WHERE TO GO IN 2017

THE MALDIVES
CULTURAL KANAZAWA
CAMBODIA'S COAST
SYDNEY
Maldives Multiplication

So many villas, so little time.

The islands have reached beyond the homogeneous market and are seeing the next generation of overwater bungalows cater to a wider variety of niche interests like surfing and yoga. A staggering 22 new hotels opened in 2015 and about a dozen more will open in 2017. The Baglioni Hotels (baglionihotels.com; doubles from US$720) acquired a private island named Masgaj, part of the Dhiffushi Atoll. A 30-minute seaplane ride from Male; it will be home to a brand-new resort to be completed this summer, composed of all-dine-villa villas, and three restaurants.

Someva Jolif (someva.com/villas from US$53 [MS]) is a new 25-villa family-friendly resort set within its own private six-kilometer-long lagoon, which opened in late 2016. Its modern minimalist architecture and bedrooms with retractable roofs are raising the bar for bungalow design. Another newcomer is the Four Seasons Yorah Baa Atoll (boursemerits.com; rates not yet available), which will be the world’s only private resort located entirely within a UNESCO biosphere. And those who can’t bear to leave the water will appreciate the Hurawalhi (hurawalhi.com; testing menu at US$80) Undersea Restaurant (US$280), the world’s largest subsea restaurant where you can dine on the very fish that swim past you.

Getting to the Maldives will be easier too: this year, Costa Cruises (costacruises.com; rates not yet available) is launching a cruise with stops in the Maldives, and Malé International Airport’s US$450 million refurb includes a new runway to accommodate more passengers. If all that weren’t enough, Hurun has been working with Maldives officials to make the entire archipelago a Biosphere Reserve by the end of this year. The plan includes a massive UN-funded clean water project that will start in Faruholi and expand to 105 of 498 other remote islands, helping the Maldives become less wasteful and more self-sufficient.

—ADAM H. BRADY

Oman of My Dreams

The Arabian peninsula’s best-kept secret is an upscale swing.

You’d be forgiven for wondering how a cradle of civilization and a major intersection of global trade routes has managed to stay off the tourism radar for so long. Oman, with its rich history exemplified by the 1,000-year-old city of Al Wadih and its univiled scenery that ranges from the limestone Al Hajar mountains to a 3,000-kilometer coastline, has big draws for every type of traveler. Trek wind-swept deserts, spot rambunctious dolphins in the gulf, visit dazzling mosques, stay in charming Bedouin towns. Even capital city Muscat, famed for its souks and seafood, boasts an incredibly diverse terrain—just to mention the laid-back, liveable scene that’s less over-the-top than neighboring Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

No, the wealth hasn’t run rampant in this sultanate, but they still know how to live luxuriously. Intrepid breads like Six Senses, The Chedi and Alila have had considerable outposts in Oman, and the 30-story, Arabian fantasy Desert Nights Camp has been on our bucket list for ages. Last year brought the opening of the first five-star on the south coast, Al Bidbid Resort Salalah by Anantara (anantara.com; doubles from US$380), and, on the curving rim of a canyon, the Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar (aljabalalakhdar.com; doubles from US$380), the highest-altitude resort in the Middle East. A Juneejah is scheduled to open near Muscat later in 2017. Now’s the time to avoid your self of that legendary Oman hospitality.

—JENNIFER LEE ST. JOHN
At six, Goode was given a pet Greek tortoise, thus clinching his love for chelonians.

Conservation work means lots of time on the road, putting up with extreme conditions and surviving run-ins with poachers. “Traveling in this way is often much more interesting,” Goode says. “You see parts of a country you’d never experience otherwise.” He flies every two weeks: to New Orleans for a turtle conference, to Southeast Asia to film a documentary about the wildlife trade, to South Africa to visit some newly acquired hectarage.

One of his most recent trips was to Mexico, where the conservancy had purchased a parcel of land in Sonora to protect a recently identified species, Gopherus ergodei, now commonly known as Goode’s thornscrub tortoise. The journey had involved massive thunderstorms, a flooded tent, chigger bites and stomach trouble, but Goode had no complaints. “It’s incredibly exciting and rewarding to travel with a mission and be able to do something positive for these countries. I feel very privileged.”

HELP A HATCHLING
THREE RESORTS THAT DON’T MIND SHELLING OUT TO KEEP OUR FLIPPED FRIENDS AFOAT.

+ Le Meridien Bora Bora The Bora Bora Turtle Center, located in the heart of Le Meridien resort, came into existence after a guest brought in an injured sea turtle from the surrounding lagoon and left it for hotel staff to take care of. Since then, more than 500 turtles have been reintroduced to the ocean, and thanks to their artificial incubation system, these waters teem with baby turtles. As a guest of the resort, you’ll have the opportunity to learn about sea turtles from the resident scientists and get a first-hand look at (and feel) up close and personal at the touch pool. Lemeridien-borabora.com doubling from US$447.

+ Gaya Island Resort Tucked within the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park amid protected mangroves, coral reefs and the coast of Matukam Bay, Gaya Island Resort serves as an idyllic safe haven for all sorts of endemic wildlife. One of the resort’s marquee eco-friendly initiatives is their turtle rescue program, which seeks to rehabilitate and release injured and endangered sea turtles. They even run a turtle hotline that you can call to notify the marine center when an at-risk turtle is found along the shoreline. Guests are encouraged to get involved in conservation efforts, whether that means taking a nature walk with the resident naturalist or volunteering at the marine park. Gayar resin.com doubling from RM699.

+ Anantara Layan Phuket The Mai Marine Turtle Foundation in Phuket, founded by the Anantara, is making headway in its mission to rejuvenate the turtle population along the Thai coast. For the past two years, Anantara Layan Phuket has hosted a marine turtle release on its own Layan Beach, where more than 40 endangered marine turtles are released into the ocean annually. Guests are invited to attend the event and have the opportunity to donate to the foundation to adopt a turtle and release it back into the ocean. Anantara.com doubling from THB1,200. — VERONICA INVEEN