

# The quiet life

All-inclusive stays are starting to make their mark in Asia

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**S**lurping a bowl of beef pho from a street stall in Vietnam, struggling to twist the garlicky noodles of Thai-style sukiyaki around chopsticks, or getting a hit of sharp-but-sweet papaya salad som tam while standing at the side of the street – these are all rites of passage for any visitor to Asia’s culinary hotspots. So with street food this good, why go all-inclusive?

It’s a fair question, but with a rising tide of hotels starting to offer all-inclusive options, there’s clearly something to the trend. Following in the footsteps of the

Indian Ocean, where luxury resorts have redefined ‘all-inclusive’ to encompass spa treatments, sports and excursions, staying all-inclusive in Asia is about more than just food and drink.

The packages are as diverse as the countries they cover, from uber-luxury camps in the highlands of Thailand to chilled-out beach resorts in Bali, but one thing almost all have in common is – contrary to the reputation of some all-

inclusive resorts – encouraging guests to get to know the local area. So there should be plenty of time for that street snack after all.

## ▶ THAILAND: HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

As the region’s most established beach destination, Thailand has the greatest choice of all-inclusive resorts, generally clustered

around popular package spots such as Phuket, Hua Hin, or larger islands such as Koh Samui.

“There are a number of great all-inclusive options in Thailand, particularly in Khao Lak,” says Hayes & Jarvis destination manager Matthew Clift. “I’d recommend the Apsara Beachfront Resort & Villas. It’s on the beach and surrounded by unspoilt natural parks. The all-inclusive option offers both Thai and international dining menus, and guests can even learn how to cook like the locals with a free Thai cooking class.” 



Kuoni offers a week at the Evason Hua Hin, Thailand, including flights from Heathrow and private transfers, from £1,344 based on two sharing. [kuoni.co.uk](http://kuoni.co.uk)

Hayes & Jarvis offers a week at Sol Beach House Benoa in Bali, including flights, from £1,099 in May. [hayesandjarvis.co.uk](http://hayesandjarvis.co.uk)



ABOVE: Apsara Beachfront Resort & Villas

carte – giving little ones a chance to try Thai foods while still having more familiar international fare on hand.

If that still sounds like typical all-inclusive territory, the luxurious Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort certainly won't. Proving all-inclusive can extend way beyond the beach, this luxurious property, tucked away on the border between northern Thailand, Burma and Laos, not only includes all meals, selected drinks (house wines, beers and spirits) and in-room dining, but also a lengthy list of activities. Choose from mahout training, a cooking masterclass, private Golden Triangle tour or a spa package, with one activity for every night stayed. Nightly rates start at £649.

▶ VIETNAM: FEEL GOOD

"Although all-inclusive options are not as common in the Far East as in other regions, when you do come across them, they are done well," says Western & Oriental product manager Erica Moore.



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RIGHT: Fusion Maia  
BELOW: Sol Beach House Benoa

"One thing to look for in Asia are hotels that include spa treatments within the all-inclusive package – clients see this as real added value. Fusion Resorts in Vietnam is a great example – Fusion Maia and Fusion Resort Nha Trang include two spa treatments per guest per day, which is a fantastic inclusion for a relaxing wellness holiday."

This alternative take on the all-inclusive concept, swapping unlimited food and drink for daily spa treatments, will suit those who want all the extras of an all-inclusive package with the flexibility to dine as they wish.

However, there are more classic all-inclusive packages available in Vietnam's ever-expanding crop of beach hotels. Chen Sea Resort & Spa Phu Quoc, part of the Centara Boutique Collection, for example, is set in a quiet bay on Phu Quoc island, and offers a stunning beachfront restaurant.

▶ BALI: LOVE NESTS

Honeymooners are a key target for all-inclusives, which helps explain why Bali – a romantic spot if ever there was one – has a plentiful supply.

Travel 2 is a fan of the four-star Grand Mirage Resort in Nusa Dua, where the package covers watersports and cultural activities for those who want to get out and about, or room service and a fully stocked minibar for couples who want to hide away from it all.

Another popular choice is the four-star Sol Beach House Benoa, a favourite with Gold Medal guests and new to Premier Holidays' programme this year. The resort offers three tiers of all-inclusive, with meals, local drinks and in-house activities included for all guests, but the option to upgrade for free Wi-Fi and laundry, or room service and a discount on premium drinks.



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PICTURE: GOLD MEDAL