

# Asia

**UNDER £100**  
**Hotel New Otani, Tokyo, Japan**

**Why we ♥ it:** 'Great facilities; great location; great prices' is what we tell friends looking for digs in the capital about Otani. It's got street cred too: the hotel (a retro '60s structure) starred in the James Bond film *You Only Live Twice*. The location, in central Akasaka, is prime, yet spacious rooms with huge beds start at a ridiculously good-value £141. There's a landscaped traditional garden, 41 bars and restaurants (yes, really), and one tower has posh 'club-level' rooms that include all-day Pierre Hermé pastries and champagne on tap (from a very fair £294).

**Editor's tip:** You need to decide the wing you want to stay in before booking. Choose Zen for a fancy stay, Garden Tower for the best city views, or the Main for the lowest prices. *Doubles from £141, room-only (newotani.co.jp).*

**ANANTARA**  
**Anantara Layan-Phuket Resort, Thailand**

**Why we ♥ it:** Phuket's cheap-package-crowd trade is only part of the story. Helping tell the island's lesser-known, luxury tale is this remote retreat, sprinkled among dense palms on the coastal slopes of a national park. There's atmosphere in even the simplest of the rooms, suites and villas, some of which wrap around private

pools, all shaded in teak-and-nature-tones. Topping the bill are 15 'residences' — glass-pavilion retreats made for honeymooners and recluses, with vast pools and terraces lit magically by pinprick lights.

**Editor's tip:** This verdant, wild northern part of the island begs to be explored — so make a day of it, taking in the (100% ethical) Phuket Elephant Sanctuary ([phuketelephantsanctuary.org](http://phuketelephantsanctuary.org)), a sort-of retirement home for pachyderms you can wander among. *Doubles from £150, room-only (anantara.com).*

**Wild Coast Tented Lodge, Yala National Park, Sri Lanka**

**Why we ♥ it:** It's a rare adventure when your safari sleepover is as thrilling as the wild animals on your game drive (in Yala, that means leopards, elephants, crocs, monkeys and more). But these 28 canvas cocoons on the Indian Ocean — some with private pools, others with cool add-on pods for children — do the trick. You might call them 'dangerously luxurious', which equates to four-poster beds, clawfoot copper tubs and sunset G&Ts on the beach, but there's no room service after 10pm — because it's too dicey for the waiter to venture outside.

**Editor's tip:** Each cocoon is all-inclusive, even of the posh minibar and daily laundry. Also incorporated is a daily

**Safari by the sea: below, Wild Coast Tented Lodge, Sri Lanka. Opposite, clockwise from top left, taking a dip at Anantara Layan-Phuket Resort; Ahilya by the Sea in Goa; the high-glam and low-key Coco Bodu Hithi in the Maldives; the lobby in Hong Kong's Hotel Icon**

game drive, and since everyone stays two nights minimum, be sure to try each of the two drives (7am and 3pm), even if you love a lie-in. They have dramatically different climate, light and sightings. *Cocoons sleeping two adults and two children from £368, all-inclusive (resplendenceyala.com/wildcoastlodge-yala).*

**THE PULI**  
**The PuLi, Shanghai, China**

**Why we ♥ it:** It's a great-looking independent design hotel in a city prone to bland big brands. The lobby's a beauty, its polished black tiles reflecting parades of giant candles. The bar is a minimalist wonder in teak, stretched along a wall of floor-to-ceiling windows. The scene-y Sunday brunch upstairs at Phénix is pricey at £80, but for that you get pancakes, sliders et al, with free-flowing champagne (it's half the price if you don't drink). The real star though is the spa, particularly the temple-tranquil slab of a pool, overlooking leafy Jing'An Park.

**Editor's tip:** Slip out for an early walk round the park, an underrated city sight where you'll see tai-chi regulars twirling through their morning routine — the definitive Shanghai moment. *Doubles from £178, B&B (thepuli.com).*

**UNDER £100**  
**Ahilya by the Sea, Goa, India**

**Why we ♥ it:** Goa can be for grown-ups, and this elegant nine-room escape is the proof. It's a rambling former dowager's home fringed with heavy vegetation, across the broad Mandovi estuary from the state capital, Panjim. The beach is a working one, of gaudy fishing boats with saintly Portuguese names painted on their prows. You'll swim in one of Ahilya's two dark-stone pools, which blaze with sunset light before atmospheric pre-prandials. Silent living areas of watchful antiques (Burmese string puppets, praying statues) lead you to alfresco, candlelit seafood dinners beneath a banyan tree.

**Editor's tip:** Overlooked Panjim is worth adding to your Goa itinerary. A wander through its cobbled Portuguese colonial quarter, Fontainhas — chatting with locals running curiosity cafes and shops — affords a rare insight into Indian life. *Doubles from £116, B&B (ahilyabythesea.com).*



**UNDER £100**  
**Hotel Icon, Hong Kong**

**Why we ♥ it:** It's a modern vision of what a city hotel should be, and it works. With a view-tastic spot on Hong Kong's local-vibes Kowloon side, this affordable Icon hotel is used for hotel-industry experimentation by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hospitality. The result? Internet-enabled smartphones, a wet-market-inspired restaurant, a free shuttle bus to Hong Kong's metro and Star Ferry, and fantastic above-and-beyond service. Rooms are business-like, plush and glass-walled (most have free minibars, too), and there are leafy 'living walls' in the lobby, while alfresco morning swims overlook that glinting skyline. It's not just a bargain, but a refreshingly unstuffy alternative to this city's high-tea-hawking palace hotels.

**Editor's tip:** Late flight time? Book directly on the hotel website and you'll get free access to the 9th-floor lounge after check-out, for access to showers, snacks and soft drinks. *Doubles from £149, room-only (hotel-icon.com).*

**UNDER £100**  
**Hotel Tjampuhan, Ubud, Bali**

**Why we ♥ it:** Bali's jungly cultural heart has five-star accommodation and hippie hostels in spades, but this traditional hideaway has a spacious retreat vibe at a brilliant price. A one-time royal guesthouse, then artists' retreat (the Primitivist painter Walter Spies and Hollywood's Charlie Chaplin both stayed), the hotel has tiers of authentic cream-and-mahogany bungalows, which shelve like rice paddies down to a freshwater pool, while a low-key spa and restaurant serves a grown-up crowd of chill-seekers. Its trickling lily ponds, carved-stone spa and little temple imitate the best of Bali, with no trace of corporate intrusion. Best of all, it's just a short walk to the centre of Ubud, but you're away from backpacker chaos.

**Editor's tip:** Power cuts are common in Bali, and this sloping resort is tricky to navigate in the dark, so check for your room's torch and candles on arrival — you might need them! *Doubles from £68, room-only (tjampuhan-bali.com).*

**Coco Bodu Hithi, Maldives**

**Why we ♥ it:** It's the 'feelgood one' of the Maldives set — and that means everything from top-notch dinners and a high-glamour overwater spa to the slightly comfy, worn-in feeling that's rare for this region (no worries if you're underdressed or spill your cocktail poolside at this place). And then there's the snorkelling: in-house marine biologist Sonia Valladares can take you out to see a staggering school of nurse sharks, vast manta rays or curious hawksbill turtles, among the kaleidoscopic coral just offshore. Villas go up to insanely Instagrammable affairs with sea access and plunge pools (book the 'Residences' overwater section for sealed-off privacy), but when booked through a tour operator, beach villas start at less than £2,000 a week, including flights.

**Editor's tip:** The best sunrise views are from the gourmet 'Aqua' restaurant — officially closed in the mornings, but unofficially easy to wander into to watch from its wooden deck. *Doubles from £445, B&B (cococollection.com).*

**And our faves in...  
BANGKOK**

**BANGKOK PUBLISHING RESIDENCE**

Part hotel, part museum, the beautifully restored building (pictured) was once the offices of *Bangkok Weekly*. It's called 'residence' because it's meant to be your home, not just a place to sleep. Books can be borrowed and, with pop-culture artefacts, retro video games and printing paraphernalia, you'll not get bored. The eight rooms are spacious; and while there's no pool, there is a rooftop hot tub. **Editor's tip:** For the city's best pad Thai, try nearby Thip Samai. *Doubles from £110, B&B (bpresidence.com).*

**We also love:**  
**The Sukothai**, a five-star haven in the city hubbub (doubles from £117, room-only; [sukhothai.com](http://sukhothai.com)); **Shanghai Mansion**, a glam, but affordable, Chinatown pad (doubles from £42, room-only; [shanghaimansion.com](http://shanghaimansion.com)); and the corking colonial B&B **Old Capital Bike Inn** ([oldcapitalbkk.com](http://oldcapitalbkk.com); doubles from £74).

