



Banyan Tree Ringha Hotel, Yunnan, China

15 hot favourites

Luxury travel buyers share their personal favourite Asian villa, along with additional selections based on most-frequently named Asian villas in a survey conducted by *TTG Asia Luxury* and *Luxperience*

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Amanpulo, Pamalican Island, the Philippines

The exclusive island-resort Amanpulo on the secluded Pamalican Island in Palawan raises the standards of the Philippine hospitality scene by several notches. The deserted island setting evokes a Robinson Crusoe feel, but with chartered turbo-prop plane access and uber-luxurious amenities, it is anything but.

Ample thought has gone into the layout and architecture of this sybaritic Philippine resort, which comprises 40 casitas set beside the beach, among the treetops or on the hillside overlooking the turquoise Sulu Sea. Each casita is designed to resemble traditional Filipino *bahay kubo* huts, but the interiors are bedecked with wood flooring, rattan furnishings and a marble-floor bathroom, with wooden sun decks for relaxation and private pools in the larger villas. Private electric buggies are provided for guests to explore the island at leisure.

Fringed by feathery white sands and crystal-line waters teeming with marine life in all directions, this bow-shaped island offers plenty of activities – diving, snorkeling, fishing, etc – but those seeking a slower pace can always seek out a pampering spa treatment or lounge in the library. The resort has a restaurant and bar, a 30m pool and tennis courts.

Tel: (63-2) 976-5200; www.amanresorts.com

Andara Resort & Villas, Phuket, Thailand

Breathtaking vistas of the Andaman Sea, impeccable service standards and warm Thai hospitality all come together to make Andara Resort & Villas an impressive stay. Set on a gentle hill overlooking Kamala Bay, on Phuket's west coast, the 63-key resort is the brainchild of the Paradise Group, which is part of Allan Zeman's Lan Kwai Fong Group.

An abundance of space is the order of the

day, with the smallest one-bedroom suite a generous 153m² while villas – with configurations of between three and six bedrooms – are nestled in free-standing buildings with their own private pools, chefs and butlers.

The brown-and-beige interiors are kitted out in Thai-style teakwood furnishings, Jim Thompson silk fabrics and indigenous artwork, accompanied by modern comforts such as Bose audio systems and LCD TVs. This villa is "really great for someone who wants to be a chef during vacations", said Francesca Lo, manager of Hip Holiday Hong Kong, as the spacious kitchen is fully-equipped with a shiny array of cooking appliances.

Elsewhere within this sumptuous getaway, there's a poolside restaurant, Silk, serving Thai fare, a full-service spa, a well-equipped gym, a black-bottom infinity pool and a beach club. For island-hopping, navigate the emerald waters around the famed Phi Phi Islands, Similan Islands and Phang Nga Bay on Andara's two private yachts (28m and 35m).

Tel: (66-76) 338-777; www.andaraphuket.com

Baan Cheep Chang, Chiang Mai, Thailand

This six-bedroom luxury villa was named Baan Cheep Chang (elephant dreams) to pay homage to the old house's provenance as a teak-logging station during the days of the Lanna kingdom. While the once-ubiquitous pachyderms no longer roam the area, the all-teak villa offers a taste of northern Thai living amid the laid-back charm of Chiang Mai.

Set beside the idyllic Ping River in the leafy Hang Dong outskirts, the property is spread across three main buildings amid landscaped greenery and ornamental waterfalls of over 3,200m². The entire villa features six bedrooms, three lounges, a swimming pool, a furnished sala and a gym, ideal for gatherings with fami-

e accommodation

like. The large bale (Balinese shed right by the cliff's edge with a wooden horigotatsu-style table, makes a great spot to revel in barbecues and enjoy jaw-dropping vistas of the sun over the Indian Ocean. In addition, the villa boasts a huge entertainment staff, making it ideal for small gatherings, A-list wedding parties and family get-togethers. International jetsetters and celebrities are known to frequent this villa. And should guests tire of the sun and sands, the highly revered Uluwatu is just a stone's throw away. Tel: (91) 737-498; www.theistana.com

Kanda, Galle, Sri Lanka

Kanda stands out from Sri Lanka's typical villa scene with its high levels of service, food and management by British designer George Cooper, accorded to by architect Hong Kong-based director of Lightfoot Travel. Perched atop a hillside overlooking the sea, the chic Kanda, near Galle, the chic

boutique hotel overlooks the Koggala Lake, a palm-fringed jungle and the surrounding 4.9ha tea plantations.

The villa's eight suites brim with colonial elegance, each housed in individual buildings and featuring a different theme but all tastefully outfitted with Sri Lankan and Asian touches like four-poster beds lined with mosquito-netting, cushion-strewn rattan couches and blue-and-white porcelain pieces. Stunning views can be expected at every turn in the property, from the 20m infinity pool to open-air dining pavilions, to lush gardens filled with colourful birdlife – peacock and parakeet sightings are common. The chefs satiate gourmands with contemporary Sri Lankan and Thai-inspired dishes such as pan-fried mahimahi with wasabi mash and crabmeat curry with saffron rice whipped up from homegrown fruits, vegetables and herbs.

This property also offers ample opportunities to pick up new skills, whether it's learning to cook a mean curry or meeting the tea pluckers to learn about the tea-picking process. Its location allows easy ventures to the ancient Fort Galle nearby. At KK – as the property is

fondly known as – a stay is intended to feel like a rejuvenating sojourn at an old friend's inviting abode.

Tel: (94-91) 494-3700; www.kahandakanda.com

The Pavilions, Bali, Indonesia

Located just steps from a coral-fringed lagoon in Bali's eastern shoreline of Sanur, this all-villa boutique retreat spirits guests into a realm of flourishing nature. Seclusion and intimacy are the order of the day at this charming sanctuary, designed with bamboo pathways and traditional Balinese flair, which makes it especially ideal for couples and honeymooners. Each of its 24 individual traditional-style villas features 120m² of indoor and outdoor living spaces, flanked by walled gardens, sundeck and access via its own Balinese entrance; most villas boast their own private pool while honeymoon villas are duplex.

Jahe Restaurant presents a journey of regional Indonesian cuisine while the Poolside Café and Bar offers a charming little corner for sipping cocktails at sunset. Rejuvenation also takes centre stage at this tranquil hideaway, where a spa renders a full suite of treatments

Private Island, Koh Rong, Cambodia



and therapies to soothe weary bodies and minds based on Balinese traditions and ingredients. With its non-flashy ethos and highly hospitable service, this bliss-inducing retreat will get travellers to see a different side of Bali, and makes a compelling stay for those who value personality over extensive facilities, relaxation over activities.

Tel: (62-361) 288-381; www.thepavilionsresorts.com

Song Saa Private Island, Koh Rong, Cambodia

For sophisticated travellers who desire to get away from it all, there's no better choice than Song Saa Private Island, which – located in the Koh Rong Archipelago, a 35-minute speedboat ride away from the nearest Sihanoukville port – is unlike "many European villas (situated) too close to civilisation in the modern sense", opined Rakesh Ramnani, director sales-leisure at Vensimal World Travel India.

Indeed, guests at this all-inclusive resort are privy to not just a private villa but two pristine isles – Koh Ouen and Koh Bong – which are

known locally as The Sweethearts. Furthermore, each of the 27 villas is a luxurious sanctuary in itself. Some are set amid the rainforest canopy, others are nestled by the water's edge or perched over the water, but all boast their own infinity pools, cabana-fringed sundecks and kitchens. Idle the days away by kayaking through Koh Rong's thriving mangroves, stretching limbs with a sunrise yoga class or simply indulging in scrumptious in-villa breakfasts.

Song Saa, which has helped put Cambodia on the region's luxury travel map since its debut in 2012, was born out of Australian owners Rory and Melita Hunter's desire to create a luxury resort built on sustainable ethos, having incorporated driftwood and used timber into the construction of the eco-luxe getaway, developed a series of programmes to properly manage waste, train local personnel and conduct research of Cambodia's marine environment. Unadulterated luxury has never been so glamorous or green.

Tel: (855-236) 860-360; <http://songsaa.com>

Space at Bali, Indonesia

Space at Bali cocoons luxury travellers in a stylish abode in the midst of Seminyak's action with its enviable location, tucked in a small lane just minutes from Jalan Laksmana and the beach. Home to a boutique collection of five one-bedroom and six two-bedroom pool villas – all interlinked by Javanese wooden doors which can be opened up and connected to accommodate larger groups – the 11-villa hideaway is an oasis of tranquility and architectural elegance right in the heart of Seminyak's hustle and bustle.

Within each villa, the spacious rooms, living quarters and outdoor spaces are seamlessly blended and designed to maximise the island's sea breezes, with high roof lines topped with along along and a large private pool surrounded by red canopied daybeds and verdant tropical foliage. The beige-hue interiors feature an attractive fusion of Balinese and Moroccan influences, with eye-catching details such as rattan ceiling fans, Moorish lattice windows, keyhole-shaped doors and Balinese batik fabrics.

Every villa comes with its own private butler, and the fully-equipped kitchen and expansive living and dining areas are specially kitted out to entertain guests. The villa manager ensures that all requests, from in-villa massages and yoga to hearty breakfasts, are available at the drop of a hat. However it is highly recommended that guests venture out from the comfy spot to explore the lively shopping and dining scene of Seminyak.

Tel: (62-361) 731-100; www.spaceatbali.com

The Tamarind, Chonburi, Thailand

Near Pattaya in the Khao Krating foothills of Bang Saray lies The Tamarind, a nine-bedroom villa that has garnered the nod of Exotissimo

Travel Thailand's general manager, Michael Lynden-Bell, who takes delight in the property's design aesthetics, low-key but attentive service and thoughtful amenities.

Situated less than two hours from Bangkok, The Tamarind is ideal for corporate retreats or large family and friends getaways. The secluded compound sleeps up to 20 guests within its nine bedrooms – the adjacent six-bedroom Villa Buraran can accommodate another 12 guests upon request – each decked out in a different theme to journey guests to the distant lands of Africa, Japan and Bali.

A 12-person team ensures that all requests, whether it's for Thai homecooked meals, in-villa barbeques or day trips to the nearby attractions of Sai Kaew Beach, golf courses, polo fields and vineyards, are all met. The sprawling 1.2ha estate is also home to a cinema room with a 62-inch TV, three tennis courts, a full-size petanque pit, a lake-facing massage sala, a gym and a 22m swimming pool equipped with a cooling system (a welcomed respite during Thailand's hot season), which more than makes up for its non-beachfront location.

Tel: (66-8) 5275-4099; www.thetamarindthailand.com

Tree of Life Resort & Spa, Jaipur, India

Amid the undulating Aravalli Range sits The Tree of Life Resort & Spa, an expansive 2.8ha estate that shines like a pink gem in the arid landscape of Rajasthan. The property gives a nod to the magnificent history of Rajasthan with the extensive use of sandstone and lime, rose-hued walls, marble floors and golden cupolas. No expense is spared in the design of the 14 villas; hemmed in by verdant gardens, each features a four-poster bed, plush sofa, a domed bathroom stocked with twin vanities, a large shower area and Ayurvedic Karama toiletries, as well as modern comforts such as flatscreen TV and Lavazza coffeemaker. For the utmost privacy, opt for the pool villa.

A spa, a bar and a library comprise the recreational facilities, while the large bell-shaped infinity pool is thoughtfully sited between two ridges to offer the best views of the countryside. The chef has no qualms whipping up India's varied cuisines from the organic gardens. The ridge top provides a lofty view of the entire valley; cushioned seats afford a charming spot to lounge with a book or enjoy live musical performances, and make an especially cosy spot for romantic cuddles during the winter season. Beyond this palatial estate, there are plenty of activities to keep culturally curious travellers occupied in the legendary Pink City, from elephant treks through the hills, to jeep rides into local villages and jaunts through bustling bazaars.

Tel: (91-960) 209-1000; www.treeofliferesorts.com



The Pavilions, Bali, Indonesia