



PICTURES: SAMIS PAPADOPOULOS; ANDREW HOWARD

# 8 OF THE Best PRIVATE ISLANDS

Laura French lines up some exclusive resorts

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**Blinking flashes of turquoise, talcum-powder sands and palm-lined shores without another soul in sight: welcome to the world of private islands.**

From the most exclusive, royalty-graced patches of land, to island resorts that won't break the bank, there's a generous smattering of options out there. It's not one to suggest to the most budget-conscious of clients, but you might be surprised to find whole-island resorts that suit the well-off as well as the mind-blowingly wealthy.

Here's our guide to some of the best – let the castaway dreams commence.

**1 FREGATE ISLAND, THE SEYCHELLES**  
For nature-loving clients looking to push the boat

out (in more ways than one) suggest Frigate Island, where safaris through the forest, wild foraging trips and a resident 150-year-old tortoise named James await ecofriendly families. Fire camps on the beach with toasted marshmallows and stargazing with an astronomer all feature on the menu too, adding a Crusoe-esque element of adventure into the mix.

Spread across the 300-hectare island are 16 private residences and seven beaches, one of which is often touted as the 'most beautiful in the world'. And with its fine white sand, granite rock formations and rippling ocean gently lulling back and forth, it's not hard to see why. It's little

surprise A-listers such as Tom Cruise have chosen to holiday here in the past – so eyes at the ready.

**Book it:** Seven nights' all-inclusive at Frigate Island with Abercrombie & Kent costs from £11,195 per person based on two sharing a Private Pool Residence. The price includes international flights and helicopter transfers. [abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://abercrombiekent.co.uk)

**2 VELAA PRIVATE ISLAND, THE MALDIVES**

When it comes to all-out extravagance, nothing quite beats Velaa Private Island, set in the Noonu Atoll. Fiona Greenhalgh, head of product and commercial at Carrier, says: "This is the most decadent of islands in the Maldives."

The 43-villa island is also a hub for adventure, with jetskis, kitesurfing, parasailing, catamaran trips and 'sea bobbing' available, alongside a new range of water gadgets including a hoverboard, flyboard and jetpack.

That means it gets a big tick for families, as does a comprehensive kids' club that offers climbing, Dhivehi language lessons, yoga, sea-life classes and pizza-making workshops – and this Easter, Alice, the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts will be turning up to add some extra entertainment.

Adults won't be left behind though: there's a golf academy designed by José María Olazábal, an Ayurvedic spa and an

atmospheric wine cellar that lays claim to the biggest selection of vino in the archipelago.

**Book it:** A four-bedroom Private Residence (with two terraces, a pool and courtyard) starts at \$16,000 per night, including a daily breakfast buffet (subject to a 10% service charge and 12% government tax). [velaaprivateisland.com](http://velaaprivateisland.com)

**3 MIRIHI ISLAND RESORT, THE MALDIVES**

Island resorts don't necessarily have to stretch the purse strings too far; for a slightly more affordable option, suggest Mirihi Island in the South Ari Atoll.

At only 350 metres long and 50 metres wide, it's one of the smallest islands in the Maldives, with 37 villas scattered among its palm-lined shores, including a new two-bedroom overwater suite with its own jetty.

The resort is built around a blue lagoon, meaning tropical fish and colourful coral reefs surround the place, and guests heading out on a snorkelling or diving trip are in with a chance of spotting whale sharks.

Back on land, there's a gym, beach cinema screenings, complimentary yoga and evening meditation, so it's a good option for those seeking some me-time. It's especially suited to solo travellers, who will get various special deals (including a free upgrade from bed and breakfast to half-board) if they travel between May 20 and August 30.

**Book it:** The Solo Traveller Special rate costs from \$325 per person on a half-board basis. [mirihi.com](http://mirihi.com)

**4 THE RESIDENCE MALDIVES**

Around a similar price point, there's The Residence Maldives – set on the secluded island of Falhumaafushi, in the Gaafu Alifu Atoll – which Iain Raeper, product manager at If Only, recommends for clients seeking a peaceful escape.

"The domestic flight and speedboat transfer is a clear indication that you are heading for one of the Maldives' quieter corners," he says.

Set in one of the region's most southerly atolls, it's a haven for snorkelling and diving, and offers an empty private beach where clients can get the castaway experience without digging too deep into the pockets. Cooking courses, cocktail-making sessions and spa treatments are also available.

**Book it:** If Only offers seven nights' bed and breakfast in a Beach Villa from £1,869 per person for stays in May and June, if booked by March 31. The price includes international and domestic flights, and speedboat transfers. [agents.ifonly.net](http://agents.ifonly.net)

**5 NORTH ISLAND, THE SEYCHELLES**

If it's good enough for William and Kate – who honeymooned here in 2011



→ - who wouldn't it please? Topaz waters, verdant hills, white-sand beaches and colourful wildlife put North Island about as close to paradise as you can get, and it's all done with conservation at the forefront, thanks to a dedicated 'environmental team'.

Located 20 miles from main island Mahé, it's home to 11 villas and four beaches, meaning it's easy to go a whole day without encountering anyone else.

It's as worthy a suggestion for families as it is for couples, as there's a Beach Buddy programme to keep kids occupied, alongside a plethora of activities to suit every age, from scuba diving and fishing to cycling and kayaking.

It's not too shabby on the dining front either: think fine dining to a backdrop of swishing ocean sounds at the Piazza, or alfresco seafood barbecues over fiery sunsets at West Beach, where nesting hawksbill turtles waddle across the shores.

**Book it:** Carrier offers seven nights' all-inclusive from £21,865 per person, for a May 12 departure. The price is based on two sharing and includes return flights from Heathrow and transfers.

**carrier.co.uk**



## 6 VELASSARU, THE MALDIVES

For a romantic break suggest Velassaru, where younger honeymooners and couples who are particularly

passionate about food will be in their element.

Sheena Paton, UK commercial and product manager for Kuoni, says: "It has a really cool vibe by day and night, with a fantastic choice of dining. The main restaurant, Vela, is fresh and contemporary, with a great buffet and live cooking stations."

International cuisine is the order of the day with four other restaurants including a Teppanyaki spot - serving creative Japanese dishes on a jetty over the lagoon - and Sand, where local specialities adorn candlelit tables along the beach.

There's also plenty on the drinks front with two chilled-out bars - think outdoor daybeds and beanbags.

The quirkiness doesn't end there. Among the activities available are night snorkelling excursions and underwater photo workshops led by a resident marine biologist - worth highlighting for clients seeking something a little different.



**Book it:** Kuoni offers seven nights in a deluxe bungalow at the five-star Velassaru Maldives from £2,244 per person in August. The price is based on two sharing and includes flights from Heathrow and group transfers.  
**agents.kuoni.co.uk**

## 7 ONE&ONLY REETHI RAH, THE MALDIVES

With a host of gongs to its name, One&Only Reethi Rah has earned itself a well-deserved reputation in the world of luxury resorts.

The all-villa island lays claim to four miles of private coastline, meaning every villa has its own private stretch of sand.

It's also a good recommendation for families, with activities such as cupcake making, pirate-themed days and cycling tours on the agenda.

Don't discount it for couples though, with its award-winning spa and good selection of dining options such as Botanica, an outdoor organic 'garden to fork'

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**For the ultimate in exclusivity there's only one thing for it - hiring out the whole island**

restaurant where dishes are served beneath towering palms and starry skies.

**Book it:** Elegant Resorts offers seven nights' half-board for the price of five, for departures on September 16. Prices start at £4,365 in a Beach Villa, including Emirates flights, boat transfers and UK lounge passes.  
**elegantresorts.co.uk**

## 8 COCO PRIVE, THE MALDIVES

For ultimate exclusivity though, there's only one thing for it - hiring a whole island. Coco Privé is among

the cream of the crop, with its domineering Palm Residence and five one-bedroom villas, which guests reach via a private luxury yacht from Malé. There's a private Jacuzzi, cocktail bar, wine cellar, library, sauna and gym, alongside a 40-metre pool where guests overdoing it on the food front can burn off some excess calories.

A personal lifestyle host, chef, spa therapist and dive master are also on hand to keep things running smoothly. Clients can canoe, windsurf or sail around on a catamaran; chances are if you can think of it, you can do it. Stays are also personalised for each guest with special touches available including celebratory dinners, performers and all-out parties - think Mr Gatsby with added flair.

**Book it:** Coco Privé costs \$45,000 per night for up to 10 people, and \$2,500 per night for every additional guest (up to a maximum of 18).  
**cocoprive.com**

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**LEFT:** Velassaru, the Maldives

**ABOVE:** North Island, the Seychelles

**ABOVE RIGHT:** One&Only Reethi Rah, the Maldives