporary cabin with a wood-burning stove and settle in for a week of cross-country [skiing](#), sleigh rides with huskies and night-time forays into the forest-filled wilderness to see the Northern Lights. Back at base, the Mii Gullo Spa offers stress-relieving, circulation-boosting treatments and the restaurant serves restorative local cuisine in a romantic, low-lit dining room. There's even a non-denominational chapel should you feel the urge to tie the knot.

Address: Fjällnas Reserve, Malmagen, Tanndalen, Sweden 84098

Telephone: +46 684 230 30

Website: fjallnas.se



9. JUMBY BAY, ANTIGUA

The spa retreat

Accessed only by boat, the secluded, car-free [private-island](#) hideaway of Jumby Bay (*pictured above*), two miles off the coast of [Antigua](#), offers the quintessential [Caribbean](#) experience. Reopened in October 2017 after a major overhaul, Jumby Bay has re-emerged with totally revamped, contemporary-colonial-style rooms, two new restaurants and the Jumby Bay Spa. The [spa](#), set close to the beach, is open to the elements, with five treatment rooms that open onto private terraces. The signature treatments use ingredients taken straight from the garden; one of the highlights is a treatment that involves lying in a soft, handmade hammock while a therapist focuses on pressure points in your head, back, hands and feet to release tension. You can then amble over to your thatched *bohio* (hut) on the beach, or to one of the many hammocks strung up between the palm trees. The resort is good for creative little extras: to help you enjoy the astonishing night sky, staff will pack a [Champagne](#)

treatments (not to generalise), they can learn how to make everything from ceviche to Caribbean lobster bisque.

Address: Jumby Bay, Long Island, Antigua

Telephone: +1 268 484 6072

Website: oetkercollection.com

Prices: Seven nights from £4,245 per person in a Rondavel Room



10. LA MAMOUNIA, MARRAKECH

Classic glamour

If you have ever been to [Marrakech](#) in the height of summer, you will appreciate how much nicer it is to be there in spring, with the warm, bright days and chilly nights. The hotel scene has grown rampantly in recent years, but our favourite – and by far

of gardens just inside the walls of the Old City, the [hotel](#) has retained the feel of a palace but added a contemporary theatricality to its accommodation (which now includes three three-bedroom riads with their own pools), plus four restaurants, five bars and a Salon de Thé. There's also a glorious new spa with a traditional hammam, indoor and outdoor pools, treatments by Valmont Cosmetics and a [yoga](#) pavilion. Faultless service is still the rule, whether staff are serving cocktails on your private terrace, organising a [shopping](#) trip in the medina or taking you into the Atlas Mountains for lunch.

CHECK DATES AND BOOK A ROOM AT LA MAMOUNIA NOW

Address: La Mamounia, Avenue Bab Jdid, Marrakech 40040, Morocco

Telephone: +212 5243 88600

Prices: Doubles from about £350

[La Mamounia hotel review](#)



PLACES TO STAY

La Mamounia hotel review

CREDIT: GUILLAUME DE LAUBIER



11. FOUR SEASONS RESORT SEYCHELLES



Island indulgence

A remote hillside retreat overlooking the bay of Petite Anse on the south-west coast of Mahé, the Four Seasons Resort [Seychelles](#) has 67 stilted villas and suites that feel like tree houses, peeping out from the jungle canopy of coconut, mango, jackfruit and cinnamon trees. All the obligatory features of the luxury 'Robinson Crusoe' experience are in place – infinity-edged plunge [pools](#), open-air showers, glass-walled bathrooms and expansive outdoor living areas – but taken to another level. The hilltop spa has eight treatment rooms, and its spa menu incorporates island herbs and spices including cinnamon, frangipani and lemongrass, as well as locally made herbal tonics and organic teas. A good choice for couples is the deeply relaxing and hydrating Coco de Mer ritual, involving body scrubs, wraps, a bathing ritual and a massage using whipped massage cream. An [ocean](#)-facing yoga room, connected to the spa by a timber walkway, is available for private sessions from dawn till dusk.

Address: Four Seasons Resort, Petite Anse, Mahe Island, Seychelles

Telephone: +248 4 393 000

per person.



12. CAS GASI, IBIZA

Island chic

As insiders will tell you, there's a lot more to [Ibiza](#) than meets the eye. Go off the beaten track even a fraction and you will discover a world of sleepy hill villages, wild forests, rambling orchards and crumbling farm houses. Visit in spring and a further surprise awaits: almond trees in full bloom, covering great swathes of the interior, with entire valleys exploding into glorious white and pink blossom. All this is complemented by an appealing combination of warm days and chilly nights. Front-row seats for this extraordinary natural show are available at Cas Gasi, a 12-room property that spills down a hillside smothered in almond, fig and carob trees and which prides itself on being a hotel 'for people who don't like hotels'. Since opening in 1998, Cas Gasi has become popular with high-profile guests who love its secluded

avoid having to open up her own house on the island. Run by a Spanish-German couple as a small, eco-friendly hotel, it has bedrooms in the main building and in converted barns and stables. Cas Gasi is adept at meeting guests' individual needs: if you want romantic meals for two in a secluded location, no problem; should you feel like dining around the big farmhouse table with your hosts, that's fine too. The hotel's central location means that nothing is very far away; getting to the beautiful village of [Santa Gertrudis](#) takes five minutes in a car or 40 minutes on foot, and the excellent beach at Salinas is a 15-minute drive away. There is also a small spa offering superb treatments including the knockout 'Ibiza Relax Massage'. The estate produces all its own organic vegetables, fruit, olive oil and free-range eggs, and the meat and fish comes from local farmers and fishermen.

Address: Cas Gasi Boutique Hotel, Camino Viejo de San Mateu, Santa Gertrudis, Ibiza

Telephone: +34 971 197 700

Website: casgasi.com

Prices: Doubles from about £350

Our guide to [Santa Gertrudis, Ibiza](#)



ISLANDS

Santa Gertrudis: Ibiza's loveliest village



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Chumbe Island view from the top of the lighthouse. #InToAfrica by @nazyxo 📍

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If you're looking for low-impact luxury on holiday and love snorkelling, Chumbe Island Coral Park, a tropical paradise just off the coast of Zanzibar in Tanzania, is spectacular. One of just nine destinations singled out by [The Long Run](#) organisation for their conservation efforts, Chumbe is a rare example of a still-pristine shallow-reef coral eco-system in an otherwise heavily over-fished and over-exploited area. Its coral gardens are some of the finest in the world, and the whole island and its waters have been designated a marine sanctuary and forest reserve. With seven palm-thatched bungalows designed for maximum comfort and minimum impact, the island never feels crowded; and it is a 30-second walk from your hammock to the water's edge. Each bungalow, decorated with African art and colourful fabrics, is self-sufficient; to supply fresh water, rainfall is captured on the roof and passed through a filtration system. The water is hand-pumped by staff through a solar-powered heating system to produce hot water for showers and hand basins. There are also composting loos. Walkways and nature trails are not artificially lit at night so as not to disturb the breeding and feeding patterns of nocturnal animals. Instead, guests are provided with solar-powered torches. Every aspect of Chumbe Island has been carefully considered, from the Zanzibarian, Indian and African food served in the communal visitors' centre to the outreach programme which has trained fishermen as park rangers to ensure local people are involved in protecting the reef.

Address: Chumbe Island, Zanzibar

Telephone: +255 777 413 232

Website: chumbeisland.com

Prices: Doubles from about £230



14. THE MAHARAJAS' EXPRESS, INDIA



Romance by rail

There is something irresistibly romantic about luxury train travel. Add [India](#) to the mix and you've got an experience guaranteed to dazzle. In the heyday of the maharajas it was not unusual for royalty to travel with their furniture – four-poster beds, thrones, you name it. This is certainly the look the new Maharajas' Express is going for. One of the only luxury trains offering itineraries that cross India's state borders, it has launched 'Royal India', a seven-day epic journey from [Delhi](#) to [Mumbai](#), taking in Agra, Ranthambore, Jaipur, Bikaner, Jodhpur, Udaipur (*pictured above*) and Vadodara along the way.

Among the highlights is a decadent Champagne lunch on a hillock overlooking the Taj Mahal, a tiger-spotting jeep [safari](#) in Ranthambore National Park and [elephant](#) polo matches in Jaipur culminating in a Champagne dinner. Life on board is all about comfort. All the cabins and suites are wonderfully regal with huge windows, comfortable beds, LCD TV's and DVD players; but if your feeling particularly flush, book the two-bedroom Presidential Suite, which occupies an entire carriage and has a living room big enough for several comfortable sofas and a dining table. (The junior suite is also surprisingly roomy and much more reasonably priced.) Other



Address: No address

Telephone: +44 20 7487 9111

Website: greavesindia.com

Prices: Greaves India offers a package that includes seven days on the Maharajas' Express from £8,850 per couple, including international flights, hotel accommodation in Delhi and Mumbai and six nights on an all-inclusive basis in a double/twin suite on the Maharajas' Express.

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ROMANTIC BREAKS

Rooms with a view

CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES

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