

THE HOLIDAYING Luxe Way

Writer Nicole Webb

When we think of a luxury hotel, we think of a sublime sanctuary where one can indulge in the rich comforts of pure unadulterated bliss. A vacation where the sky is the limit with adventure or a dip in the infinity pool is all that's required to elevate your senses.

Whether it's a private villa overlooking the stunning Caribbean, a majestic safari park in the heart of Africa or a modern slice of sophistication in the Arabian Gulf, luxury in hotels means service that's second to none, world-class cuisine and ultimately a wonderfully 'unforgettable' experience.

There are many beautiful hotels, but the following nine resorts have been handpicked for their unique style, exotic location, luxurious qualities and impeccable service. These are destinations where you can revitalise your soul and bask in a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



LIZARD ISLAND, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

A place where beauty resides in its natural, wild and uninterrupted glory, Lizard Island is the most northern Great Barrier Reef resort, accessible only by light plane.

Set in a national park and known as 'Dyigurra' to the Aboriginal people, it was once regarded as a sacred place.

Covering over 1,000 acres, this tropical sanctuary is flanked by 24 powdery white sand beaches, undisturbed bar the occasional footprints.

Choose between 40 elegant yet understated private villas or for the ultimate in luxury – The Pavillion – perched on the point of Sunset Ridge, featuring stunning panoramic views.

Relish in every creature comfort, including the dulcet tones of a Bose sound system. With your own private plunge pool, you'll have no need to leave your heavenly retreat.

If you can tear yourself away from your perfectly positioned daybed, take a dinghy to a secluded spot for a gourmet picnic. Feast on delicious fresh prawns washed down with an ice-cold bottle of wine – topped off with a sumptuous cheese platter.

A snorkeller's paradise, submerge yourself into crystal clear waters where you'll encounter velvety cobalt blue starfish, giant clams, playful dolphins and green sea turtles.

For something more energetic, hike to Cook's Lookout – 1,200 feet up, the views are simply breathtaking. This is a little piece of paradise on earth, where you're limited only by your imagination. www.lizardisland.com.au



THIS PAGE: The sun sets over the sumptuous Amandari in Bali; Lizard Island's stunningly clear waters and white sand beaches. OPPOSITE PAGE: Romance and dining with a view at Emirates Palace. OPENING PAGE: Poolside luxury at Hotel Le Toiny St Barth

AMANDARI, BALI, INDONESIA

Meaning 'peaceful spirits,' Amandari is a luxurious resort seamlessly reflecting ancient Balinese tradition.

With close ties to the local Kedewatan community, staying here is like coming home to a warm and welcoming village, where time stands still, yet the most modern comforts prevail.

This authentic Balinese hamlet is fringed by terraced rice fields





THIS PAGE: Grand architecture at The Oberoi Rajvilas. OPPOSITE PAGE: Hidden amid nature, the opulent Royal Malewane; the decadent interior design of The Oberoi Rajvilas in Jaipur

Sprawled across 1.3 km of pristine private beach, surrounded by lush manicured gardens and 114 gold domes, including the Grand Atrium (which is higher than the dome of St Peter's Basilica in Rome) this hotel, dubbed 'seven stars', takes luxury to a new level.

With 1,002 Swarovski crystal chandeliers and 200 fountains, the beauty of Arabian culture is on display in all its glory.

Make a splash in the hotel's two majestic swimming pools, one designed for relaxation and one for adventure. For the sports buff, there's a FIFA standard football pitch, tennis courts and cricket facilities, not to mention first class fitness suites, an Anantara Spa plus its own marina and helipad.

You'll bask in 24-hour butler service when you stay in one of the 302 rooms decorated with gold and marble furnishings. The top floor is home to six 'Rulers' suites reserved solely for Emirati royalty and dignitaries.

Dine in equally palatial restaurants, including the popular Caviar Bar with its world-class champagne menu, or have afternoon tea with a slice of 24-carat gold chocolate cake.

Emirates Palace is a place where all that glitters is gold.

www.kempinski.com

ROYAL MALEWANE, SOUTH AFRICA

Immerse yourself in the heart of wild Africa. Located on a private reserve within the Greater Kruger National Park, Royal Malewane affords you the romance and beauty of a bygone era.

A getaway for those who value privacy, impeccable personalised service and the best game viewing in Africa, this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Take a bush adventure under endless skies, where expert trackers



on one side and the rolling Ayung River on the other.

A river-stone walkway leading from the resort to the river is said to be on sacred land, and for centuries, locals have visited the pool of holy water, where three traditional shrines stand next to a seventh-century tiger, carved in stone.

Amandari's timeless charm echoes through the resort's 30 free-standing suites – all boasting Balinese-style thatched roofs and flourishing private gardens. Choose from Village, Valley or Pool suites, each with their own outdoor sunken marble bathtubs.

For absolute pampering, stay in the Amandari Villa with its landscaped deck embracing a two-tiered swimming pool.

Indulge in the Amandari Spa, where soothing, natural ingredients are used to rejuvenate your senses.

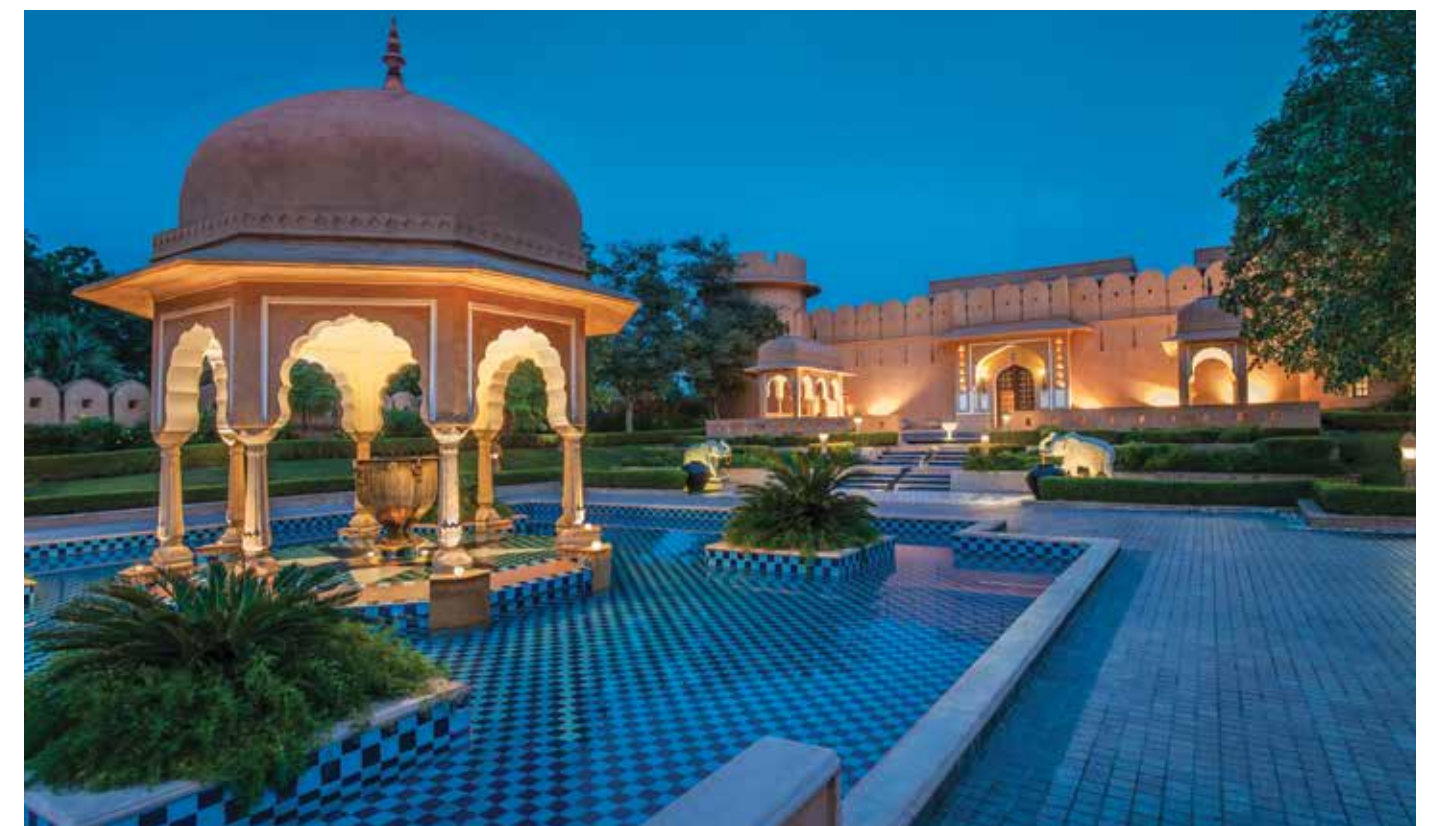
Continue the revitalising experience with an outdoor yoga class before cooling off in Amandari's 32-metre swimming pool with scented cold towels, iced water, sunscreen and woven fans.

Behind the pool, gamelan players perform at a music pavilion and local children practice their Balinese dancing. Amandari is an oasis of Balinese tranquillity that will leave you under its spell.

www.amanresorts.com

EMIRATES PALACE, ABU DHABI, UAE

Claiming the crown as the second most expensive hotel ever built, Emirates Palace is nothing short of a royal hideaway, where you'll be king and queen of your own palace.



bring you thrillingly close to the big five!

For the unrivaled safari experience, take a helicopter for heart-stopping views or for something a little more sedate but no less exciting, a hot air balloon ride.

After a day of sightseeing in the wild, spoil yourself at the 'bush spa' where you'll be submerged in an oasis of calm.

Dine outdoors under a canopy of stars, where the chefs will relish in providing you with a myriad of feasts, or try equally decadent fare in a Bedouin tent bedecked with Moroccan lanterns.

Hosting a maximum of 20 guests, there are nine suites displaying decor that can only be described as deluxe. Enjoy seclusion and stunning views, which may even include elephants drinking from your private plunge pool!

Royal Malewane is a haven of old-world charm and splendour,

where your stay will be unforgettable. www.royalmalewane.com

THE OBEROI RAJVILAS, JAIPUR, INDIA

Located just eight km from Jaipur, The Oberoi Rajvilas is the perfect base from which to explore one of India's most exotic and vibrant cities.

Set on 32 acres of lush gardens with flowering trees and cascading fountains, guests have the opportunity to unwind and soak up the serenity.

Evoking a princely Rajasthan feel, luxury villas and royal tents stand regally in a fort-like setting with gold leaf hand-painted wall murals.

All rooms feature a white Italian marble bathroom with a sunken bathtub that looks onto its own private walled ornamental garden.

You can delight in watching the ever-popular peacocks strolling elegantly through the plush property.

A 280-year-old Shiva temple and a Rajasthani *haveli* (mansion) have been meticulously restored – the *haveli* serving as Oberoi's spa offering, reinvigorating holistic, Ayurvedic and Western therapies.

Dine at Surya Mahal courtyard for a magical experience, where gas torches burst into flames amid enchanting folk music.

The surrounding towers create an ambiance of royal dining in a fort-like castle. The Oberoi Rajvilas is a captivating retreat that will make you feel like you're a guest at an old friend's sprawling mansion. www.oberoihotels.com

THE WAKAYA CLUB & SPA, FIJI

Set on a 2,200-acre tropical oasis, Wakaya is one of 333 islands



THIS PAGE: Dining at Burj Al Arab's Al Mahara restaurant. OPPOSITE PAGE: Magnificent views from the private pool at The Wakaya Club & Spa in Fiji

that make up the Fiji archipelago.

Surrounded by a protected coral reef with azure lagoons, majestic cliffs and gleaming beaches, it's one of the most secluded corners in the South Pacific.

Experience gracious living, sophisticated style, international cuisine and unparalleled leisure opportunities, including some of the finest scuba diving on the planet.

With a dream to protect an untouched tropical habitat while setting a new standard in travel hospitality – Wakaya remains Fiji's jewel in the crown.

Each of the ten free-standing waterfront bures is a luxurious hideaway designed to showcase the island's beauty while providing every conceivable comfort, including a double-hammock strung between coconut palms for those lazy days.

Here, time doesn't slow down, but you do – especially in the deeply restorative experience of the Wakayan spa, a retreat for the mind, body and soul.

Take part in authentic Fijian ceremonies, such as a Meke, to learn about Fiji legends through traditional song and dance, or quench your thirst at a Kava Ceremony. Even long after your tan has faded, you'll still remember the friends you made here and the power of the Wakayan smile. www.wakaya.com



By day, St Barth has become the Mecca of big game fishing in the Caribbean, so partake in a deep sea fishing trip or alternatively sail around the island in style.

This perfect tropical hideaway oozes simplicity and solitude – a place to recharge your batteries in five-star fashion. www.letoiny.com

BURJ AL ARAB, DUBAI, UAE

Repeatedly voted the world's most luxurious hotel, Burj Al Arab meaning 'Tower of the Arabs' stands at 321 metres high, making it the fourth tallest hotel in the world.

A sleek and sophisticated symbol of modern Dubai, the shape of its impressive structure is designed to mimic the silhouette of an Arabian ship's tall sails.

Located on an artificial island, Burj Al Arab is connected to the mainland by a private bridge and with one of the world's largest chauffeur-driven fleets of Rolls Royce and a dedicated helicopter service, you can only arrive in style.

Characterised by 202 suites featuring a private reception and personal butler on every floor (not to mention Hermès toiletries in each room) service is second to none.

Burj Al Arab houses eight world-class restaurants, including the unique Al Muntaha, meaning 'tallest' in Arabic. Standing 200 metres above the Persian Gulf, it offers a spectacular view of Dubai's 'state-of-the-art' city.

Dip your toes in one of four sensational swimming pools – or relax in the shade of the palms on the resort's private beach.

Live life in the fast lane and glide the streets of Dubai in one of

THIS PAGE: Le Sirenuse's magnificent views of Positano. OPPOSITE PAGE: Enjoy your own private plunge pool and sweeping views at Hotel Le Toiny St Barth in the Caribbean; the impressive sail design of Dubai's Burj Al Arab

HOTEL LE TOINY ST BARTH, CARIBBEAN

A tropical paradise overlooking the Caribbean Sea on the hills of St Barth, Hotel Le Toiny St Barth stands unequalled as a private enclave of villas catering to every guest's whim.

Each of the 15 pastel-coloured luxury bungalows is surrounded by tropical vegetation, characteristic of the island and bordered by the beautiful Toiny beach. With its own gated entrance, each villa has a red mailbox flag that serves as your very own "Do Not Disturb" sign.

Privacy and exclusivity define Hotel Le Toiny with all self-contained villas boasting their own entrances, parking, private terraces and gardens.

Each morning, delight in breakfast served on your poolside balcony, take a dip in your own private infinity pool and relax in an exquisite environment, where the only sight is the dazzling Caribbean blue sea – the only sound, the crashing of the waves.

If you're feeling a little social, try Hotel Le Toiny's gourmet restaurant, Le Gaïac, which has long been a central part of the hotel, renowned worldwide for its culinary artistry, which blends mouthwatering French and local cuisine to perfection.





THIS PAGE: Dining at Le Sirenuse comes with breathtaking Amalfi Coast views. OPPOSITE PAGE: Stunning sea vistas and Positano panoramas from Le Sirenuse

the hotel's cars that are available for hire, including an Aston Martin, Ferrari or Lamborghini.

The Burj Al Arab is a grand work of art, priding itself on the ability to deliver dreams. www.jumeirah.com

LE SIRENUSE, POSITANO, ITALY

Le Sirenuse is a place to enjoy the simple pleasures that come with staying on Italy's magical and mesmerising Amalfi Coast.

Located in the heart of enchanting Positano – stepping into Le Sirenuse is like stepping onto a Hollywood movie set.

Wedge into the side of a cliff above the Mediterranean Sea, this 'summer house' has been transformed into a luxury boutique hotel.

Family-owned and managed, Le Sirenuse has 58 spacious rooms, each furnished with five-star comforts, whilst maintaining the atmosphere of a charming private home.

Most suites include a private terrace overlooking the picturesque bay of Positano while all are adorned with elegant decor and exquisite furnishings that epitomise Italian charm.

Outside, breathe in the fabulous fragrance from the pool terrace laced with lemon trees. The Champagne and Oyster bar is equally alluring on a terrace filled with sweet-smelling roses and frangipani flowers.

Don't miss the hotel's Michelin-star restaurant La Sponda – an event in its own right, where you can indulge in dinner by candlelight (400 of them in fact) – amid the sounds of a mandolin and classic guitar. Le Sirenuse is like a diamond in the middle of a million beautiful places. Pinch yourself – you're not dreaming. www.sirenuse.it