

## ● 5 BEST

# The hideout gang

ALEXANDER BASEK checks into five of Southeast Asia's most tempting new hotels

## CHEDI CLUB AT TANAH GAJAH

Ubud, Bali

**Who should go:** Serenity-seekers, nature lovers

Gorgeous Bali saw a huge drop in tourism after the tragic terrorist bombings that struck in 2002. But things are (slowly) going back to normal, and returning visitors are choosing from a short list of spectacular new hotels.

Those concerned Bali's rapid growth was ruining the island's beauty will be in heaven at the Chedi Club, which opened last July. It's development done right.

The theme here is seclusion. Accommodations (20 suites and villas done in traditional Balinese architecture) are spread out, room service is available 24/7, and rooms include high-speed Internet and a home theater.

Each villa has an outdoor bathtub, private pool and butler. The 12-acre property is two miles outside of Ubud, a sophisticated town full of art galleries and Bali's best restaurants.

**Checking in:** Ngurah Rai Intl. Airport in Denpasar is an hour from Ubud. From the airport, take a taxi to the hotel.

From \$280; 620 361 975 685, ghmhotels.com.

## AMANGALLA

Galle, Sri Lanka

**Who should go:** Colonial history buffs

Galle, Sri Lanka, a former Dutch port on the southern tip of Sri Lanka, was heavily damaged by last December's tsunami. Its Old Town, however — a former 17th-century fort — withstood the advancing water. Inside of it, you'll find Amanresorts'

Amangalla hotel, which opened in February 2005.

The 25-room Amangalla is in a group of 400-year-old colonial buildings. Rooms are swathed in teak and other woods and some feature French doors that open onto the garden. Suites have views of the ramparts or Galle's harbor. There are also Middle-Eastern style baths and a swimming pool.

Rack rates are being cut by 50 percent here and at Aman's Amanwella (located on the beach near Tangalle, 30 minutes away).

**Note:** For sun bathing, head to the beaches near Unuwatuna, Weligama and Tangalle.

**Checking in:** Fly into Bandaranyike Intl. Airport in Colombo, a three-hour taxi ride (\$100) to the hotel.

From \$225 until Oct. 31; 94 91 223 3388, amanresorts.com.



Bali, wood: The entrance to the super-swank Chedi Club at Tanah Gajah, Indonesia.

## EVASON HIDEAWAY AT ANA MANDARA

Nha Trang, Vietnam

**Who should go:** *Pa junkies (and seafood lovers)*

Last year we introduced readers to the Hideaway's sister property, the Ana Mandara. Evason's new property here in Nha Trang blows it away.

While Ana Mandara is an oasis in the middle of Nha Trang — a charming but gritty beach town — the Hideaway is on a nearby island in stunning Ninh Van Bay, with its rock formations near distant mountains.

On the property are 52 villas decorated in Vietnamese colonial style. Each has an open-air living room, terrace with daybed, outdoor plunge pool and a wine cellar.

There's plenty to do on the 300-acre island. The main attraction is the hotel's 100,000-sq. foot open-plan spa; try to get a treatment next to a waterfall or outdoors with a view of the bay.

In Nha Trang, guests can gorge on fresh seafood from vendors that line the beach, or hire a boat to explore other islands offshore.

**Checking in:** Nha Trang is an hour by plane from Ho Chi Minh City Airport and two hours from Noi Bai Intl. Airport, outside Hanoi. (Bus and train service are also available.)

From \$400; 84 58 829 829, sixsenses.com.



Au naturel: Bathtubs at the Evason are in open-air rooms.

Gulf of Thailand coastline.

Sihanoukville had no upscale digs to speak of, though, until last year's opening of the 166-suite Sokha Beach Hotel.

The hotel features Khmer architectural flourishes (read: lots of wood). Rooms each have a private balcony. Amenities include a gym and an alfresco garden bar.

A spa and golf course should be up and running by year's end. Next year, Sokha plans to open a sister resort in Siem Reap.

**Checking in:** You'll fly into Phnom Penh — from there, hire a taxi. From \$160; 855 34 935 999, sokhahotels.com.

## THE SCARLET HOTEL

Singapore

**Who should go:** *The over-worked road warrior*

Singapore conjures up images of an intense, hyper-modern nation — one where littering brings a \$600 fine.

It wasn't always this way.

In the 1800s, Singapore was Southeast Asia's free-market version of the Wild West.

The Scarlet Hotel, in an arty enclave in the central business district, tries to recapture some of the verve.

This 84-room hotel opened in December 2004 in a restored 1924 Art Deco building that boasts a decadent vibe. Overstuffed suites — with names like Swank, Opulent and Lavish — feature four-poster beds and the occasional chandelier. Most rooms have gilded mirrors, dark-wood accents and DVD players.

Eat at Desire, the main restaurant, drink at Bold, or hit up Breeze, the rooftop dining option.

There's also a fitness "enclave" (perfect for yoga), and an open-air Jacuzzi.

**Checking in:** Singapore is served by Changi Intl. Airport. The hotel is accessible by subway or taxi.

From \$145; 65 6511 3333, thescarlethotel.com.

with Farhad Heydari

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