

TROPICAL BLISS

Bask in the beauty of nature in bamboo-built lodgings or dwell in a colourful resort full of whimsy—these island getaways celebrate life on the equator while providing plenty of decor inspiration for your home



BY ELIZABETH LEE IMAGES COURTESY OF JW MARRIOTT PHU QUOC EMERALD BAY RESORT & SPA

JW MARRIOTT PHU QUOC DEPARTMENT OF FUN

Picture perfect at every turn, this whimsical resort located in Phu Quoc's Emerald Bay, Vietnam, is second to none

If you love the sun, sand and sea but hate how crowded some popular beach destinations have become, head to Phu Quoc in Vietnam. Unlike the bustling cities of Ho Chi Minh or Danang, this island just off the coast of Cambodia is home to an impressive stretch of unspoilt “ice cream beaches”—so named because of its beautiful white sand and crystal clear waters. Although still largely considered an off-beat location by travellers, the island recently got a luxurious addition when JW Marriott Phu Quoc Emerald Bay opened last year.

The brainchild of acclaimed architect and interior designer Bill Bensley (the man behind St. Regis in Bali and The Siam in Bangkok), this JW Marriott property is unlike any other in the world. In fact, this fantastical resort, which takes its inspiration from a fictional

LEFT TO RIGHT
The shell-shaped swimming pool is one of many whimsical features at JW Marriott Phu Quoc; the grand hotel lobby; the Turquoise suite; the Chanterelle spa



PRIMED FOR PAMPERING

Like falling down an amazing rabbit hole, the Chanterelle spa borrows heavily from *Alice In Wonderland*. Zesty yellow hues, botanical wallpaper, and charming Victorian-style pieces add a surreal touch to the experience. Every so often, the spa throws a Mad Hatter's Tea Party, and guests can look forward to an afternoon of champagne and rainbow-coloured cakes in the company of the Mad Hatter himself.

school called Lamarck University, has been described by Bensley as having “stretched the boundaries of his imagination”. “I’ve always wanted to create a resort with this theme because of the profound influence that my university studies had on my design approach,” says Bensley. Each pastel-coloured building on this sprawling campus-inspired resort represents a different school, and even the bar has been cheekily named the Department of Chemistry Bar, while the fitness centre is fashioned after a school gym.

Bensley's eye for detail is remarkable, and there are no shortages of Instagram-worthy spots to be found. Case in point: the beautiful black-and-white lobby that greets guests is elaborately outfitted with bells, busts, books and twin giant swing sets. The main street, called Rue de Lamarck, which houses several shops and restaurants, is reminiscent of the ancient town of Hoi An with its colours and architecture. And the six villas, each christened a department—ranging from Astronomy, Insect Study to Mammal Study—is thematically decorated in a single colour palette and packed to the brim with curios sourced from Bensley's personal collection.



marriott.com



TOP TO BOTTOM

A view of the lagoon and jetty from the Treetops restaurant; the over-water bungalows feature steps that lead directly to the sea

OPPOSITE PAGE

The rustic-style tented lodgings are loosely furnished with rattan pieces and accents of patinated bronze; al fresco dining at the Treetops restaurant



BAREFOOT LUXURY

Go off the grid and bask in the beauty of nature: the TV and radio are noticeably absent in the rustic-style lodgings, with the suites and villas loosely furnished with rattan and wood cabinetry, and accents of patinated bronze. The effect is akin to glamping by the beach, with the sea just a few metres away from each accommodation.

BY HONG XINYING IMAGES COURTESY OF BAWAH RESERVE

BAWAH RESERVE

SERENITY NOW

This private-island resort in Indonesia celebrates the natural beauty of the Anambas archipelago and the tranquil qualities of island life

The journey matters more than the final destination, so the adage goes. For this private-island resort, it's happily a bit of both. While travelling to this remote resort is a feat in itself—the route involves a ferry ride, land transfers as well as a seaplane flight—the aerial views of the archipelago during the flight prove to be as stunning as the sights that greet guests daily on the island. Up-close, the emerald sea offers glimpses of marine life and coral reefs beneath, with the surrounding lagoons keeping the clear waters tranquil.

Foliage is abundant at this eco-conscious retreat, with most of the existing forestry and rocky cliffs kept as it was. The resort management also set up the non-profit group Bawah Foundation, which focuses on keeping the sea clean and litter-free, while caring for the wildlife and coral reefs. Primary amenities and suites are located on Bawah island (the largest of the six islands), with access to the other isles made available via solar-powered boats. With just 35 suites lining oceanfront, it's easy to feel like you've much of the beach to yourself.

Designed by interdisciplinary studio Eco-id, the deliberately rustic appearance of the accommodations echoes the resort's commitment to caring for the environment. "Bawah Reserve's sustainable ethos is about designing the architecture and interiors for optimum comfort while having a light impact on the environment," says Sim Boon Yang, Eco-id's founding partner, who saw to the architecture and interior design of the property. The resort's remote setting inspired the use of materials: villas and restaurants on the island were built primarily with bamboo, which were sustainably harvested from plantations in Java, and then prefabricated and shipped for assembly on the island.



bawahreserve.com

COMO UMA CANGGU
A NEW WAVE

Como Uma Canggu embraces the languid vibe of the coastal village in Bali, while bringing a cosmopolitan touch to its resort-style interiors

Bali is known for many things—its culturally-rich religious sites, rice paddies, forested volcanic mountains, beaches and spectacular coral reefs, and endless stream of resorts and retreats vying for a share of the tourist population. This new property in the tropical paradise, however, isn't squeezing in with other luxury players in resort towns Seminyak or Sanur. Instead, hospitality brand Como Hotels and Resorts sits on Canggu—an up-and-coming destination that is already a favourite among expatriates and surfers.

With already two properties in Bali—Como Shambhala Estate, the luxury hotel group's flagship wellness retreat; and Como Uma Ubud, a rustic resort nestled in the tropical jungle—Como adopts a distinctly different approach with Como Uma Canggu, catering to the village's vibrant scene of digital nomads and beach lovers. The result? A cosmopolitan melting pot that borrows from Modern Asian and European design principles.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT Each penthouse at Como Uma Canggu features its own rooftop pool; nearly all residences offer panoramic views of the Indian Ocean from the balconies; nature plays a big part in the resort's outdoor and indoor spaces



THE INTERIORS PAIR JAPANESE MINIMALISM WITH ITALIAN SOPHISTICATION, WHILE BEING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE



The work of longtime collaborators Koichiro Ikebuchi (Como Shambhala and Como Uma Ubud) and Paola Navone (Como Point Yamu in Phuket, and Como Metropolitan Miami Beach), the interior design of Como Uma Canggu is a combination of Japanese minimalism and Italian sophistication, with a nod to Balinese philosophy, which seeks harmony with nature.

Nature plays a big part in the resort's architecture, expertly designed and integrated into both indoor and outdoor spaces by landscape architect Trevor Hillier. Tropical flora and shrubbery dot the property and adorn the balconies, breathing life into the timber and concrete structure; almost all the residences offer panoramic views of the Indian Ocean from their private balconies. Outside, the sprawling lawns are perfectly in tune with the laid-back vibes of Canggu.



POOL ACCESS For guests of the ground floor residences, Como Uma Canggu makes up for the lack of ocean views with direct access to the 115m lagoon-like pool (pictured on the left), right outside their balconies. The pool features an organic shape that winds its way through the resort's lawns. For guests who want it all, the coveted Como penthouses feature rooftop pools (seen above) with breathtaking views of the Indian Ocean.



BY CHLOE PEK IMAGES COURTESY OF COMO HOTELS AND RESORTS