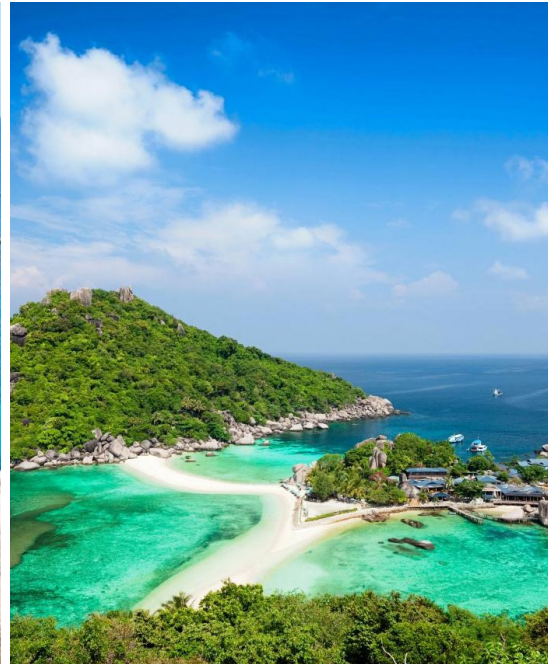




Island hopping in Surat Thani.

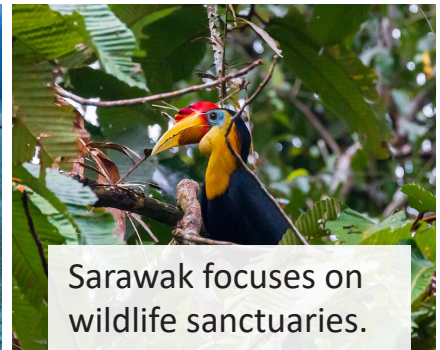


Tripadvisor

2021 the year for luxury travel?



Centara Maldives targets Indian travellers.



Sarawak focuses on wildlife sanctuaries.

2021 the year for luxury travel?

After a year of being stuck at home, Tripadvisor search data reveals travellers are ready to splurge on luxury stays in 2021.



Tripadvisor

After a year that left us locked down and staring at the same four walls at home, Tripadvisor's latest research reveals a new mindset to book luxury travel in 2021.

Based on global traveller search behaviours and sentiment data across six markets (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Japan and Singapore), the message filters through; "people want to make this year count."

Travel consumers, having sacrificed vacation time in 2020, are preparing to spend more on luxury accommodation

and destinations.

"Out with the weekend backpacking and budget hotels, and in with the beachside villas and picture-perfect locations," Tripadvisor says is now the dominant sentiment.

Despite the financial impact of Covid-19 hitting that intensified during the first three weeks of January, global travellers on Tripadvisor were searching for pricier trips than they had in the past two years (during the same period).

In fact, the average cost of a single future trip in 2021 that travellers globally are planning on Tripadvisor jumped 13% since January 2019. In the UK and Singapore, that rises even more significantly, to +64% and +45% respectively since 2019.

When looking at the international destinations showing the biggest increase in hotel searches for trips planned in 2021,

based on searches in the first two weeks of January (versus the same period in 2020), it is clear to see where some of those dollars may be going.

In APAC, travellers are longing for high-end trips to visit cities like Singapore, Bangkok and Dubai. While travellers in Brazil, Germany and Spain prefer the overwater bungalows and pristine waters of Bora Bora and the Maldives as they seek relaxation to melt away the worries of the past year.

These same trends can be seen in the destinations that are popping on the Tripadvisor travel wish list — spots people have been "saving" on Tripadvisor in the last 12 months.

Winners in the emerging destinations category of the 2021 Travelers' Choice Best of the Best Awards for Destinations include the white sands and stunning volcanic landscapes

of Martinique, the gastronomic delights of Armacao dos Buzios, and the bustling and vibrant Male in the heart of the Maldives.

Some of the projected increased travel spend seen on Tripadvisor may not just be down to the type of destinations travellers are booking, but also the type of accommodation they are choosing, as more than one in ten (11%) global travellers said that they plan to go luxe on accommodation in 2021. In fact, of the six nations surveyed, travellers from Singapore and the US are the most likely to have already booked a luxury hotel stay in 2021 — almost one in five have already done so (19% and 18% respectively), compared to a global average of one in seven (14%). This is true of recent search behaviour for luxury accommodation on Tripadvisor in January 2021.

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Centara Maldives targets Indian travellers

Centara invites Indian travellers to enjoy exclusive 'couples' escapes or family vacations in the Maldives

Centara Hotels & Resorts is welcoming Indian guests to the Maldives through April, with a new promotion at its two award-winning resorts; Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa Maldives and Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa Maldives.

Unlike many of Asia's other beautiful beach destinations, the Maldives is currently welcoming international tourists for short or long stays*.

The Maldives has direct connections from several cities (Mumbai, New Delhi and Bangalore), short flight times, and does not apply self-isolate or quarantine measures.

Under the "Maldives Calling" promotion, Indian guests will receive a 30% discount when they book with Centara in the Maldives. Rates start from INR 15,800 per night, based on double occupancy. CentaraThe1, members will be rewarded with an additional 20% off, and guests who stay for four nights or longer will receive USD100 in credit to spend at the resorts.

Bookings can be made until 31 March 2021 for stays up to 30 April 2022.

For couples and honeymooners, Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa is an adults-only island retreat in the North Malé Atoll, just over 15 minutes by speedboat from Velana International Airport. It houses a collection of beachfront and over-water accommodation, including the Deluxe Spa Overwater Villa, accessed via a wooden boardwalk. They feature 42 square metres of living space with an outdoor spa bathtub and direct steps down to



the reef – perfect for swimming or snorkelling around the lagoon. Alternatively, the Premium Deluxe Spa Water Villa offers an elegant ocean-facing deck with an outdoor spa bathtub and direct access to the sparkling lagoon.

With a choice of seven restaurants and bars, exhilarating water sports, scuba diving, ocean excursions and a soothing therapies at SPA Cenvaree, this intimate resort promises many romantic moments, both during the day and under the stars. This makes it especially suitable for honeymoons and Valentine's vacations.

Nestled on a pristine island in the South Ari Atoll, Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa Maldives is a fantastic option for families. Amid a landscape of pure white sand, crystal clear seas and swaying palm trees, guests can choose to stay in a 93-square metre Deluxe Family Water Villa, which includes bunk beds and a PlayStation for kids, a Jacuzzi and a secure terrace with breathtaking ocean views and steps down to the lagoon. Alternatively, the stunning Sunset Ocean Pool Villa can accommodate up to three guests in 110 square metres of

luxurious living space, with a large terrace, plunge pool with sunset views. A collection of beachfront villas are also available with private pools and access to the powder-soft sand.

Parents and kids can spend unforgettable days splashing in the beachfront pool or enjoying activities such as tennis, volleyball, water sports, snorkelling and scuba diving. Adults can relax at SPA Cenvaree or workout at the fitness centre, while their children have endless hours of fun at the dual-age kids' club, and all ages can dine at a choice of six restaurants, bars and lounges.

Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa Maldives and Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa are eco-friendly havens that have both achieved the EarthCheck Gold Certificate, among a long list of other international honours, awards and accolades. And of course, every Centara hotel and resort adheres to strict health and safety standards, as part of the "Centara Complete Care" programme, which was developed in partnership with Ecolab and SGS.

For more information visit www.centarahotelsresorts.com

Island hopping in Surat Thani

Surat Thani is home to three of the country's prized island destinations, but there are hundreds of island to explore in the archipelago.

Surat Thani is home to a myriad of magical islands or 108 to be exact, and that gives it a spot in the record book as the single Thai province with the most islands on the Gulf of Thailand.

Thailand's Department of Marine and Coastal Resources counts the islands as part of its surveys and on-going measures to protect the marine environment. Surat Thani's famed island trio Koh Samui, Koh Pha Ngan, and Koh Tao are top-draw attractions. They happen to be the three biggest islands, not only in size but also for their net tourism worth in dollars earned for the local economy.

In 2019, Surat Thani generated THB94.28 billion in tourism revenue. Providing the financial windfall in 2019 were 5,900,721 visitors, of which 2,309,165 were Thai and 3,591,556 foreigners. Visitors stay 4.47 days in Surat Thani and spend THB3770.88 on average. On Koh Samui alone, the island welcomed 3,500 to 5,000 visitors a day during the pre-Covid-19 era.

Due to their distinct rugged topography and abundant marine life, the islands of Surat Thani province have been listed among all-time favourite island and beach destinations in Thailand. They also ranked among the top 10 island destinations worldwide by popular global booking websites. The province offers countless activities for island hoppers to enjoy. They can make day-trips to explore an awesome and protected archipelago that appears to have endless clusters of craggy islands



and Karst formation as far as the eye can see.

Be pampered

Koh Samui is undoubtedly a spot where the visitor is pampered by beautiful beaches and an abundance of resorts across all of the star-ratings. There are 650 hotels with 30,000 rooms, of which 20% are run by international chains. As the biggest island in the province, Samui offers the full range of tourist facilities, including competition standard golf courses, spas, restaurants, shops, and various attractions which can answer all beach holiday

needs. Served by an international airport and ferry services, Samui is also a perfect hub for islands hoppers. Travellers can catch a ride on a ferry to Koh Pha Ngan and the divers' paradise of Koh Tao, or take a day-tour to enjoy the natural marine beauty at Mu Koh Ang Thong National Marine Park. Most international travellers fly to Samui to save time but others, who are enjoying a gap year or early retirement, may travel by train and board ferries for a leisurely sail to the islands.

In 2019, 1.18 million passengers travelled through Samui Airport that served 52 domestic and international flights per day. For the overland traveller, the island hopping begins with a ferry ride from one of the terminals such as Donsak Pier, Baan Don Pier, or Tha Thong Pier where car ferries or an express boat get you there in 90 minutes or six hours on the overnight slow-boat.



Party with nature

Located 20 km to the north of Koh Samui, Koh Pha Ngan dominates the horizon off the northern coast of Samui. It's the preferred destination due to its famous full moon beach parties. The 2 km long beach, Haad Rin, is the party venue that started with the full-moon variety back in the 1980s and then expanded to include half-moon or black moon parties. The world's famous full-moon party is currently on hold due to Covid-19 but could resume during the last quarter of 2021 if travel restrictions ease. However, there are many other reasons to make the island your perfect getaway. It also happens to be an amazingly attractive island acclaimed for its rugged natural landscapes. Famous sites are Haad Thong Nai Pan Noi, Haad Thong Nai Pan Yai, Haad Mae Haad, Hadd Malibu, Haad Khuat, Haad Salad, to name a few examples of the landscape beauty of the coves and beaches. There is plenty of heritage too to be discovered in small fishing villages, handicraft communities and the island's temples. Natural attractions include its hilly peaks, caves and waterfalls. There are also venues to practice beach yoga or meditation. From Koh Samui, travellers can catch ferries to Koh Pha Ngan from the Big Buddha Pier or Nathon Pier. A ferry ride from Samui takes around 30 minutes.

Explore the underwater world

Koh Tao is a premier haven for scuba divers from around the world. Diving sites in Koh Tao are credited with being among the best in the Asia Pacific. The island is home to



an 8 km long coral reef with around 25 dive sites where scuba divers can enjoy exploring underwater beauty and diversity of marine life. Top diving sites around Koh Tao's coastline are Chumphon Pinnacle, Southwest Pinnacle, Northwest Pinnacle, Sail Rock, Shark Island, Hin Wong Pinnacle, Sattakut Wreck, to name a few. Meanwhile, Ao Muong, Ao Hin Wong, Ao Tanote, and Au Leuk are famous for snorkelling. Koh Tao is part of Surat Thani Province, but travellers can opt to take a ferry or speedboat ride from nearby Chumphon Province to shorten the transfer time. There are three piers where ferries depart on daily sailings to Koh Tao. They are Ta Yang Pier, Lomphraya Pier, and Seatran Ferry Pier. Depending on the ferries

used, the trip from Chumphon can take one-hour and 45 minutes up to six hours on the appropriately named "slow boat."

Take a hike

Koh Wua Talap offers the best spot to enjoy the magnificent scenery of Mu Koh Ang Thong National Marine Park that consists of 42 limestone karst islands rising sharply from the sea in the Gulf of Thailand. Located 32 km northwest of Koh Samui, Koh Wua Talap is a favourite day-trip destination for Koh Samui visitors for sight-seeing and snorkelling. On the island, visitors can also explore a trail walk to Bua Boke Cave. The trip's highlight is the Pha Jun Jaras viewpoint, located 500 metres above the beach. The short trek to enjoy the panoramic view of the archipelago can be challenging for a not-so-fit visitor, but worth

the effort. From Koh Samui, a join-in day trip departs right after an early breakfast and returns before sunset. Most tourist boats leave Nathon Pier at 0830. The boat ride takes around two hours to reach Koh Wua Talap.

On the return trip, the boat departs Koh Wua Talap at 1500.

Let's selfie

Koh Nang Yuan is one of the most beautiful islands in the world. The white-sand beaches stretch from the emerald green waters of the bay and provide a slim sandbar that connects the three islands. The islands offer a picturesque photo backdrop. It is definitely a not-to-be-missed spot, especially for visitors who are staying on Koh Tao as it takes just 20 minutes by long-tail boat. The island is attracts day-trip diving. For those who want to get the best photo of this natural landmark, hike to the viewpoint.

[Click for full report.](#)

Sarawak focuses on wildlife sanctuaries

Wildlife conservation is now a top priority for Sarawak.

Wildlife conservation is now a top priority for the government of Sarawak that is home to 22 national parks, four wildlife sanctuaries and five nature reserves.

The state's parks cover 710,884 hectares offering refuge and sanctuary for many endangered species endemic to Borneo, including the orangutan, proboscis monkey, sun bear, brindled deer,



dugong, Irrawaddy dolphin, sea turtle, and many more.

Bindi Irwin, daughter of the late wildlife conservationist and television personality Steve Irwin, and the rest of the team at Australia Zoo continue to carry on the conservation work in Sarawak that was started by Irwin.

Bindi's fascination with Sarawak began as a child listening to her father's stories of encounters with wild orangutans in Borneo and has only grown since then as she follows with keen interest the conservation work being done by her counterparts in Sarawak.

"We encourage visitors to Sarawak to learn more about these efforts and plan their itinerary to see and learn as much as they can

about Sarawak wildlife conservation and rainforest sustainability," the Sarawak Tourism Board advises on its website.

Tanjung Datu National Park

Tanjung Datu may be the smallest of Sarawak's National Parks, at just under 14 sq km, but it is also one of the most beautiful. The park comprises a narrow ridge of rugged forest-covered hills fringed by pristine white sand beaches, crystal clear waters and patches of coral reef. The rich mixed dipterocarp forest reaches almost to the water's edge in some places, and this close



proximity of rainforest and coral reef – the two most diverse natural communities on our planet – make Tanjung Datu a very important reservoir of biodiversity.

Located at the south-western tip of Sarawak on the Datu Peninsula, Tanjung Datu is one of Sarawak's less accessible natural parks, but its relative remoteness is one of its main attractions. The beaches really are undisturbed, the corals offshore are untouched, and the forest trails are virtually untrodden. This seclusion has helped to preserve a wide range of unusual plant species, including the night-blooming Putat tree (*barringtonia asiatica*), which

produces pink and white flowers the size of tennis balls, huge Umbrella Palms and Strangling Figs, whilst the beaches are fringed with purple-flowered Sea Morning Glory.

Tanjung Datu's animal life is equally rich and varied. Notable amongst the hundreds of bird species are at least three types of Hornbill, as well as peacocks. Primates include Bornean Gibbons, Pig-Tailed Macaques, Long-Tailed (or Crab-Eating) Macaques, and Silvered and Banded Langurs (or Leaf Monkeys). Bearded Pigs, Sambar Deer, Mouse Deer, Barking



Deer, Bearcats, Civet Cats and various species of squirrel are amongst the land mammals that may occasionally be seen here.

Reptile species include a variety of ground and tree lizards, as well as Pit Vipers and Tree Snakes, but Tanjung Datu's greatest contribution to reptile conservation is its role as a marine turtle nesting site. Highly endangered Green Turtles and Olive Ridley Turtles regularly lay their eggs on the park's beaches. Therefore a turtle hatchery has been established – a fenced-off area close to the beach, which is protected and monitored by park staff. Eggs from nests vulnerable to predators such as pigs, monitor lizards and snakes are relocated here to reduce the high levels of natural mortality.

Visit: www.sarawaktourism.com



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An aerial photograph of a stunning tropical coastline. The water is a vibrant turquoise, transitioning to a deeper blue further out. Lush green hills and mountains rise from the water's edge, covered in dense tropical forest. In the foreground, a rocky shore with green vegetation meets the water. Several boats are visible: a small white boat in the distance, a larger white boat with a blue roof, a small motorboat, and a red boat with a white roof and a blue canopy. A white wake is visible in the water. The text "Amazing moments await you in Amazing Thailand." is written in a white, cursive font across the middle of the image.

Amazing moments await you
in Amazing Thailand.