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Hide and Seek Hidden Luxury Around the World

By Marlise Kast-Myers

Between nosy neighbors, urban sprawl, and family drama, it's not easy to find a peaceful place where you can escape and simply "be." Even some of our favorite hideaways seem to be bustling with tweeting travelers, documenting everything from massages to margaritas.

Now you can bypass buffet lines and timeshare pitches at these confidential properties where privacy, seclusion, and tranquility are the name of the game. Don't be surprised if your cell signal drops or if Wi-Fi is patchy at times. That just means you'll have to live in the moment, rather than post about it. For hidden luxury—that you'll never see from the road—check out these hush-hush hotels that are inviting you in on their little secret.

Toscana Resort Castelfalfi (Montaione, Italy)

Located between Florence and Pisa, this 2,700-acre property in Montaione, Italy transformed from an abandoned tobacco factory into a luxury estate. In 2007, TUI Travel Group awakened the sleeping beauty and invested \$267 million in developing a boutique hotel, private villas, and a five-star hotel opening this spring. Despite the rebirth of this medieval ghost town, the countryside is remarkably secluded with its own nature reserve where guests can ride horses, forage for truffles, or tour the vineyards and olive groves. From farm-to-fork cuisine in the historic castle, to vinotherapy spa treatments on the Tuscan hillside, it's all about serenity and privacy—unless of course, you decide to wander the cobblestone streets of neighboring villages where civilization still exists. One night at this Tuscan kingdom will set you back \$650.

The Ranch (Laguna Beach, California)

If you're not in on this So Cal secret, you'd have no clue this secluded resort even exists, smack dab in the heart of Laguna Beach. Owned by Hobie founder, Mark Christy, the unpretentious sanctuary across from the beach opened its doors in December 2017. Despite the central location, it's the 1,000-foot canyon walls that keep it hidden from the summer chaos of trendy Laguna Beach. No matter where you look, you'll be safe inside your canyon cradle where laid-back luxury comes out on top. This microcosm of local surf culture shuffles out a cool casual atmosphere, beach cottage-style rooms, and family-friendly activities that will keep kids entertained for days. While you golf and get pampered at the spa, the little ones can learn how to surf or explore the canyon by hayride. Rooms have canyon-pool-or-golf course views, but it's worth splurging for the hexagonal tree house with a private gazebo perched above Aliso Creek. Even if you don't plan on staying here, stop by for dinner at Harvest Restaurant where California comfort food meets thoughtfully sourced cuisine. The motto here is "Live like a local," which means you might actually become one, even at \$500 a night.

Laucala Island (Taveuni, Fiji)

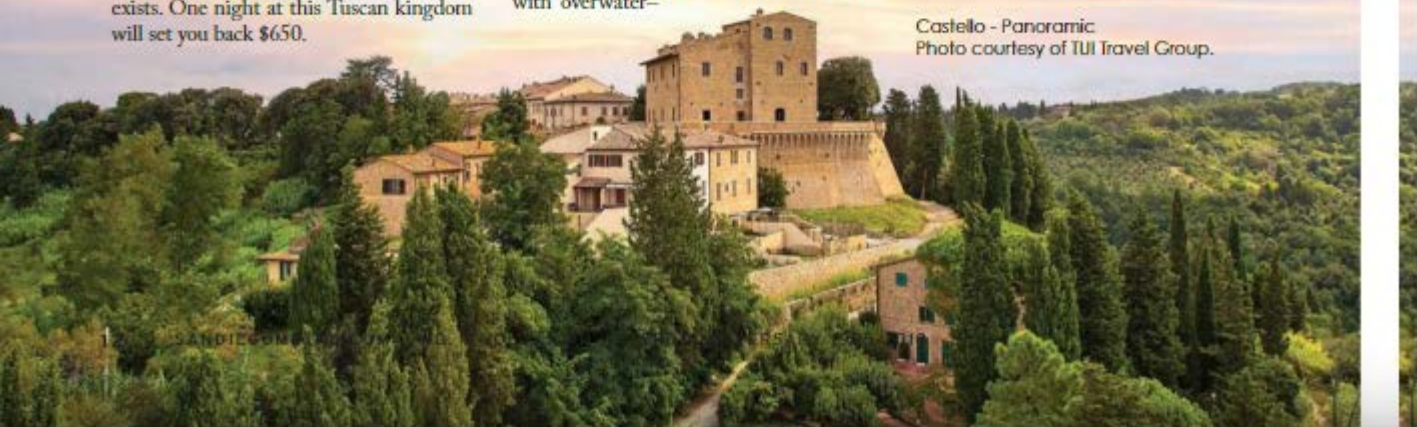
Set on a 3,500-acre private island, this hidden property in Fiji's archipelago is made up of 25 villas—each with its own swimming pool and private butler—set amid coconut plantations and dazzling beaches. It truly is the essence of seclusion with overwater-

beachfront-or-hilltop lodging that overlooks deserted beaches and lush rainforest. Style and sustainability go hand-in-hand with 95 percent of the island untouched, and the rest dedicated to raising livestock and growing crops like vanilla, pepper, tea, orchids, and produce. Accessible by its own airport, the luxurious resort boasts an 18-hole championship golf course, horseback riding, hiking trails, five restaurants, submarines for guests, and the highest staff-to-guest ratio of any hotel in the world (16 per villa). This level of privacy comes with a hefty price tag, however. Prepare to pay \$4,800 a night for the all-inclusive time of your life.

Hidden Canopy Treehouses (Monteverde, Costa Rica)

Tucked in the Costa Rican cloud forest of Monteverde, six luxury tree houses immerse you in calming nature with wraparound decks, driftwood headboards, waterfall showers, and skylight ceilings. Far from your vision of a childhood tree house, these two-story units are cupped in massive branches high above koi ponds and a network of hiking trails. Each tree house (from \$395) has a lounge area, private entrance, and floor-to-ceiling windows with views spanning over the hills to the Gulf of Nicoya. Breakfast and tea are served in a lovely solarium in the main house, one of the few spots you'll encounter other guests. Prepare for silence at this peaceful retreat where the sound of screaming children is replaced with that of chirping birds and howler monkeys (no kids under 16).

Castello - Panoramic
Photo courtesy of TUI Travel Group.





Credit: Cal-a-vie

Hacienda Uayamón (Campeche, Mexico)

One of the most remote haciendas in the Yucatan, this exquisite jungle property was abandoned in 1913 and resurrected a century later as one of five haciendas in the Starwood Luxury Collection. The original architecture and decor have been carefully preserved, right down to the ancient ruins jutting through the swimming pool. Draped across original tile floors are handwoven hammocks where you can sway in the historic casitas, each with its own garden and Jacuzzi. Paying tribute to the past are such details as sisal rugs, high-beamed ceilings, and the original company store—now serving as the spa with Mayan-influenced treatments. This property is remarkably challenging to find, meaning it's best to take advantage of the airport shuttle or avoid traveling by night. Rates start at \$570.

Musha Cay (Exumas, Bahamas)

If one island isn't enough, how about a whole chain of 'em in the southern Bahamas? Ironically, these off-the-radar islands in the Exumas are owned by legendary illusionist David Copperfield. For \$39,000 a night, you and 12 of your closest friends can get a taste of the magic that includes five beachside villas, world-class cuisine, and endless water activities from 40 sugar-sand beaches. The best part about this hideaway is that the only other guests on the island are the ones you invited.

Deplar Farm (Troll Peninsula, Iceland)

For adventure and solitude far from the madding crowds, this converted sheep farm in the remote Fljot valley is way off the beaten track but worth the journey—and the \$1,750 a night room rate. The modern 13-suite lodge pays tribute to Icelandic



Credit: Chalet Pelerin

architecture with locally-sourced stone, black timber, and grass-sodded roofs. Walls double as windows with floor-to-ceiling views of mountains, lakes, and ocean where guests heli-ski, fly fish, horseback ride, snowmobile, whale watch, hike, and surf. Tired bodies can find healing at the spa with its own floatation tank, or in the geothermal infinity pool illuminated by sun-lit nights. If cozying up is more your style, head to the library, private theater, or bar where you can nurse your favorite cocktail. If you'd rather have the entire place to yourself, simply dish out \$21,000 a night for the entire farm.

La Troza (Puerto Vallarta, Mexico)

Only accessible by boat, privacy is top priority at this Puerto Vallarta resort cradled between Bahía de Banderas and the Sierra Madre Mountains. Accommodations for 24 guests are housed in four residences; the villa, the beach house, and two casitas, meaning you'll have your own beachfront estate complete with a restaurant, infinity pool, outdoor Jacuzzi, and white-sandy beach. Between snorkeling, kayaking, fishing, surfing, and hiking, the only reason you'll need to visit Puerto Vallarta across the bay is to possibly catch your flight home. For even more tranquility in your stay, you can book private yoga, cooking classes, or a massage on the beach. Included in the nightly \$5,000 buyout rate are activities, airport transportation, unlimited drinks, and elaborate meals prepared by a five-star chef.

Chalet Pelerin (Le Miroir, France)

You might just want to leave your boots on for this one, where heli-skiing is considered to be some of the best in the world. Indulgence starts with bubbly by the fire and continues throughout your stay with spa treatments, an indoor saltwater pool,



Credit: Musha Cay

and a terrace Jacuzzi showcasing views of Mont Pourri while you soak. The five-room chalet offers intimacy aplenty, tucked away in the Tarentaise Valley near the mountain village of Le Miroir. Named after celebrated French landmarks, rooms are woodsy-chic with alpine furnishings like sheepskin throws and beamed ceilings branded from the 1800s. Pack leaders should claim the master suite with a private balcony, log fire, and steam shower. Outside your door are the French Alps where you can snowshoe and snowboard in winter, and rock climb and mountain bike in summer. A room will set you back \$884. Big spenders can opt for the 12-guest buyout at \$6,275 a night.

Cal-a-Vie (Vista, California)

It's secrecy at its best when celebrities like Julia Roberts and Oprah Winfrey can hang out at this destination spa without getting noticed. Despite its location in the hills of Vista, California, you'll feel like you've died and gone to a pampering Provençal village. Classic French style prevails in the opulent lounge areas and private villas with marble baths, Frette linens, antique furnishings, and 200-year-old reclaimed wooden floors. Balconies open onto hillsides blanketed in lavender, where a stone chapel from 1615 (imported from Dijon) is utilized for meditation and weddings. This luxury spa "camp" is no-holds-barred when it comes to fitness, health, and service with a staff-to-guest ratio of 5:1. Every three-course dinner is a fine dining experience in the ornate setting with its crystal chandeliers, velvet chairs, and 14th century fireplace. The 3-night minimum stay (\$4,675) includes meals, spa treatments, fitness classes, and access to the private 18-hole golf course.

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