

VALUE SPECIAL

TRAVEL WELL (AND SPEND LESS)

T R A V E L + L E I S U R E

WIN A TRIP!
ENTER
THE T+L
WORLD'S
BEST
SWEEPSTAKES
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**2009
DESIGN
AWARDS
RESTAURANTS
HOTELS
LUGGAGE...**



**HOTEL
SECURITY
UPDATE**

35

**AFFORDABLE
BEACH
RESORTS
FOR UNDER
\$250 A NIGHT**

**MEXICO
COSTA RICA
ST. BART'S
CALIFORNIA
ITALY
GREECE
THAILAND**



35

Affordable Beach Resorts

Looking for an easy Mexican retreat, a shingled Cape Cod inn, or a thatched-roof villa in Thailand—for \$250 or less? At these authentic seaside getaways, barefoot simplicity is the name of the game.



ASIA

\$179 CAMBODIA In its 1950's heyday, Kep, just over 100 miles southwest of Phnom Penh, was the weekend destination of choice among French colonials and the Cambodian elite. Today, it's a haven for international jet-setters, who love the two-year-old **Knai Bang Chatt** (*Phum Thmey Sangkat Prey, Thom Khan Kep; 855/2321-2194; knaibangchatt.com*). Set in three waterfront Modernist villas, the 11 airy rooms are done up with Asian antiques, Khmer fabrics, and furniture made from salvaged driftwood. **DON'T MISS** Lunch at one of the ubiquitous crab shacks that line the beach—order the day's catch, accompanied by a puckery citrus-peppercorn sauce.

\$80 INDIA The 12-room **Wild Orchid Resort** (*Vijaynagar Beach; 91-3192/233-358; wildorchidandaman.com*), on Havelock Island, part of India's Andaman archipelago, is reached by ferry from Port Blair. This is an oasis of style in the region: hand-carved beds, dark wood ceilings, rattan wall hangings. The menu at the open-air restaurant changes daily. Try the smoked trevally fish with chili mustard or the Burmese *oh nout kaw swe*, noodles simmered in coconut milk. Down a short, sandy footpath is isolated Beach No. 5, where the slope is so gentle it's possible to wade 200 yards out. **DON'T MISS** A rickshaw ride from the hotel to Radha Nagar beach, where you may spot local celebrity Rajan—one of the only elephants in the world that swims in the sea.

\$175 INDONESIA Traditional thatched huts and jade-green fields border the pristine mile-long beach on Lombok island's underdeveloped northwest coast. True to this country's blend of cultures, **Hotel Tugu Lombok** (*Jalan Pantai Sire; 62-370/620-111; tuguhotels.com*) deftly combines Dutch, Peranakan, and indigenous design. Colonial-era doors and window frames are still intact in the 18 bungalows, villas, and suites; the rustic-luxe interiors are filled with Chinese and Indonesian

antiques. **DON'T MISS** A cooking class that begins with a trip to the nearby market to pick up ingredients such as galangal (blue ginger), lemongrass, and candlenuts.

\$245 THAILAND Between Phuket's throngs and Krabi's crowds lies the pristine, 20-square-mile island of Koh Yao Noi, home to the **Koyao Island Resort** (*24/2 Moo 5; 66-76/597-474; koyao.com*). Fifteen thatched open-air villas, cooled by a breeze from the Andaman Sea, face the bay's dramatic limestone islets. At the spa, try the Nuad Bolaan massage, an invigorating, deep pressure treatment. **DON'T MISS** The resort will arrange a tour of the island's mangrove-lined rice fields, tiny tin-roofed villages, and miles of uninhabited beaches on a three-wheeled *tuk-tuk*.

\$169 THAILAND Seclusion is one of the most attractive amenities at the **Seven Seas Resort** (*221 Moo 2, Koh Kradan; 66-75/203-38990; sevenseasresorts.com*), on a 237-acre island reserve 170 miles south of Phuket. This five-month-old hotel borders an isolated stretch of powdery white sand, and the 32 thatched-roof villas—outfitted with pine furniture—open onto spacious sundecks screened by giant coconut trees. Snorkelers can come face-to-face with the endangered sea cow, one of the Andaman's gentle giants, as well as sea horses and ghost pipefish. **DON'T MISS** A long-tail boat excursion to Tham Morakot, the “emerald cave.” At low tide, you'll navigate through a 260-foot-long limestone tunnel before reaching a sparkling green pool.

\$160 VIETNAM Nineteen miles south of Danang, **Victoria Hoi An Resort & Spa** (*Cua Dai Beach, Hoi An; 84-510/392-7040; victoriahotels-asia.com*) recalls an ancient fishing village, with clay-tiled houses and narrow paths leading to a private shoreline. Crimson silk lanterns, Chinese character scrolls, and antique yoke-back chairs fill the 109 wood-floored rooms. For the best beach access, book one of the four 390-square-foot Victoria Deluxe suites. **DON'T MISS** A day trip 12 miles north to Marble Mountain, an ancient site filled with pagodas and Buddhas carved into granite caves.

AUSTRALIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

\$139 AUSTRALIA In the New South Wales town of Merimbula—285 miles from Sydney—the **Coast Resort** (*68/1 Elizabeth St.; 61-2/6495-4930; coastresort.com.au; seven-night minimum*) is a complex of eight cube-shaped structures. The two- and three-bedroom apartments and suites, with their stainless-steel kitchens, white-on-white terraces, and contemporary furnishings, stand out from the town's otherwise dated options. Stay in a room above the ground floor for spectacular ocean views from floor-to-ceiling windows. **DON'T MISS** The Sydney rock oysters on the relaxing deck of nearby **Whealers Seafood Restaurant and Oyster Farm** (*162 Arthur Kaine Dr.; 61-2/6495-6089; dinner for two \$90*).

\$95 FRENCH POLYNESIA A one-hour flight from Tahiti, the **Rurutu Lodge** (*Unaa BP87 Moeri; 689/940-215*) is an outpost of civilization on secluded Rurutu island, formed by a raised coral atoll, that doesn't seem to worry about the rest of the world. Each of the 10 whitewashed bungalows comes with tropical hardwood floors and beds strewn with natural linens. Rurutu's coastline is ringed with dramatic cliffs and golden-sand coves. **DON'T MISS** A snorkeling swim with female humpback whales in peak season (July–October) led by the **Raie Manta Club** (*BP 22 Moerai; 689/968-480; raieantaclub.com*). The docile creatures nurture their young in the warm waters off the island.

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

\$182 SOUTH AFRICA On a stretch of savagely gorgeous coastline, 90 minutes southeast of Cape Town in Hermanus, sits the spare, white-on-white, colonial-style **Ocean Eleven** (*11 Westcliff Rd.; 27-28/312-1332; oceaneleven.co.za*), a 10-room inn at the water's edge. The owner's recommendations for Hermanus's best galleries, shops, and cafés are spot on, as are the lavender-infused soaps and salts in the »