

COVER STORY

# FAMILY TIES

The top villas at leading resorts and lodges are making room for the whole clan

SUSAN KUROSAWA

Soneva Secret in the Makunudhoo Atoll, The Maldives; Astrolabe residence at Kokomo Private Island, Fiji, above right





**A** private premium villa or mini-lodge with all the expected comfort and satellite status of a private pad but within cooee of broader resort facilities? There's a distinct trend towards such a one-of-a-kind model, particularly across Asia's top tourism playgrounds, island chains and award-winning examples in Australia and New Zealand. These equivalents of city hotel presidential suites are the creme de la creme of resort and lodge accommodation options, but the lure is not just luxe trimmings. Absolute privacy and a privileged sense of solitude are the key drawcards for celebrity couples and VIPs, while house-party holiday-makers and those gathering for family reunions relish the space and communal facilities.

According to Expedia research, a quarter of Australians cite family as the biggest influence when planning a trip. And in Luxury Escapes' latest travel trends report, multi-generational travel is regarded as the most highly sought-after experience, with families favouring resorts that offer varied accommodation options. This enables them to make use of resort facilities as a central hub, without sacrificing privacy away from other holidaymakers.

Adam Schwab, chief executive of Luxury Escapes, says: "We are seeing the growing demand for multi-generational travel coming through strongly ... Families are looking for ways to connect meaningfully, and we're focused on providing tailored experiences that cater to every generation."

Try these options for size.

#### **AUSTRALIA** **Southern Ocean Lodge,** **Kangaroo Island, SA**

The original lodge, all but razed by bushfires in 2020, reopened after a massive rebuild in late 2023. Located at Hanson Bay on the island's southwest coast, this second iteration includes a 625sq m indoor/outdoor dual-winged pavilion with four bed-

rooms and dramatic views. Recently rebranded from Ocean Pavilion to Baillie Pavilion East and West, in honour of Baillie Lodges co-founders James and Hayley Baillie, the posh digs divide neatly into two sections or can combine as one booking. Each option feels about as big as an embassy, with all imaginable comforts and conveniences, including a jacuzzi in the east wing and a plunge pool to the west, yet the main lodge, with its restaurant, bar, convivial lounge areas and wellness spa, is but a short stroll away.

[southernoceanlodge.com.au](http://southernoceanlodge.com.au)

#### **Saffire Freycinet,** **Coles Bay, Tasmania**

Plans are afoot for a three-bedroom Saffire Villa to be added to this award-winning lodge's inventory of 16 suites. Designed to book on an exclusive-use basis, the style is aimed to suit multi-generational families, corporate retreats or small groups. Expected to be online by spring 2026, Saffire Villa will stand on the property's northwest side with uninterrupted views of Great Oyster Bay and The Hazards mountain range. The list of inclusions is slated to cover a private heated pool, al fresco spa and entertainment area with fireplace, living and dining rooms and adjacent kitchen for staff to serve meals. The award-winning lodge has commissioned furniture, fittings and soft furnishings from Tasmanian suppliers, with structural design by hospitality expert Atlis Architecture. Bookings will be taken about six months prior to the opening. Watch this space.

[saffire-freycinet.com.au](http://saffire-freycinet.com.au)

#### **Bells at Killcare, NSW**

This boutique hotel on the central coast, 90 minutes' drive north of the Sydney CBD via highways and the M1, has added four tri-level private lodges to its inventory of suites and villas. Ideal for house-party stays and attended by a lodge manager and concierge, each has a rooftop ocean-facing deck and heat-

ed magnesium pool edged with daybeds and outdoor shower. Thanks to native plantings and the proximity of Bouddi National Park, there's the feel of being in a rustic setting but steps away is the main homestead and its lauded The Wild Flower Bar & Dining hub overseen by well-known local chef Cameron Cansdell, day spa and flourishing herb and produce gardens.

[bellsatkillcare.com.au](http://bellsatkillcare.com.au)

#### **Silky Oaks Lodge, Queensland**

This leading eco-retreat, founded in 1985, was reopened in late 2021 after a \$20m refurb by new owner Baillie Lodges. The property sits snug above the Mossman River at the rim of the Daintree National Park, about an hour by road north of Cairns. Chalet-style bowers in rainforest, billabong and treehouse categories featuring high-spec design and luxe trimmings sit amid native plantings like the most sophisticated of cubby houses. But top of the pops is the exclusive two-bedroom Daintree Pavilion, with soaring atrium, private tiered infinity pool and a pair of accommodation wings with ensuites and entertainment areas. This private retreat is cradled by wraparound views of ancient World Heritage-listed rainforest with a soundtrack of native birds and an appropriate level of sustainable luxury. Billabong dips and guided nature walks await.

[baillielodges.com.au](http://baillielodges.com.au)

#### **NEW ZEALAND** **Rosewood Matakauri, Queenstown**

Originally opened by the philanthropic Robertson family in the early 2000s and acquired by Rosewood in late 2023, this popular lodge enjoys dress-circle views over Lake Wakatipu against a backdrop of forested slopes. In prime position is a 405sqm four-bedroom residence with large living and dining area, open fireplace, fully equipped kitchen, balcony with infinity-edge

**Continued on Page 20**



Continued from Page 19

jacuzzi and sheltered courtyard. Country-chic interiors are by Virginia Fisher, one of NZ's leading designers, and up to eight guests are accommodated in one booking. Rosewood Matakauri also offers a broader inventory of deluxe rooms and suite styles, including lofts. Those in the know often proceed to make a Rosewood circuit of the shaky isles, adding Rosewood Kauri Cliffs in Northland and Cape Kidnappers at Hawkes Bay. [rosewoodhotels.com](http://rosewoodhotels.com)

## BALI Capella Ubud

Visionary designer Bill Bensley conceived the look of this 22-tent property amid the terraced paddy fields up in Ubud, about 40km north of Denpasar airport. Opened in 2018 and terraced over 3.6ha, with not a single tree removed, it's all a bit eccentric to appeal to everyone, and good walking shoes are a must for the steep terrain. But those travellers with a sense of imagination love Bensley's colourful approach to design, his vibrant artworks and layering of artefacts. Set away from the tents, The Lodge offers two bedrooms; one is a king-sized master and the other a twin-bed option, with hand-hammered copper bath and Japanese-style tub respectively. A 19sqm heated pool is part of the mix, plus vintage Chinese-influenced interiors, and plunging views down the verdant Keliki Valley. [capellahotels.com](http://capellahotels.com)



## LOMBOK Qunci Villas

Villa Qusia is this popular resort's premium option, positioned on a hill above the main property and angled to take advantage of views of the Lombok Sea with Bali's Mount Agung beyond. There are three master bedrooms, outdoor living and dining spaces, a 25m private pool scented with drifting frangipani petals, an entertainment/TV room, kitchen, study nook, library and a state-of-the-art exercise studio and gym. Interiors reveal an impressive art collection and the villa's large windows let in loads of light. Free transport is available to pop down to the main facilities, set beside a long beach, where the resort's majority of villas and rooms are located, all with garden or ocean aspects. The Qunci Villas estate is about an hour by resort car from Lombok airport. Daily flights from Denpasar take 40 minutes. [quncivillas.com](http://quncivillas.com)

## SRI LANKA Cape Weligama

This freshly refurbished star of the Dilmah tea family's Resplendent Ceylon collection, and a Relais et Châteaux member, is located amid a 5ha estate on a promontory of the island's southern coast near the heritage city of Galle. There are 39 recently refreshed terracotta-roofed villas and suites but the more regal perches are three duplex Cape Residences, each featuring a ground-floor villa with a pool pavilion on the upper level connected by an internal staircase. The 15m infin-



Bells at Killcare, above; Cape Weligama, below left; Owner's Cottage, Rosewood Matakauri, below; Capella Ubud Bali, bottom

ity-edge pool affords panoramic Indian Ocean views, and interiors include all the expected luxe accoutrements across two double bedrooms, ensuites with rain shower and steam room, spacious living areas, timber deck with sunbeds, the latest in electronic entertainment, complimentary movies and international channels, plus even a secretive second pool in a lush garden accessed from all three villas. [resplendentceylon.com](http://resplendentceylon.com)

[relaischateaux.com](http://relaischateaux.com)

## THAILAND Trisara, Phuket

Set beside the Andaman Sea on Phuket island's north-west tip, this award-winning hideaway with Michelin accolades to its credit comprises serried rows of stand-alone accommodation options featuring plunge pools, garden or ocean aspects, and decor replete with Thai motifs. Even more private are party-pad residences that span from two to nine bedrooms, all with a self-contained sense of seclusion and multiple extras. The seven-bedroom residential villa No. 5 is set on a sprawling headland with such wide sea views that there's almost the sense of being on an island. The entryway is framed by palms, tropical hardwoods and lotus ponds that lead to the lower level, with its infinity pool, decks, shaded relaxation areas and airconditioned living spaces. One bedroom is set up for children; an on-call chef and staff magic up traditional home-style Thai and Western meals in the ultra-modern kitchen. [trisara.com](http://trisara.com)

## VIETNAM The Anam Cam Ranh

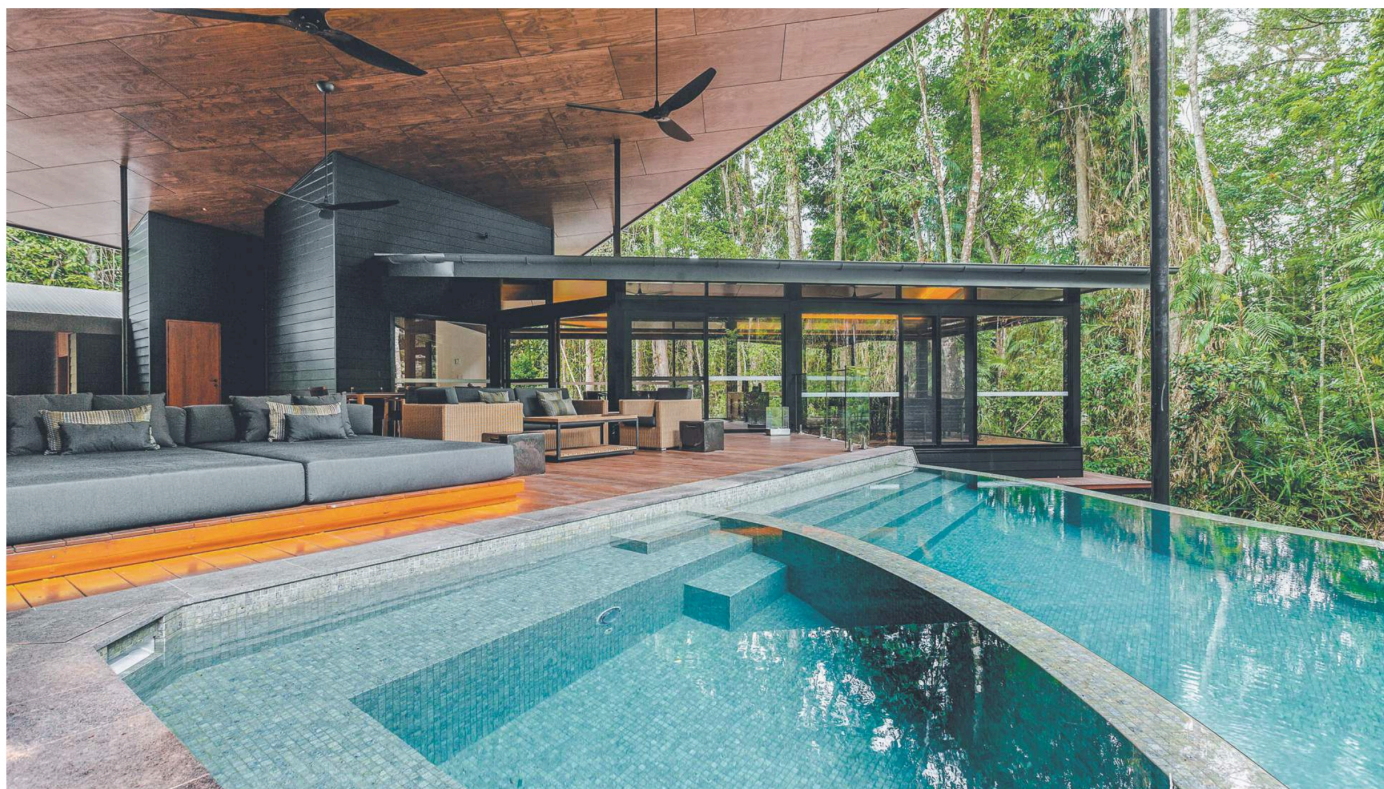
This acclaimed east coast hideaway, set on 300m of beachfront just south of the tourist hub of Nha Trang, has introduced a pair of unambiguously named Honeymoon Villas to supplement its broader itinerary of 177 villas and 136 guestrooms and suites. The two options are set well apart from the resort proper, each covering 180sqm, with 40sqm pools, garden annexes and private sauna, steam and jacuzzi facilities. The tariff covers in-room dining on call, afternoon tea delivery, and private valet and laundry service. Although it's definitely a romantic option, evidence of honeymoon status is not required, but do be prepared for scatterings of red rose petals on the bed, heart-shaped amenities and other romantic touches. The resort also offers two and three-bedroom hilltop villas. [theanam.com](http://theanam.com)

## CAMBODIA Song Saa Private Island

The Royal Villa at this privately owned Koh Rong archipelago property, a 45-minute speedboat ride from Sihanoukville, echoes the famed thatch-roofed over-water architecture of The Maldives, with interiors as stunning as the location and no stickybeak neighbours. Huge ensuite bedrooms with sunken bathtubs, spacious dining and living areas, a breezy furnished deck, 33sqm private pool, indoor-outdoor rain showers and direct ocean and private marine reserve access are just some of the lures. The 24-villa property, built with reclaimed timber and materials from the mainland, is widely lauded for its sustainable practices, manage-







ment's championing of community projects and emphasis on locally sourced cuisine.

[songsaa-privateisland.com](https://songsaa-privateisland.com)

### FIJI Kokomo Private Island

Five residences at this leading island resort in the Kadavu group are designed for house parties and are equally popular as venues for small weddings and family reunions. Set apart from the island's main villa inventory, the homes feature configurations of three, four, five and six bedrooms. All have pools, dedicated butler service, full kitchens, media rooms with massive TVs, and pretty outlooks. Astrolabe, set on a hill, is an imposing single-storey, five-bedroom option named for the Great Astrolabe Reef, the world's fourth-largest, which girdles 57ha Yaukuve Levu island, home to Kokomo. Tick inclusions such as a 110sq m infinity pool, lofty views, serene decor, oceans of space, flourishing gardens and courtyards, and an electric buggy to get around, either self-drive or butler-chauffeured up, down, round and about paths bordered by bright bougainvillea and sweet frangipani.

[kokomoislandfiji.com](https://kokomoislandfiji.com)

### THE MALDIVES Soneva Secret

The Soneva brand is well-known in The Maldives for its community projects, marine stewardship and eco-conscious principles at Soneva Jani and Soneva Fushi resorts. But in 2024, things got even more exclusive with the unveiling of Soneva Secret, the first property to open in the Makunudhoo Atoll. Fourteen overwater and island villas are available, each attended by three staff, including a chef on call. Experiences include swimming with manta rays, stargazing from the island observatory, beach picnics, wellness therapies, and all manner of aquatic adventures. It's the last word in private island luxury and surely it would be rude to feel superior to those staying at more routine Maldivian island resorts? But it's perhaps irresistible to feel smug while waving to speedboats passing by as you whoosh down your villa's slippery dip into the aquamarine waters.

[soneva.com](https://soneva.com)

### JAPAN Aman Kyoto

A wooded estate on the northern outskirts of Japan's



Daintree Pavilion at Silky Oaks Lodge, top; Baillie Pavilion at Southern Ocean Lodge, Kangaroo Island, above left; Villa Quisia, Lombok, above

cultural capital is home to one of the Aman group's most serene properties. Offering privacy and a true sense of tradition, there are 34 rooms and suites, of which the east-facing Washigamine Pavilion, set on a green rise, is Aman Kyoto's largest and most secluded. Designed in the style of a self-contained contemporary villa, the 241sqm sanctuary overlooks immaculately tended gardens and surrounding landscapes. There are two ensuite bedrooms, a traditional tatami-matted room plus a lounge and dining area, abundant use of natural timbers, and beautiful artefacts. Floor futons are provided for those wishing to sleep in traditional style. A trekking path leads directly from the pavilion through the forested grounds to private meditation gardens.

[aman.com](https://aman.com)