

#1 FOR DESIGN: SOORI BALI

50 Best Beach Hotels in the World



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*

2 — Playa Vik and Bahia Vik, Uruguay

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 right) doubles from \$600; Bahia Vik doubles from \$550; 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 well-being.

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*

4 — Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo Island, Australia

On a secluded cliff top 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*

5 — Keemala, Phuket, Thailand

The Bird’s Nest Pool Villas at this lush, restorative eco-retreat are the ultimate escapist fantasy: cocoonlike 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*

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 south-east 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*

7 — Borgo Egnazia, Italy

There’s a movie-set quality to this collection of white-stone villas and townhouses, 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*

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/*

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*

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 glasspannelled waterfront hideaway for two, which overlooks a private bay”. *Near Christchurch, South Island; Seascape from NZ\$3,395 (£1,905); annandale.com*