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Top 10 Series: Beach Holidays

Conservation Beach, Brazil

The air in Fernando de Noronha, an island in the archipelago of the same name, 350km off the coast of Brazil, is the purest in the world after that in the Arctic. It is a marine sanctuary ringed by crystal-white sand, and is a haven for turtles. Only 480 visitors are allowed on the island at a time. Volunteer at Tamar Turtle Protection Project to observe turtles laying their eggs on the beach at night, and help monitor the baby turtles going out to sea. Stay at Maravilha, a contemporary pousada of eight enchanting wooden bungalows scattered along a rugged hillside.



Exotic Beach, Bora Bora

So good they named it twice, Bora Bora has been the ultimate romantic desert-island idyll since the 1950s. Its reputation hasn't dwindled. The Four Seasons Resort has recently opened on the edge of a lagoon in the Motu Tofari atoll. Its 107 thatched bungalows and suites are on stilts or their own stretch of secluded beach, and all have pools and soak tubs. Despite its honeymoon credentials, it is well equipped for families, with children's clubs and a Young Adults' activities club on its own island.



Eco Beach, Thailand Luxury

Koh Kood is Thailand's fourth-largest but barely developed island near the Cambodian border and Soneva Kiri is the latest resort by Six Senses. It's a 'light footprint' place, but also offers complete indulgence. Guests will arrive by eight-seater Cessna Grand Caravan plane, live in exquisite but simple villas built of sustainable local materials, and enjoy the large hillside spa, outdoor cinema, treetop dining (waiters will be hoisted up on pulleys to refill your glass), plus classes in anything from gardening to astronomy.



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Un-spoilt Beach, Tasmania

Tasmania's southern coast includes some of the most extraordinary, unspoilt beaches in the world. There are also challenging mountain tracks, peaceful sclerophyll forests and boat trips. Try staying at the award-winning sustainable Friendly Beaches Lodge (so well hidden it is known as the Invisible Lodge), big on posh cabin-charm and modern art, with floor-to-ceiling windows looking out over the wilderness. Feast on oysters and crisp Tasmanian white wine in front of a roaring fire.



Whale Beach, South Africa

Fans of the southern right whale descend on the sleepy town of Hermanus, on South Africa's Western Cape, from June until December, to see them play in the surf. They come in so close that you can watch them from the cliff tops. Birkenhead House sits on its own promontory, so guests can watch the action while sipping bubbly out on the terrace. The hotel has just expanded into the house next door, which sleeps 12, is filled with contemporary art and has its own chef and staff. It offers total privacy, direct access to the beach and safe swimming waters.



Beach by Yacht, Croatia

Croatia isn't known for its beaches. Not because there aren't any, but because they are pebbly, not sandy, and the best are accessible only by boat. The extraordinary clear water that surrounds them holds the most allure, so why not island-hop on a yacht? Drop anchor in coves on the Paklinski islands for the best dip of your life.



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Beach House, St Barts

Built in the 1940s by the 'spirited' first mayor of St Barts as a beachfront bolthole for his celebrity friends, Eden Rock was a second home to Howard Hughes, Greta Garbo and Robert Mitchum. Today the hotel is as glamorous and whimsical as ever, and continues to evolve. It has just launched the very private Villa Nina and Villa Rockstar. Nina comes with its own art gallery, cinema, two pools, a Mini Cooper for exploring, a butler and a Valucine kitchen where executive chef Jean-Claude Dufour can prepare dinner for you.



Beach Party, Ibiza

There's never been a shortage of nice villas on Ibiza, but when it came to 'truly unforgettable', there was really only one: Villa Roca, a gorgeous hillside retreat. Until now. Two years ago its owners launched Villa Rica, a beachfront property on Cala Jondal, home to sleek night spots such as the Blue Marlin and a long, lustrous sandy beach. The villa, which comes with its own chef and staff, has four suites with polished cement floors, an outdoor bar, low white seating, a swimming pool and eight-person hot tub. On the lower ground floor is a private club for after-hours parties with decks, mixing desk, disco lighting and sub-aquatic windows cut into the side of the pool



Classic Beach, Key West

At Moorings Village, a collection of 18 pretty shingle houses and cottages on Islamorada, between Miami and Key West, you'll be hard-pushed to meet anyone who hasn't been there half a dozen times before. People get hooked on the rustic-chic, pastel-coloured dwellings, accessed via perfectly weathered boardwalks. On the edge of a powder-white beach, the houses are well spread out and shaded by palms and bougainvillea. Most people acquaint themselves with the nearest hammock, but this stretch of coast also has some of the best fishing and diving in the Keys.



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Sparty Beach, Spain

Doing absolutely nothing on a beach holiday has its virtues, but you might want to go to the other extreme. In the windswept village of Tarifa, which sits on a 14km-long sandy beach in southern Spain where the Atlantic meets the Med, you can kitesurf all day and hit the beach bars for après-surf beer and tapas at night. Stay at La Sacristía, a beautifully restored 17th-century Moorish inn.

