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The Thrill Stays Here

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COVER STORY

Faraway, so Close

Everyone needs a little time away, and what better way to escape life than with a luxurious villa? Imagine a white-washed villa, swaying palms and an empty beach. That's living



The Thrill Stays Here

In search of the ultimate luxury getaway? We take a look at some of the top properties in the world, where world-class service combines with stunning natural surroundings to produce a once in a lifetime experience.

Text by Antonius Martono

Photo courtesy of Casa Kimball



Photo courtesy of Qasr Al Sarab



Photo courtesy of Qasr Al Sarab

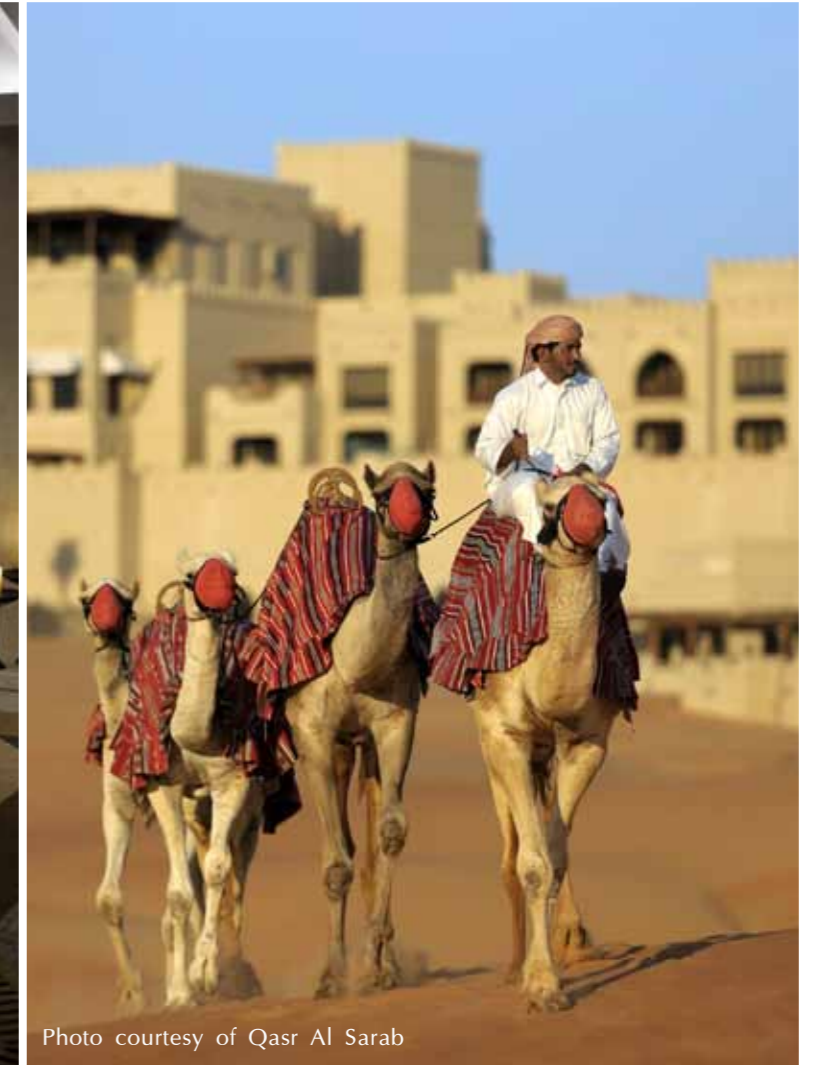


Photo courtesy of Qasr Al Sarab

It started with a debate in the office over the difference between a villa and a bungalow in Indonesia's hospitality industry. Then someone brought up *lanai*, *cabanas* and pavilions, and we all agreed that someone needed to come up with a simple guide to tell all these things apart.

A villa was originally an upper-class country house in ancient Rome. Since then, of course, the idea and function of a villa have evolved considerably. In modern parlance, a villa can refer to a specific type of detached suburban dwelling.

Villas used to be classified as *villa urbana*, houses located in suburban areas to facilitate their owners' access to the city centre, and *villa rustica*, farmhouse estates that were permanently occupied by the servants who had charge of the estate, which would be centred on the villa itself.

A typical villa was surrounded by lush colonnaded gardens and

often had spectacular views of the countryside or sea, opulent decorations, abundant foliage and open space. In 14th and 15th century Italy, a villa once more connoted a country house, like the first Medici villas, Villa del Trebbio and the villa at Cafaggiolo, both strong fortified houses built in the 14th century in the Mugello region near Florence.

With changes in social values in post-colonial Britain after World War I, suburban villas became bungalows, and by extension the term is used for suburban bungalows in both Australia and New Zealand, especially those dating from the period of rapid suburban development between 1920 and 1950.

A bungalow is originally a type of house, but it has different definitions around the world. Many, but not all, of these definitions include being detached, low rise (single or one-and-a-half stories) and the use of veranda.

In the tourism industry, bungalows are often advertised as an alternative to motels or hotels for holidaymakers. In South Africa, for example, a bungalow can mean a small wooden frame house, or one of log construction.

Both villas and bungalows in modern tourism parlance generally involve lavish service and accommodation, and the wow-effect of the natural surroundings nature. With their extreme locations, out-of-the box concepts and attractive programmes, villas and bungalows attract travellers in search of a unique experience.

GOING TO THE EXTREME

From desert oases to Hemingway-like tents, travellers can find the ultimate in luxury in the most extreme locations.

Qasr al Sarab by Anantara is perched on the golden sands of Abu Dhabi's Liwa Desert, one of the largest uninterrupted deserts in the world. The property embraces the epic



Photo courtesy of Qasr Al Sarab

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adventure of indigenous desert culture with renowned luxury through its unsurpassed palatial-style villas. The villas combine the thousands-year-old traditions of the region with the ultimate in modern luxuries for those who want an experience like no other.

Guests can enjoy a range of unique activities like camel trekking, archery and desert walks.

There are one- to three-bedroom villas with such facilities as king-size common lounge area and pantry, while the two- and three-bedroom villas come with private pool, sundeck, oversized bathtub, rain shower and private butler service.

If the desert is still too crowded for you, then you should travel beyond Bali. There is an island surrounded by the turquoise waters and untouched reefs of the Flores Sea. The island, called Moyo, is 350 square kilometres of natural wonders, with a landscape that changes from savannah to tropical jungle. The island is also blessed with a variety of animal and bird life, from deer to wild boar, macaque monkeys, sea eagles and osprey.

The island is home to **Amanwana** (meaning “peaceful forest”), the only resort on Moyo, a nature and marine reserve 15 kilometres off the coast of Sumbawa, east of Bali. Moyo is a haven for hikers and nature enthusiasts.

Guests can enjoy a range of activities tailored to their needs and desires, including snorkelling, trekking and mountain biking.

Amanwana boasts 20 luxury tents set under a canopy of tropical forest. Each 58-square-metre tent is constructed on a solid foundation from which rise wooden walls with large picture windows. The canvas ceilings are covered with a separate, waterproof exterior layer. Coral stone surrounds the hardwood deck of each tent. Inside, the air-conditioned tents feature Indonesian island artwork, hard-wood flooring, a spacious sitting area with facing divans, a king-size bed, a writing desk and a large bathroom. Sand paths link the tents to one another and lead to the beach, the dining room and reception. The tents are identical and the only difference between the two

categories is location; the ocean tents and the jungle tents.

SEA DREAM

As the saying goes, it all comes down to location, location, location. With all the competition, a property needs a spectacular location to thrive. The Maldives is an archipelago in the middle of the Indian Ocean that offers never-ending natural attractions for travellers.

Located in the Maldives’ pristine South Nilandhe Atoll, **Angsana Velavaru** unveiled an exclusive cluster of 33 InOcean Villas on 1 July 2009 to complement its 79 beachfront villas. The InOcean Villas constitute the first standalone collection of water villas in the Maldives, setting new standards in resort living, offering guests more to see and do via a series of signature experiences and service touch points.

A host of unique experiences have been specially created exclusively for guests of the InOcean Villas, leaving them with indelible



Photo courtesy of Amanwana



Photo courtesy of Amanwana

Photo courtesy of Amanwana



Photo courtesy of Parrot Cay



Photo courtesy of Angsana Velavaru



Photo courtesy of Parrot Cay

memories of the resort and ocean living. The adventure commences with an exploratory 40-minute seaplane journey from Malé Island -during which guests are provided with binoculars and route maps to better enjoy the breathtaking views of beautiful isle formations and ocean blues. Guests are welcome to take part in the villa activities and do their part in preserving the marine life so vital to the natural beauty of Maldives.

For a touch of nighttime adventure, guests can embark on a round of night fishing where they can hope to reel in barracuda and different kinds of snappers, through sustainable line fishing methods. Their catch is specially prepared for day's lunch or dinner. For the sporty, an extensive range of water-based activities at Angsana Velavaru awaits. These include kite-surfing, kayaking, deep-sea diving and a snorkelling safari. The twice-weekly snorkelling safari excursion is led by the resort's resident marine biologist, who will bring guests to two different locations to discover the diverse range of marine life such as turtles, stingrays and colourful coral in natural underwater gardens.

The sea is the ultimate destination for those in search of tranquility,

and there are probably hundreds of concept villas and hideaway islands around the world, but there are only a few that offer the ultimate in seclusion and luxury.

Parrot Cay in the Turks and Caicos has a legendary reputation for luxury. Located on the northern Caribbean's pre-eminent private island, the property is wrapped in sweeps of sand and peaceful seas. The islands are positioned some 575 miles southeast of Miami, which is a 70-minute flight away. International flights come into Providenciales, the main island, from where it is a 35-minute speedboat ride to the resort. The Turks and Caicos have been largely saved from high-rise construction. The region came relatively late to tourism compared to opportunities elsewhere in the Caribbean. This has protected the islands' natural integrity.

The topography of Parrot Cay slopes up from the ocean towards a 50-foot-high ridge along the centre of the island. One mile south lies Rocky Point, an outcrop concealing more curls of sand. This is where Parrot Cay Estates is located, encompassing the largest villas, which are owned by private individuals but let and managed by the hotel.

They comprise six one-bedroom Beach Houses and three one-bedroom villas, all of which have plunge pools, two two-bedroom Beach Villas, and one three-bedroom Beach Villa. These are low buildings, steps from the sand, with weathered wood cladding and decking. The warm, contemporary look with a colonial-style finish is achieved with soft white cottons covering chairs, cushions and four-poster beds. Further design motifs include teak furnishing, terracotta tiles and Indonesian loungers. Windows are shuttered, and bathrooms are white tongue-and-groove with wooden surfaces.

Island hopping is a popular activity, incorporating uninhabited cays, such as Iguana Island (home of the shy rock iguana) for snorkelling and impromptu barbecue-picnics. Here one can indulge in the natural solitude of powder beaches and pristine shallow waters and perhaps be fortunate enough to discover a snow-white sand dollar. Specific excursions include exploring West Caicos, an uninhabited cay with some of the bluest waters in the island chain. Guests can also visit French Cay, a small wildlife sanctuary lying on the edge of the wall about 20 miles to the southwest of Parrot Cay. If the tidal conditions



Photo courtesy of Kurland Villa

are good, it's possible to continue to West Sand Spit, a small sandbar that emerges at low tide on the edge of the Caicos Bank - an incredible natural phenomenon.

AWAY FROM HOME

Kurland Villa in magnificent Plettenberg Bay, South Africa, is the home of Peter and Dianne Behr, who established the Kurland Hotel and Polo Estate. The villa is situated on private property adjoining the estate, near indigenous forest, and in a secluded and commanding location.

The villa is a large, recently built home designed in the Cape Dutch tradition, but in which all requirements of modern living are fully catered. The interior finishes are of the highest specifications and the villa has been beautifully and elegantly appointed.

The villa is set in park-like surroundings, north facing onto an indigenous forest, in the foothills of the Tsitsikamma Mountains. It consists of a two-storey area and has a layout of an ordinary house with kitchen, wine cellar, dressing room, en-suite bedroom and a separate wing.

This home-like concept villa is suitable for families or groups looking for an exclusive, secluded country living experience. It is also the perfect base for polo enthusiasts who might be playing or watching polo at the estate. Although far from the madding crowd, it is close to Plettenberg Bay and its many attractions.

Polo is the raison d'être of Kurland, the hub of polo in the Southern Cape. There are 13 polo fields in the Plettenberg Bay area, spread over five properties. All tournaments are co-ordinated by Clive Peddle, Kurland's Polo Director and CEO of the South African Polo Association.

The main grouping of fields is on the Kurland Estate, with four full-sized fields and a Stick and Ball field, Wooden Horse and Equine Hospital. Adjacent, at Kurland Park, are three more fields. Tournaments are held annually, from December through April, over all the fields, which remain in good condition throughout the year.

Kurland Villa is the perfect base for guests coming to Kurland to play polo, for patrons who are travelling with their families or for an entire polo team and families. On 29 December every year, the Kurland International Polo Test Match is played on the main polo field in front of the Kurland' Pavilion. This match has become a popular event on the local calendar. Guests staying at the villa will have complimentary tickets for the event.

Crossing the Atlantic, back to the turquoise waters of the Caribbean Sea, **Casa Kimball** offers an



Photo courtesy of Casa Kimball



Photo courtesy of Casa Kimball

ultramodern villa concept mixed with the stunning ambience of Dominican nature. Designed by the acknowledged young architect Jasmit Singh Rangr, the villa offers guests panoramic views of the sea from all points of the property and modern open spaces, outdoors and indoors, which benefit from the warm Caribbean breezes and sunshine. The exceptional design of the infinity pool creates an outstanding centrepiece to the property, while the dramatic cliff-side hot tub is a more private but equally stunning counterpoint.

Casa Kimball is located on the north coast of the island near the world-class golf and beach of Playa Grande. The area features vast stretches of white-sand beaches, spectacular vistas of mountainous terrain lush with tropical vegetation and expansive views of the Atlantic Ocean.

This luxury estate is situated on three acres of pristine property facing the Atlantic Ocean surrounded by almond trees, coco palms and flowering vines and shrubs native to the Dominican Republic. Groups of up to 18 can reside in eight full suites that contain all the comforts for discerning vacationers. Private terraces and ocean views

accompany every accommodation. Large, thoughtfully designed guest spaces include an indoor living area with full bar, an outdoor living area with fireplace, a dining room with 180-degree views of the infinity pool and ocean beyond, billiard and entertainment room, rooftop lounge with umbrellas, as well as an outdoor bar and a large ocean-front terrace for special events.

Explore the jungle rivers, rain forests and native villages hidden away in the mountains and valleys beyond the coast. Guests of Casa Kimball are encouraged to immerse themselves in the natural beauty of the Dominican Republic. 📍

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The edge - a dramatic villa property determined to offer its guests a sublime taste of life on the edge of the island of Gods, Bali. Unforgettable moments can be experienced in our stunningly located luxury villas. Each villa and each of the ten bedrooms in the villas have a sea view overlooking the Indian Ocean. Each villa is equipped with a private pool, full Butler service to cater to every need, a fully integrated entertainment audio and visual system including wi-fi internet and a state of the art lighting system.

The spa, takes design to another world by clinging at the edge of the sea cliff. Enjoy ultimate treatments by spa specialists in a wall less room with private steam coves and sensuous curves brimming on the ocean. Signature treatments include the Arak Massage and Rice Wine body scrub.

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