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8 AWESOME PRIVATE VILLAS FOR YOUR NEXT GROUP GETAWAY

We love our hotels, but #villalife is really something special. Get inspired for your next group trip with this round-up of killer villas across the region. By Nicky Short



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Published February 22nd, 2021

By: Travel and Leisure Asia



LUXURY VILLAS ARE SO HOT RIGHT NOW, and understandably so. Just as we've begun to catch onto the idea that [getting away with the gang](#) is better when you can make yourself at home, palatial properties in stunning settings are becoming increasingly accessible. And now that Covid-19 calls for extra vacation caution, we're even more keen to kick back in a unique space filled with just our faves.

Ten years ago, villas were mostly for boutique weddings in Bali. Now, we're all over them every chance we get: sprawling out in a beachfront crash pad or clifftop cabin with family or friends for a long weekend or extended staycation. The growing popularity of popping off to a private property is a result of a shift towards traveling less, staying longer and experiencing more, says Jon Stonham, the founder and recently retired CEO of luxury-villa purveyors [Elite Havens](#). "We all realize now the value of relationships and spending extended time with people, together."

Turns out, when Stonham hints that a style of escape is here to stay, we should probably listen. Asiahotels.com, which he set up in 1996, was a pioneer for guest reviews (“Way before anyone heard of TripAdvisor”), and when he started Private Homes & Villas in 2008, the opinionated-portal model blazed the trail for AirBnb. There are a plethora of [baler high-end villas](#) in our region, and their devoted independent owners, along with management companies such as Elite Havens and [The Luxe Nomad](#), offer families and groups space, privacy, flexibility and, crucially in Covid times, safety.

The shift has not escaped the notice of big conglomerates; see: [Accor](#) and [Marriott](#) highlighting their apartments, villas and bungalows as we clamor for a work-life balance that combines home comforts and hotel-style service.

But for many, it’s the personal touches that make a privately owned property really special, whether that’s the chef who gets to know your tastes through countless meals, the villa manager who shows you around the local area to get a deeper understanding of the culture, or the unique story of the spot. Among Jon’s favorite of Elite Havens’ 300-strong portfolio is [Simona Oasis](#) in Canggu, Bali, a labor of love built by a doting husband. “During construction, they unearthed a natural spring that feeds the villa,” Jon says. “The karma of this sanctuary has been enjoyed by many since. Its energy is special.”

In that spirit, here’s our selection of eight independently owned idylls around Asia-Pacific with something special:

SRI LANKA

Ocean's Edge, in Tangalle



Courtesy of Elite Havens

Plucked from the Elite Havens collection (rude not to), this aptly named escape combines colonial elegance with barefoot beachfront seclusion. Tucked away in a lush garden on a serene sandy shore, you're nearer to the inhabitants of Sri Lanka's only marine turtle sanctuary than those of closest township, Tangalle. The fully staffed villa's four bedrooms feature gauzily draped four-posters, and wraparound balconies overlook the pool, perfect for sundowners in the comfort of your rattan chair — as pictured in the top photo, in all its dreamy tropicolonial splendor.

<https://www.elitehavens.com/oceans-edge-villa/tangalle-south-coast-sri-lanka.aspx>; from US\$540

INDIA

Summertime Villa, in Calangute, North Goa



Courtesy of Summertime Villa

Share a hectare of tropical garden with birds and butterflies at a tranquil couples' retreat. With three equally generous master suites, there's no need to fight over who gets the best bedroom, giving you more time to spend dining on the poolside verandah or in the breezy double-height living-dining room.

Summertimegoa.com; from US\$445

PHILIPPINES

Ariara Private Island, in Palawan



Courtesy of Ariara Private Island

Looking to truly leave the world behind? Escape to a literal private island. Part of the Calamian Archipelago, Ariara is a 50-hectare unspoiled paradise all your own. The self-described “tiny settlement” is composed of 10 villas and cottages, decked out with vast beds, hammocks, freestanding tubs and outdoor showers. Everything’s arranged around “The Lodge,” a central social hub, where your extended family can gather, dine, swim and live out your Bond-villain fantasies.

Aiaraisland.com; from US\$33,000

THAILAND

Villa M, in Koh Samui



With the Chinese shopfronts of Fisherman's Village on one side and the glittering Gulf of Thailand on the other, Villa M (short for Macpherson) keeps everyone happy on a Samui sojourn. Pristine white and plantation-style shuttered, this chic beachfront retreat promises personalized service and space to sprawl with four bedrooms, two living rooms, rooftop jacuzzi and ocean-facing pool deck.

Villamsamui.com; from US\$690

CAMBODIA

Villa Des Palmes, in Kep



Courtesy of Villa Des Palmes

Just outside sleepy fishing town Kep, this four-bedroom estate combines authentic Khmer touches and luxurious French-inflected services a la carte. “The Mansion” is good for families or groups, with three rooms decked out in Cambodian silks, and airy living spaces set around the saltwater pool. “The Sala” is unquestionably for couples, though the rest of the party might kill the romance by strolling across the tropical garden for a dip in your infinity pool or for a movie night in the home cinema.

[Villadespalmes.org](http://villadespalmes.org); from US\$600

INDONESIA

Villa Naga Putih, in Ubud, Bali



Courtesy of Villa Naga Putih

Get the gang together for a getting-back-to-nature getaway in Bali. Perched on a jungly hill just outside Ubud, Villa Naga Putih is like a luxurious picture frame for the tropical beauty that surrounds it. Gaze down at the Petanu River from your vast balcony or spot exotic wildlife from the 13-meter infinity pool. Inside, four en-suite bedrooms feature luxe local touches and there's a state-of-the-art media room if you can drag yourself away from the nature show.

Villanagaputih.com; from US\$680

AUSTRALIA

Tussie Mussie Vineyard + Retreat, in Mornington Peninsula, Victoria



Courtesy of Tussie Mussie

Wine country getaways don't get much more immersive than a stay among the Pinots Noir and Gris of a 10-hectare private vineyard estate. Book out one or all three of the characterful residences at Tussie Mussie for a rustic sojourn just an hour's drive from Melbourne. With four en-suite king bedrooms, the Vineyard Lodge is geared up for groups and families; cozy and romantic the two-bed Owner's Cottage overlooks the vines; The Old Laundry is a spacious private suite tucked into the woodland. Forage in the kitchen garden and cook up wood-fired pizzas or barbecued delights for alfresco dinners around the long table, and raise a glass of something local.

Tussiemussie.com.au; from US\$2,200

JAPAN

Kazahana, in Niseko



Courtesy of Kazahana

This is snow-lodge luxury, Japanese-style. A few minutes from the slopes of Niseko, three-floors of stylish apres-ski coziness is framed in local timber and furnished with mod cons, from the home theater and massage chair to the heated parking spot. Six bedrooms sleep up to 13 in beds dressed with linens as crisp and soft as the winter powder, and the top floor is dedicated to open-plan living and dining. Step out onto the top deck for a hot tub soak with views of Mount Yotei.

[The Luxe Nomad/Kazahana Niseko](#); from US\$2,894

Link: <https://travelandleisureasia.com/8-awesome-private-villas-for-your-next-group-getaway/>