



Coasting in Asia

Across Asia, beachfront resorts represent a distinct strand of luxury hospitality shaped by geography as much as design – we visit six of the best to find out how and why

While cultural context varies widely between destinations, the common thread is direct engagement with exceptional coastline where sand, sea and architecture are treated as an integrated system rather than separate elements. From Indonesia's surf-heavy western shores to Sri Lanka's sheltered bays and China's rapidly evolving resort coastline; each property reflects a distinct interpretation of living by the water.

What distinguishes every luxury resort is not only its beachfront location, but the specific interpretation of coastline it engages with. Some destinations such as Bali and Da Nang are shaped by continuous activity and long-established tourism infrastructure, while others such as Sri Lanka and Koh Samui, prioritise separation and spatial privacy. Urban coastlines like Busan integrate beach and city into a single system, while destinations

such as Sanya sit within rapidly scaling resort ecosystems where development and landscape remain in active transition.

Design language across these properties reflects this variation. Southeast Asian resorts tend toward low-rise architecture, open-air circulation, and heavy use of vegetation to mediate climate and scale. More urban coastal environments rely on verticality and structural integration with surrounding infrastructure producing

a different relationship between interior space and shoreline.

Ultimately, what unites these resorts is the primacy of coastline as the defining spatial element. Each property is structured around the relationship between built environment and sea where geography determines rhythm and architecture responds rather than dominates. In this sense, the beach is not a backdrop but the organising framework of an entire experience.

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's southern coastline is home to Saman Villas, situated near Bentota on a rocky headland overlooking two distinct ocean coves. The property is deliberately low density with architecture that follows the natural contours of the site rather than imposing

structural uniformity. This results in a spatial layout where suites are positioned for direct ocean views and privacy rather than access to shared resort facilities. The surrounding coastline is less developed than comparable Asian beach destinations, which contributes to a quieter marine environment shaped by the Indian Ocean's seasonal rhythms. The resort's scale and positioning make it particularly oriented toward relaxation and extended stays rather than activity-driven tourism. jetwinghotels.com

THAILAND

In southern Thailand, Vana Belle Koh Samui is located on Chaweng Noi Beach; a quieter extension of Koh Samui's most developed coastal zone. The resort is built into a steep hillside



that descends toward the Gulf of Thailand, allowing its villas and suites to be oriented for maximum elevation and uninterrupted sea visibility. This vertical spatial planning is a defining feature of the property separating it

Pictured: Asian beach resorts such as Legian Beach in Bali where the spectacular Padma Resort Legian is popular – and Thailand's Koh Samui's east coast beaches are famous for swimming and snorkeling

from flatter beachfront resorts on the island. Dense tropical vegetation acts as both visual and acoustic insulation creating a controlled sense of privacy despite proximity to Chaweng's main tourism area. Koh Samui itself operates as a mixed resort destination combining high-end hospitality with active nightlife and beach commerce making location within the island particularly important in defining guest experience. marriott.com

BALI

Bali's west coast delivers one of the island's most established large-scale beachfront resort experiences, Padma Resort Legian. Positioned directly on the Legian Beach between Seminyak and Kuta, it sits within a dense coastal corridor defined by surf breaks, continuous foot traffic and a mix of local and international tourism. The resort is structured around extensive tropical gardens and multiple lagoon style pools which ▶



function as internal micro-environments that offset the urban beachfront setting. Its scale allows for a high level of internal zoning with separate dining areas, family oriented spaces, and quieter garden sections creating a layered use of space. Unlike smaller boutique resorts, Padma operates as a self-contained coastal environment where guests move between beach and internal resort landscape without leaving the property. Its location

Above: The beautiful My Khe beach in Danang, Vietnam, where the Furama Resort was one of the first luxury resorts

Below: Haeundae Beach is South Korea's most famous and vibrant coastal destination, where The Westin dominates

also places it within easy reach of Seminyak's dining and retail strip, reinforcing its position as both a resort and a base for wider coastal exploration.
padmaresortlegian.com

VIETNAM

On Vietnam's central coastline, Furama Resort Danang occupies one key stretch of My Khe Beach, a long uninterrupted shoreline that has become central to Da Nang's emergence as a major coastal city. The resort is one of the earliest luxury properties in this region and reflects a design approach that blends tropical open air planning with Indochine inspired architectural elements. Low-rise structures are arranged to maximise sea exposure while maintaining garden separation

between rooms and public areas. Its position is strategically significant, sitting between the historic town of Hoi An and the expanding urban core of Da Nang, which has developed into a commercial and logistics hub for central Vietnam. The beach itself is wide and consistent in gradient which allows for long walks and water-based recreation while maintaining a relatively calm swimming environment compared to more exposed surf coasts in the region.
furamavietnam.com

SOUTH KOREA

The Westin Josun Busan occupies one of the most urbanised beachfront positions in Asia along Haeundae Beach in Busan. Unlike tropical resort destinations, this coastline is embedded within a dense metropolitan area where high-rise residential and commercial buildings line the shore. The hotel integrates into this environment providing direct beach access while maintaining immediate proximity to one of Korea's key port cities. Haeundae functions as both a seasonal resort beach and a year-round urban district which, creates a dual identity between leisure

and city infrastructure. The property therefore operates less as a secluded resort and more a hybrid city and beachfront hotel where guests experience coastal access alongside cultural institutions, retail districts, and business hubs.
marriott.com

CHINA

On China's Hainan Island, Park Hyatt Sanya Sunny Bay Resort is located on a comparatively quiet section of coastline within a broader resort region that has developed rapidly over the past decade. Sunny Bay is positioned away from the higher density resort zones, such as Yalong Bay, allowing for a more controlled beachfront environment. The architecture emphasises horizontal lines and open-view corridors toward the South China Sea while integrating landscaped tropical elements that buffer the architecture. Sanya itself has become a major domestic luxury tourism destination supported by climate conditions, infrastructure investment, and government backed tourism development, making it one of China's most significant coastal resort markets.
hyatt.com ■

