

Explore the Shore

Pamalican Island, Philippines

Challenged with choosing the top five beach resorts in the region, *Kate Farr* factors in easy access to luxury spas, creative cocktails and picture-perfect infinity pools

If you believe that a holiday really isn't a holiday without getting a little sand between your toes, read on for some inspiration for your next sunshine break. With some of Asia's best beaches within easy striking distance of Hong Kong, it's time to pack your sunscreen, your flip-flops and your favourite lounge reads, and unwind to the sound of waves lapping against the shore.

Tioman Island, Malaysia

Situated just off the coast of Peninsula Malaysia, the jewel-like volcanic island of Tioman has scooped many plaudits over the years, with *Time* once declaring it one of the world's most beautiful islands. Tioman's breath-taking beaches will be familiar to anyone who has seen the 1958 movie, *South Pacific* – the shots of 'Bali Hai' were



actually filmed here – and its fringe of white coral reefs draws diving enthusiasts from around the world.

Built from recycled materials, eco-luxe resort Japamala sits on Tioman's

west coast, offering 13 comfortable suites and villas, set just back from a truly spectacular private beach. But there's more to this stunning property than simply sunbathing – from April to October, Japamala can arrange a visit to the Juara Turtle Project Centre, where you can witness one of nature's miracles, turtles hatching in their natural habitat.

Hua Hin, Thailand

Known as the chic beach spot where Thailand's great and good go to see and be seen, Hua Hin is a vibrant, buzzy town that has the added benefit of being easily accessible from Bangkok. Unlike many Thai resorts, Hua Hin's coastline is clean and the warm, shallow waters are exceptionally family-friendly too.

Located right on Cha Am Beach, Sofitel Hua Hin makes for a great



Hua Hin, Thailand



Sofitel Hua Hin, Hua Hin



Amanpulo, Pamalican Island



Pamalican Island, Philippines

base for your exploring, with a variety of room types and sizes that will suit everyone's needs. The resort boasts its very own beach club that dishes up delicious dining and creative cocktails in front of a private pool set right on the shore. It's the ideal spot for sandy-toed sundowners.

Pamalican Island, Philippines

Feeling fancy? The private island resort of Amanpulo is hard to beat for a special occasion beach break with all the frills... and then some. The only property on Pamalican Island, Amanpulo has sole use of the 5.5 kilometres of pristine coral sand that rings the tropical vegetation in the island's centre. As you might expect, much of the resort's programme of activities focuses on its coastline.

Try your hand at stand-up paddle boarding or sailing in the azure waters, snorkel the superb reefs that surround the resort, while away your afternoon in a breezy hammock, grab

a drink in the floating bar or meander along the shore. Just make sure you're back in time for a beachside barbecue dinner with front row seats for one of the most spectacular sunsets you'll ever witness.

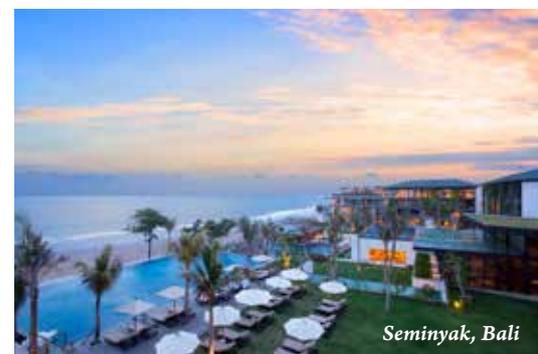
Seminyak, Bali, Indonesia

And where would a roundup of beautiful beaches be without Bali? Known as the Island of the Gods, it's an undeniably popular destination, and for good reason, but if you're looking for a little exclusivity, you're better off avoiding the best-known resort towns. To swerve the bustle of Kuta, Sanur and Nusa Dua in favour of a considerably more refined vibe, head to Seminyak.

Alila Seminyak's beachfront location offers guests a chic escape, with easy access to both the sea and a truly impressive infinity pool from which you can float your stay away. Catch some surf in the warm tropical waters of the Indian Ocean, soak up some rays on pure white sand, ▶



Alila Seminyak, Seminyak



Seminyak, Bali

then head next door to the famous Potato Head Bali. Here you can enjoy an evening of award-winning drinking and dining, while a line-up of international DJs soundtrack your holiday.

Nha Trang, Vietnam

Having recently become more accessible due to low-cost carriers launching new routes out of Hong Kong, Vietnam's east coast destination of Nha Trang is still relatively unknown amongst the tour-group crowds. A laid-back destination with excellent beaches, you'll benefit from affordable prices, a balmy climate and clean, clear waters. A day trip to Doc Let, some 50 kilometres up the coast, is well worth the effort; you'll be rewarded with serene, bounty-island scenery and powder-white sand.

Owned and managed by the Six Senses group (so you know it's going to be good), the Evason Ana Mandara resort is Nha Trang's only beachfront resort. The all-villa accommodation nestles in lush, tropical gardens, with plenty of hidden corners in which to lounge with a cocktail. Make some time in

your hectic schedule for a visit to the on-site Six Senses Spa: the menu of massages and body treatments draws on traditional Vietnamese

remedies to soothe and pamper. Post spa, you'll be floating on air, ready for another hard day of sun, sea and sand. **B**



Evason Ana Mandara, Nha Trang

FIND IT

- Alila Seminyak, www.alilahotels.com
- Amanpulo, www.aman.com
- Evason Ana Mandara, www.sixsenses.com
- Japamala, www.japamalaresorts.com
- Sofitel Hua Hin, www.sofitel.com

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