



8
OF THE
Best
VILLAS

Laura French rounds up the Indian Ocean's best villa resorts

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When it comes to privacy, seclusion and the flexibility to do what you like, when you like, nothing quite beats a villa, and that's where the Indian Ocean shines out, with a plethora of all-villa resorts bordering turquoise waters, lush forests and snow-white shores.

To help you match the right one with the right client, we've rounded up some of the best - cue personal chefs, private butlers and all-out pavilions suspended over crystal-clear waters, sounds of the sea lulling you into a gentle daze.

1 HUVAFEN FUSHI, THE MALDIVES
Best for: Underwater spa.
The details: Every bungalow and pavilion has a private plunge pool and spacious outdoor terrace at this boutique resort in the North Malé Atoll. Deluxe Beach Bungalows sit beside white-sand shores, while Ocean Bungalows are over the water, with glass floors offering a glimpse of the colourful reef below.

It's the Parisian-inspired 'Playpen' pavilion that impresses the most though: 800sq m of luxury including a steam and sauna room, private cocktail bar, open kitchen, courtyard, 24/7 butler and infinity pool illuminated in eye-catching red.

That, and the spa, which features a cluster of underwater treatment rooms where colourful fish swish back and forth as you sit back, relax and watch the

watery world go by.

Book it: Caribtours offers a week's bed and breakfast in a Beach Bungalow with Plunge Pool from £4,129 per person. The price includes flights, transfers and airport lounge access. caribtours.co.uk

2 MAIA LUXURY RESORT & SPA, THE SEYCHELLES
Best for: Butler service.
The details: Located on a private peninsula at Anse Louis Beach, Mahé, this all-villa resort is a go-to for clients looking for no-holds-barred luxury, according to Zoe Saunders, Indian Ocean senior product manager at the Inspiring Travel Company. "Each villa has its own butler who does everything for you," she says. "They can cook your breakfast, arrange a romantic meal on the beach and even babysit the children."

Guests can choose a hillside or beachfront location - each features an infinity pool, outdoor bath and Hermès amenities - while the 'beyond all-inclusive' deal lets them dine at any time, in any location. The surroundings aren't bad either, with 12 hectares of lush forest and sugar-sand shores circling the resort.

Book it: The Inspiring Travel Company offers a week from £5,985 per person, based on two adults sharing an Ocean Panoramic Villa, with flights and private car transfers on a 'beyond all-inclusive basis'. Valid for travel before December 20. inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk

3 LUX SOUTH ARI ATOLL, THE MALDIVES
Best for: Excellent value.
The details: For a more affordable option that doesn't sacrifice on luxury, Premier Holidays recommends this 193-villa resort in the Maldives. Sizeable beach villas make it a hit with families, while overwater villas give it welly for couples seeking a secluded getaway amid the ocean's turquoise hues.

There'll be no getting bored, either. Alongside the Lux Me Spa, a Padi dive centre, eight restaurants and five bars, you'll find an outdoor cinema and junkyard studio - where clients can make crafts out of recycled items - plus a host of quirky touches, including a 'tree of wishes' and red telephone boxes where guests can phone home free of charge.

Book it: Seven nights' bed and breakfast in a beach villa costs from £2,599 per person with Premier Holidays, including Etihad flights and transfers, for travel from September 1-15. trade.premierholidays.co.uk

4 HERITAGE THE VILLAS, MAURITIUS
Best for: Families and groups.
The details: Set on the grand Domaine de Bel Ombre estate - a 19th-century sugar plantation that's also home to the Heritage Awali and Heritage Le Telfair resorts - Heritage The Villas offers space and privacy with all the amenities you'd get from a

hotel, including an 18-hole golf course and access to 15 bars and restaurants.

Designed in colonial style, they span two, three and four bedrooms, with in-villa chefs, private infinity pools and an open-plan layout making them a good bet for bigger families and groups - and the top pick for If Only's marketing manager, Tom Higgins, who highlights their "light, airy feel, lush gardens, spacious en suite bedrooms and fabulous outdoor living space".

Book it: If Only offers seven nights' bed and breakfast from £1,495 per person in September. The price includes flights, private car transfers and airport taxes, based on four adults sharing a two-bedroom villa. ifonly.net

5 ANANTARA MEDJUMBE ISLAND RESORT, MOZAMBIQUE
Best for: Adult-only getaways.

The details: With just 12 villas, this adult-only retreat is an excellent recommendation for couples in search of total seclusion. Scattered across a private island off the coast of Mozambique, each features a thatched roof, private plunge pool and outdoor terrace overlooking the water, alongside access to one of the most pristine coral reefs on the planet.

There's a string of activities for those wanting to get out and explore - snorkelling, diving, whale watching, sailing and

→ sea kayaking to name a few – plus a beachfront spa villa, restaurant serving local and European cuisine, and a new Star Bed Experience, which whisks guests away to an uninhabited private island for the night and is free for guests staying four nights or more. **Book it:** Seven nights' all-inclusive starts at £5,350 per person with Rainbow Tours, based on two sharing a Beach Pool Villa. The price includes international flights and helicopter transfers to the island, for departures in October. rainbowtours.co.uk

6 FINOLHU, THE MALDIVES
Best for: Nightlife.
The details: For young, trendy types looking to live it up a little, suggest the quirky, retro-chic Finolhu, where you'll find everything from a campervan bar to a Fish and Crab Shack, cinema screenings to retro pool parties and plenty in between. The villas are stylish and ultra-luxury, spanning beach and overwater villas. There are also two-bedroom versions for families or groups of couples travelling together.
"It's a very cool, luxurious property,"



ABOVE: Anantara Medjumbe Island Resort, Mozambique

BELOW: The Residence, Zanzibar



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says Linda Pedler, product and purchasing manager for Kuoni, which has just added the property to its portfolio. **Book it:** Seven nights' all-inclusive in a Beach Villa starts at £3,449 per person, including SriLankan Airlines flights from Heathrow and resort transfers, based on two adults sharing in September. kuoni.co.uk

7 MARADIVA VILLAS RESORT AND SPA, MAURITIUS
Best for: Peaceful surroundings.
The details: Sandwiched

between tropical forest and the talcum-white sands of Flic en Flac, the all-villa, all-pool Maradiva has earned itself a name among the very best thanks to its impeccable service, peaceful setting and lush surroundings, with villas (all recently refurbished) offering spacious outdoor terraces and open-air showers. "It's one of the finest all-villa resorts in Mauritius," says Rebecca Turner, senior product manager for Simply Luxury by Travel 2. "It offers luxurious

outdoor living in an intimate setting, inspired by Indian heritage, with an elegant design and exceptional facilities." **Book it:** Simply Luxury by Travel 2 offers a week's half-board in a Luxury Suite Pool Villa from £2,449 per person, for travel between May 1 and June 23, 2019. The price includes Emirates flights from Gatwick, private transfers and an early-booking discount. travel2.com

8 THE RESIDENCE, ZANZIBAR
Best for: Local culture.

The details: Perched on a sprawling, forested estate and ringed by topaz waters, The Residence combines Swahili, Omani and European heritage in its villas with beach or garden settings, private pools and sun decks. Every guest gets their own bike on which to ride round the island, while there's plenty more to be getting on with, from exploring the markets of Unesco-listed Stone Town to taking part in a culinary tour or watching a traditional taraab dance. Nearby you'll also find the Jozani Forest Reserve, where you might be lucky enough to spot Zanzibar's crowning glory, the red colobus monkey. **Book it:** Hayes & Jarvis offers seven nights' half-board in a one-bedroom luxury garden villa from £1,924 per person, including flights from Heathrow with Kenya Airways, departing April 22, 2019. hayesandjarvis.co.uk

