

# Islands

Enthusiast Travel Since 1981

SKIP THE CUSTOMS LINE  
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## WHERE TO GO IN

*March*

**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

A trio of hotels debut on the north coast.  
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*June*

**GALAPAGOS**

Blue-footed boobies and giant tortoises are calling.  
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*July*

**JAMAICA**

Nab a front-row seat to the hottest music fest.  
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## Dream Trips

Bora Bora // Australia  
Fiji // Puerto Rico  
New Zealand // Alaska  
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SLEEP IN THIS  
*Clifftop Villa*

SUNBATHE ON A  
*Private Beach*

SWIM WITH  
*Turtles and Angelfish*

# 6 Splurge-Worthy Retreats

Where to blow your tax refund?  
Try one of these over-the-top resorts.

## 1

### Laucala Island

FIJI

I still can't believe we're here. I've been in disbelief since we boarded the resort's private jet in Nadi for the 50-minute flight to this private-island paradise. Now I'm sitting on a couch in my villa's living room, gazing at our own infinity plunge pool overlooking the Pacific, letting it all sink in. The resort's 25 villas — luxurious thatch-roof *buves* the size of small houses — are all amazing, but we've opted for the ultra-private Peninsula Residence, built into the edge of an oceanside cliff. Upstairs is our bedroom, a sun deck and a rooftop hot tub; down below, our own secluded little stretch of beach. Sipping a glass of champagne from our personal bar — stocked with full bottles of premium spirits and wine — I contemplate my next move. This morning, it was a lovely massage at the hilltop spa. For a souvenir, I chose ginger and lemongrass grown in the resort's organic garden, which were blended by a coconut press into an essential oil. The resort's 14-boat fleet is convenient for getting out on the water. Tomorrow,

we're diving Fiji's famous rainbow coral, followed by a romantic sunset cruise on the yacht. Deep-sea fishing, sailing, Jet Skiing and kayaking are also options, should we choose to partake. Maybe we'll book a tee time on the David McLay Kidd-designed golf course, but for now, I'm more than content with my glass of bubbly, this once-in-a-lifetime view and knowing the real world is far, far away. *From \$4,800 per night, all-inclusive; laucala.com — Rebecca Kinnear*



Ride to secluded beaches on a horseback tour, stopping for a romantic picnic along the way.



## 2. CAPE KIDNAPPERS

HAWKE'S BAY,  
NEW ZEALAND

Stone facades, distressed wood and liberal use of metal: The Farm at Cape Kidnappers has an unusual, yet vaguely familiar design — sort of Colorado mountain-meets-modern style. But I'm definitely not in Colorado: I'm perched 1,000 feet above the Pacific, on New Zealand's North Island.

Twenty-two accommodations on 6,000 acres affords a lot of elbow room — people are significantly outnumbered by sheep. I make eye contact with scores of them while on a long horseback ride — and on an even longer bike ride that takes me through the twisting trails of the 18-hole championship golf course designed by Tom Doak. I watch the sheep walk

nonchalantly along cliff edges that look as if they might break off and tumble into the sea at any moment. New Zealand is worth the travel distance mainly because it delivers an immediate connection to the ends of a precarious and vividly hued Earth.

The property carries the rarefied Relais & Châteaux designation, which might seem incongruous given that Cape Kidnappers is a working sheep and cattle farm. But one meal is enough to dispel that: New Zealand has some of the freshest, most flavorful food on the planet. The onsite garden produces zucchini, strawberries, 37 different kinds of tomatoes and lettuce that I still rhapsodize over.

As for my favorite space, it's the converted silo that's now a cozy lounge. I stare out the louver windows at the technicolored green hills and the big blue ocean and fantasize about staying a little longer. *From \$1,055 per night; capekidnappers.com — Drew Limsky*

New Zealand's rugged coast (top) is the setting for the luxe Cape Kidnappers (below).



# 3

## Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve

DORADO, PUERTO RICO



Only three properties in the world boast the Ritz-Carlton Reserve title, and I'm en route to Dorado Beach, their closest resort to the U.S. We drive through the jungle-like, yet perfectly manicured grounds — a world apart from the chain restaurants we passed a mile back. Upon arrival, I'm greeted by Carlos, my *embajadore*, or personal butler, who hands me a delicious frozen treat made from fresh mango. He guides me through the open-air lobby and shares a bit of background, like how the sprawling resort is set on 50 acres of a former Rockefeller estate. It was designed so that all of its 115 accommodations face the Atlantic, including oceanfront balconies, suites with plunge pools and multibedroom villas. I try to play it cool when I see

Dorado Beach's Positivo pool (top) and an outdoor treehouse pavilion at Spa Botanico (left).

the size of my Ocean Reserve room. Carlos offers to make a reservation at Mi Casa, the restaurant by James Beard award-winning chef José Andrés. He also mentions the resort's three golf courses and the treehouse treatment rooms at Spa Botanico, unique for alfresco massages. Lounging on my terrace's daybed is tempting, but Carlos is bringing a bike — my own for the duration of my stay — so I can explore the 11-mile historic Rockefeller Nature Trail. After a full day, I relax in my deep soaking tub, soothed by the sounds of serenading *coqui* tree frogs. *From \$1,499 per night; ritzcarlton.com — RK*

**Don't miss a night kayak tour to Laguna Grande to paddle the bioluminescent bay.**

# 4

## Sal Salis

CAPE RANGE NATIONAL PARK, WESTERN AUSTRALIA



It might seem crazy to swim alongside the world's biggest sharks, but that's exactly what you come to Western Australia's Ningaloo Reef to do — swim with whale sharks — and Sal Salis is where you stay.

A two-hour flight north of Perth, Sal Salis is the only lodging located within the remote Cape Range National Park. The rustic-luxe camp has just nine kitted-out safari-style tents — complete with king-size beds, screened-in, en suite bathrooms and sun decks with hammocks — strung along a ridge of red dunes overlooking the Indian Ocean.

On land, you can trek through the rugged Mandu

**The spacious wilderness tents at Sal Salis include king-size beds and en suite bathrooms.**

Mandu Gorge and the striated rock formations of Yardie Creek, spotting solitary black-footed rock wallabies and prickly echidnas. Watersports include kayaking to the Blue Lagoon to see humpback whales or snorkeling among colorful fish and stingrays.

But at Ningaloo Reef, it's all about the whale sharks. Hundreds of these mammals — some of which grow up to 40 feet long — regularly migrate here, arriving to feed on blooms of plankton and krill from April to July. Whale shark excursion numbers are limited to just 300 people per day. Combined with the relative isolation of this region, it ensures

that this is one of the most unique aquatic experiences around — and a far cry from the crowded day trips out to the Great Barrier Reef on the country's opposite coast.

Back at Sal Salis, guests gather to compare photos from the day over sunset cocktails and canapes in the main open-air tent. Dinner is served at a communal, candlelit table, where the evening's menu might include local specialties like pan-fried Exmouth tiger prawns paired with an Australian sauvignon blanc. *From \$2,010 per person, all-inclusive, for three nights. [salsalis.com.au](http://salsalis.com.au) —Eric Rosen*

## 5. STEAMBOAT BAY FISHING CLUB

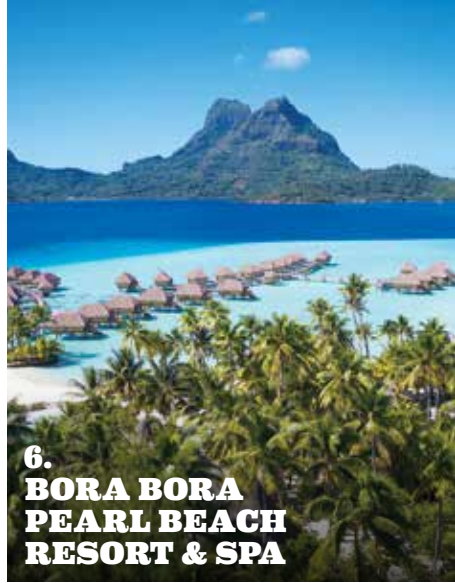
NOYES ISLAND, ALASKA

Reaching this anglers' paradise isn't for the faint of heart. The only resort — in fact, the only building — on remote Noyes Island, Steamboat Bay is accessible solely by seaplane, on a hair-raising flight over the glacier-filled Inside Passage. So why come all this way? Quite simply, it's where you'll find some of the world's best fishing. Halibut, yelloweye rockfish, king salmon — some weighing in excess of 50 pounds — this is where they feed. So expect to catch plenty of fish, but don't expect a typical rough-and-tumble Alaskan fishing-lodge experience. Steamboat Bay is luxury all the way, from the boats (custom-built, heated cabin cruisers) to the food (gourmet three-course dinners) to the amenities (open bar, bayfront hot tub, onsite massage). And then there are the accommodations: The Lodge and newly built Residence — all honeyed native spruce, wood-burning fireplaces and plush bathrobes — are limited to just 24 guests. So after a long day of hauling in your catch, relax in an Adirondack chair and soak up the pristine Alaska scenery — humpback whales included. *From \$5,390, all-inclusive, for three nights; [steamboatbay.com](http://steamboatbay.com) — Jennifer Ceaser*

## 6. BORA BORA PEARL BEACH RESORT & SPA

MOTU TEVAIROA, FRENCH POLYNESIA

I jump off the deck of my over-water bungalow — one of 50 at this French Polynesian resort — and find myself floating in a school of vibrantly colored parrotfish. The lagoon is less than 5 feet deep, a light shade of green. The bungalows frame the view of Bora Bora's central, mountainous island — and adventure beckons. I swim farther out, to the distinct line where the water turns from green to deep blue as it drops hundreds of feet at once. As I tread water, an outrigger canoe approaches me from the main island. The oarsman stops before me, then motions that I should try out his canoe. He gets out and I get in; I try to paddle, but I repeatedly flip over, much to his delight. Eventually he paddles off, laughing, and I take my sweet time swimming back, along with a great story waiting to be shared. *From \$404 per night; [spmhotels.com](http://spmhotels.com) — DL*



April through October is the best time to visit. Avoid Australia's summer months, when temps

can reach over 100 degrees Fahrenheit.