National Geographic Traveler

Best Trips

Where to Go in 2019

- Mexico City
- Tahiti
- Dordogne
- Oman
Dine in a candlelit grotto, dive with manta rays, or lie back for a waterside massage.

The sea in all its styles, from big-wave drama to lapping lagoon, sets the scene at the world’s most spectacular island resorts. Whether guests arrive by boat or by plane, an island escape affords a remove that a mainland property can’t mimic. Untethered and unbound, isles from the tropics to the Arctic compel adventurers and sunseekers drawn by the dream of downtime. Where better to relax and write resolutions for the year ahead? Here are 21 of our favorite island resorts, from Caribbean idylls that have bounded back after the 2017 hurricane season to eco-retreats in Africa.

—Elaine Glusac

Time + Tide Miavana on Madagascar’s Nosy Ankao island makes a luxe base for exploring and lounging.
**BEST LIST**
**ISLAND RESORTS**

**The Americas**

**UNITED STATES**

**The Big Island, Hawaii**
Soak in aquatic endeavors at the Four Seasons Resort Hualalai (e), which offers a snorkeling cove, outrigger canoes, and separate pools for families, adults, and lap swimmers. The water theme flows into the ground-floor rooms, all of which feature outdoor showers in a lush garden.

**St. Simons Island, Georgia**
Just six cottages at the Lodge on Little St. Simons Island (e) share the 11,000-acre barrier island that's protected by the Nature Conservancy. Guests have access to seven miles of beaches and naturalist-led outings to birdwatch, canoe, and hike.

**Puerto Rico**
Travelers are once again heading to Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve (e), newly reopened after a year's refurbishment. A mile of scalloped beaches edge the 1,400-acre property, the former estate of Laurance S. Rockefeller, which has three golf courses, 11 miles of bike trails, and 14 oceanfront rooms. Take a dip in the beach club's vast pool or, if you're in a ground-floor room, a private plunge pool. Fronted by a nearly 100-year-old frangipani tree, the five-acre Spa Botánico is a sanctuary within a sanctuary with treehouse treatment spaces, a water circuit of hot and cold temperatures, and an herb-filled apothecary for custom aromatherapy.

**Chiloé Island**
With 24 rooms and a spirit of adventure, Tierra Chiloé (e), a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World, takes visitors on excursions to discover the Chiloé archipelago, from trekking coastal cliffs and kayaking around bays to cruising past palafitos, traditional stilt houses. Afterward, an infinity pool, massages, and local seafood await.

**Jamaica**

**Negril**
Perched atop limestone cliffs at Negril's west end, 12 pastel cottages and suites lure privacy seekers to The Caves (e), owned by Island Records founder Chris Blackwell. It's a beginner-friendly jump into inviting waters to explore the chasms. Then tipple in the cave-enclosed rum bar or dine in a candlelit grotto for two.

**British Virgin Islands**

**Guana Island**
Unplug the smartphones and play castaway crow on Guana Island (e), an 850-acre wildlife sanctuary with 19 cottages and villas and a 40-year history of entertaining families. Ways to spend quality time with the kids range from strolling seven beaches and snorkeling among some 170 species of fish to hiking, foraging in fruit orchards, and checking flamingos off the bird list.

**Nantucket, Massachusetts**
From the 1875-vintage Inn The Wauwinet (e), guests can explore Nantucket by land in a 1949 Knightmake station wagon or by sea in the 21-passenger Wauwinet Lady. The adults-only resort, neighboring tranquil Coatsa-Coatsa Wildlife Refuge, offers entry to private beaches on the ocean and the calm bay. After port-and-cheese hour, dine at Topper's restaurant, which serves oysters harvested 300 yards away.

**St. Lucia**

**Soufrière**
With a marine reserve offshore and the Piton mountains as backdrop, Anse Chastanet (e) brings adventure to the beach. The former French plantation, which retains 18th-century ruins, now serves as a playground for cuddleboat types. Dive or snorkel directly from shore, or test your quads on a summit of Gros Piton.

**Canada**

**Fogo Island**
Off the coast of Newfoundland, Fogo Island Inn (e) is both an Atlantic Ocean refuge and a portal to the local culture. The 29-room National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World engages islanders to make furniture, sew quilts, and lead berry picking or hiking excursions. Newfoundland's "seven seasons" inform every stay, from the locavore restaurant dishes to the scenery that shifts from flowers to ice.

**Vancouver Island**
Tucked in the rugged west coast of British Columbia's Vancouver Island, the Wickaninnish Inn (e) makes for a warm refuge even in storm-watching season (November). February) with 75 wood-paneled rooms on a stormy peninsula between coastal temperate forest and the sea. Its Ancient Cedars Spa deploys nature—pedicures come with water views—and indigenous practices in its healing treatments.
Europe

ICELAND

Grindavik
The mineral-rich waters of this island nation’s most famous attraction surround the 62 rooms of the new Retroat at Blue Lagoon Iceland (e). Beyond soaking in the steaming, milky bean and slathering on silica mud, seek additional therapy at the subterranean spa with volcanic rock walls and in-water massages. Modernist rooms with floor-to-ceiling windows channel a blissed-out vibe; windows overlook a moss-covered lava landscape. Dine on seasonal Icelandic specialties in Moco Restaurant, featuring a chef’s table and wine cellar made of carved rock. Don’t forget to arrange a wake-up call, should the northern lights start dancing.

ITALY

Isola delle Rose
The JW Marriott Venice Resort & Spa (e) provides the best of both worlds: the enchantment of the City of Canals, a 20-minute boat ride away, and the tranquility of a 60-acre private island. Stroll through the olive grove, take a dip in the pool, and dine at the Michelin-starred waterfront restaurant in view of the distant city lights.

MONTENEGRO

Sveti Stefan
The 15th-century fortified island of Sveti Stefan now links to Montenegro’s mainland via an isthmus, but the Aman Sveti Stefan (e) that occupies the village, with 56 rooms arrayed in stone cottages, maintains a sense of remoteness. Maroon yourself in palm-shaded lances or swim to pink beaches ashore. (Most of the resort is open only spring through fall.)

Asia

INDONESIA

Flores Island
At the newly opened Ayana Komodo Resort, Wae Rebo Beach (e), dive in a marine sanctuary, strike a yoga pose on a paddleboard, and take a safari in Komodo National Park to see Earth’s largest lizards. Sailings on the resort’s nine-cabin phinisi yacht visit deserted beaches.

Sumba Island
Twenty-seven bungalows dot the 560 acres at Nih Sumba (e). Explore the legendary left break, while paddleboarders ply jungle rivers. A visit to NihOka spa begins with a trek (or car ride) through rice paddies to your own bale, or pavillon, overlooking the sea.

MALDIVES

Kunfunadhoo Island
In the Indian Ocean’s Baa Atoll, Sonesta Mysti (e) combines kaleidoscopic reef life with on-land family fun such as a Logo room and an instrument-filled music room. In the evening, take a sunset jaunt to watch for dolphins or listen to the resident astronomer tell stories about the stars.

Oceania

AUSTRALIA

Kangaroo Island
With 21 suites strung above its namesake body of water, Southern Ocean Lodge (e) snares guests in the wilds of the Island. The National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World offers walks to the Remarkable Rocks, sea lion safaris, and evening sunsets with wild kangaroos (aka “kongs and kanpods”).

FRENCH POLYNESIA

Bora Bora
Kiss the clock goodbye in one of 89 villas—most built over the pristine lagoon—at the St. Regis Bora Bora (e). Kayak, sail, or simply lounge-lounge with views of Mount Otemanu. Butler service, a restaurant menu by Jean-Georges Vongerichten, and traditional tahitians round out the relaxation.

FIJI

Kokomo Island
The Great Astrolabe Reef, one of the world’s largest, encircles the Kadavu Island Group, home to 140-acre Kokomo Private Island Fiji (e), a 21-villa, five-residence resort well-suited to family reunions and weddings. Hike to a waterfall, learn to surf, or hop the resident marine biologist propagate a coral garden.

Africa

MADAGASCAR

Nosy Ankao
Off northern Madagascar, the new 16-unit Tima + Tita Mivana (e) is a jumping-off point for exploring the 37,000-acre marine preserve around it, where whales, sialfish, and manta rays swim. Land safaris, accessed by helicopter or boat, visit groups—or “conspiracies”—of lemurs.

SEYCHELLES

Fregate Island
More than a hundred bird species, thousands of giant tortoises, hundreds of nesting turtles, and just 16 villas—each with a pool and butler—occupy Fregate Island Private (e). The National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World supports the conservation of this so-called mini-Galapagos, also home to seven white sand beaches, a dive center, and a restored forest.

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