

WIN A LUXURIOUS FOUR-NIGHT STAY IN **BEIJING**

DestinAsian

ASIA'S TRAVEL MAGAZINE



20

AFFORDABLE BEACH RESORTS

LOMBOK
SRI LANKA
KERALA
SABAH
HUA HIN
PHU QUOC
FIJI AND
MORE

WINE AND
WILDLIFE ON
AUSTRALIA'S
**KANGAROO
ISLAND**

KOWLOON
CALLING

PONDERING
PATTAYA

PLUS:
DESIGNER JEWELRY IN BALI
BALLOONING OVER MYANMAR
PUDONG'S BEST BETS

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SEASIDE LODGINGS FOR LESS

FROM NEW ZEALAND TO SRI LANKA,
WE'VE SCoured THE REGION
FOR 20 AFFORDABLE BEACH
RESORTS WHERE STYLE
AND VALUE MEET JUST
STEPS FROM THE SAND.
ALL ARE PRICED AT
LESS THAN US\$250 A NIGHT IN THE
LOW SEASON, GUARANTEEING
THAT YOU'LL STAY
OUT OF THE RED WHEN
GOING INTO THE BLUE.

over organic hinterland herbs and spices in its treatments, which can also be enjoyed off-site at a nearby waterfall. Diving is an equally remarkable affair, with meals served in the thatched-roof lounge, in the garden, or under the stars beside the beach.

\$196 Located on a 15-hectare private isle just east of Boston (a 45-minute ferry ride from Singapore), the **Nikai Island** (65-9635-1990; nikai.com) resort is a cluster of just six beach houses overlooking the South China Sea. The one- to three-room beach houses combine traditional design features like driftwood walls and thatched roofs. Chill out by the resort's impressive pool, set amid granite boulders high above the ocean on the north coast, or grab a snorkel and explore the coral reef that rings the island. It's a winning formula that hotel management is looking to expand: six new houses will soon open on the island's south coast.

\$235 Bali's **Tuban Beach** may be woefully undeveloped, but guests checking into the **Waga Waga Baring Beach Resort** (Jl. Wana Segara, 62-361-7713-780; wagabaringbeach.com) will feel like they have their own patch of paradise. Freely emerged from the multimillion-dollar makover of an older property, this stylish all-suite hotel features just 11 timber-framed rooms (five of which have plunge pools and outdoor decks), dressed up with Balinese and Japanese art and fabrics. As at its cliff-hugging sister resort in Ubud, service standards here are high, and the food—spearheaded by classically trained French chef Patrick Marty—is first-rate. Better still, the resort's pleasant all-inclusive restaurant is just steps from the sand.

MALAYSIA

\$110 Like summer camp for grownups, **Gayana Eco Resort** (Kota Kinabalu, Sabah; 60-88/42-233; gayana-eco-resort.com) comprises 44 villas perched on stilts above the South China Sea, each outfitted with Frette sheets,

Hamm bath products, and powerful rain showers. Start the day by feeding the trevally fish that congregate around the jetty (which connects the resort to the mainland via a 10-minute ferry ride), then get an underwater education at the Marine Ecology Research Center, which is staffed by scientists and supported by a portion of room rates. Also popular are kayak tours to the mangroves of Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, home to monitor lizards and stingrays. Seafood



THE SKY'S THE LIMIT The lush grounds of Panglao Island's Amorita resort.

features prominently on the menu at the overwater Alu Alu restaurant; the lobster and barramundi are standouts. There's also a small spa offering jaw-dropping views and Borneo healing traditions like *urat*, a long-stroke massage that employs native herbs.

NEW ZEALAND

\$150 Settings don't come much more dramatic than the wild west coast of New Zealand's South Island. Here, at **Kapitiu Creek**—a three-hour drive across the Southern Alps from Christchurch—a husband-and-wife team recently opened the six-room **Kapitiu Ridge** (Cherryfield Rd., Hāhake, 64-3775-6075; kapitiu.co.nz).

The lodge sits on eight hectares fronting a private beach and the Tasman Sea. Each room has a different look and color theme, though all come with heated bathroom floor tiles, panoramic wall features, and outdoor blankets. There's a distinct regional focus across the property, from the wine and food to the striking indoor and outdoor art. When you're not walking in the open-air Jararua or sipping a local Chardonnay by the fireplace, take a gourmet picnic hamper down to the beach, where you'll be hand-picked to find another wild.

\$205 Resposed late last year following extensive renovations, the **Pukia Beach Resort & Spa** (Bay of Islands, 64-9402-0112; pukiaresort.com) occupies a picturesque perch at the top end of New Zealand's North Island. The 20 suites and apartments are modern and minimal, featuring French oak floors and Dedon patio furniture. Activities include big-game fishing, yacht cruises, and dolphin watching. Or, blow out in the resort's beautiful spa, where treatment packages can occupy the better part of a day. Although the arctic waters off Pukia Beach are hard to resist, the resort has its own aquatic attractions, including five outdoor hot tubs, each set to a different temperature.

PHILIPPINES

\$113 Diving enthusiasts will not want to leave **Amorita** (Alona Beach, Bohol, 63-2687-3641; amoritaresort.com). Set cliffside on tiny Panglao Island, a two-hour ferry ride from Cebu in the middle of a stunning coral reef, the property has its own well-equipped dive center, allowing guests to get up close and personal with an astonishing array of marine life. On dry land, the Amorita offers a range of suites and villas. The Ocean View villas are the pick of the bunch, with plunge pools, sun decks, and an outlook to the hotel's private beach and the Bohol Sea, where dolphins are frequently spotted. Until the spa opens later this year, guests can enjoy treatments in their rooms or beside the main pool. Meals are as casual or formal as you wish. (Continued on page 104)