

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

# Luxury hospitality heating up in South Pacific

March 1, 2024



Brands such as Four Seasons and Aman Resorts are increasing activity in Oceania. Image credit: Four Seasons

---

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

Ultra-high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) are demonstrating a thirst for far-flung getaways.

To appease their adventurous spirits, top-end travel brands are increasingly taking to the sparkling waters and lush islands of Oceania. Heating up operations in remote spots around the South Pacific, the expansion efforts and exclusive programming of international luxury names reveal a thriving vacation destination.

"A vacation in this region is about relaxing; it's about enjoying the friendly people, the beaches and just escaping from everyday life," said Leora Lanz, assistant dean at [Boston University School of Hospitality Administration](#) and member of the International Society of Hospitality Consultants, Boston.

"You'll hear more about travelers' explorations' or expeditions' than ever before (rather than simply touring') because the intent today is for travel to be an innovative and immersive experience, even transformational," Ms. Lanz said. "This region, known as an escape from everyday life, allows travelers their own opportunity for a reset, to escape and to transform."

## The next high-end hotspots

On the islands sprinkled around the South Pacific, luxury brands are digging their heels in.

This is leading to vacationers around the world putting these destinations on their wishlists. Their social media feeds are filled with Oceania's scenery, leading to many more in Western countries becoming familiar with the geography and now they want to see it in real life.



*Aman has been taking to social media this week to celebrate its Oceania offerings. Image credit: Aman Resorts International*

With top earners planning to spend 20 percent more on their trips this year ([see story](#)), hospitality companies are leaning in and trying to listen to what excites the group.

As it turns out in many cases, the more remote, the better ([see story](#)). Focusing on seclusion and protected nature could capture the attention of audiences, especially in light of trends established over the last few years.

“The desire to travel to and explore new destinations exploded when we were all trapped at home during the period of the pandemic,” Ms. Lanz said.

“Over-touristed locations had the opportunity for a reset, and the knowledge of, and interest in, exploring new or untouched locations, secondary or even tertiary places boomed,” she said. “The pandemic has helped us better realize the need to escape to natural areas, and be one with ourselves and with nature while also appreciating the peoples of different cultures.”



*Seabourn recently launched new itineraries for the region, celebrating adventure. Image credit: Seabourn*

In Auckland, IHG now has a plot.

Located in New Zealand’s largest city, waterfront views ground the [Intercontinental](#). With a local Whariki (woven panels) in each room, guests get a taste of the landscape.

Native food and outdoor activities are key points of focus of the country ([see story](#)).

Wellness permeates through other nearby islands. For example, spa treatments, fitness and gastronomy define experiences in Bora Bora ([see story](#)).



*Luxury travelers are ready for something new, and the South Pacific offers just that. Image credit: Four Seasons*

With many more openings and developments sure to hit the tropical oceans soon, companies continue to carve out their spots by putting prestige and one-of-a-kind perks at the forefront.

Thanks to affluent adventurers increasingly seeking out vacations that offer bigger bragging rights, the farther out, the better. Ocean-bound businesses are clued into this favorite travel theme.

After its inaugural Antarctic season, Cruise line Seabourn's Pursuit ship will head to the islands of the South Pacific between March and October 2024. Eventually ending up in Australia, the brand is promising those wanting a super remote vacation a world-class expedition experience.



*The ship will explore the remote reaches of the South Pacific during its upcoming adventure. Image credit: Seabourn*

The **Seabourn Pursuit** will visit Papua New Guinea, West Papua, Indonesia, and the area between Melanesia and Chile.

"For much of the world's population, it is a long-haul flight to the South Pacific," Ms. Lanz said.

"Thus, people with more discretionary income and more time to spend can enjoy the region for the escape as luxury intended," she said. "They can indulge in the natural beauty or the wellness offerings for which the region is so highly regarded."

### **Global South ascending**

The rise of Oceania is not just due to international travelers' love of remote destinations.



*St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort is welcoming two-Michelin-star chef Domenico Stile from March 27 to April 3, 2024. Image courtesy of St. Regis*

Studies show that the Global South is bulking up its infrastructure, accumulating further resources and gaining more centimillionaires every year ([see story](#)). In fact, the region is estimated to hold the highest growth potential between now and 2033.

“Statista just yesterday reported that the APAC region is the largest consumer of personal luxury goods in the world and has thus become an important segment for global luxury brands,” Ms. Lanz said.

“High Net Worth and Ultra High Net Worth Individuals are increasing,” she said. “During the August 2023 Virtuoso Travel Week, it was reported that the association’s target clientele of high-net-worth travelers grew even faster than expected in every market in the world.

“The luxury travel brands are eager to provide personalized, private and exclusive types of experiences in new places to meet the wants (not needs) of today’s HNW traveler.”



*Over-water huts are becoming social media influencer staples in the luxury digital space. Image credit: Six Senses*

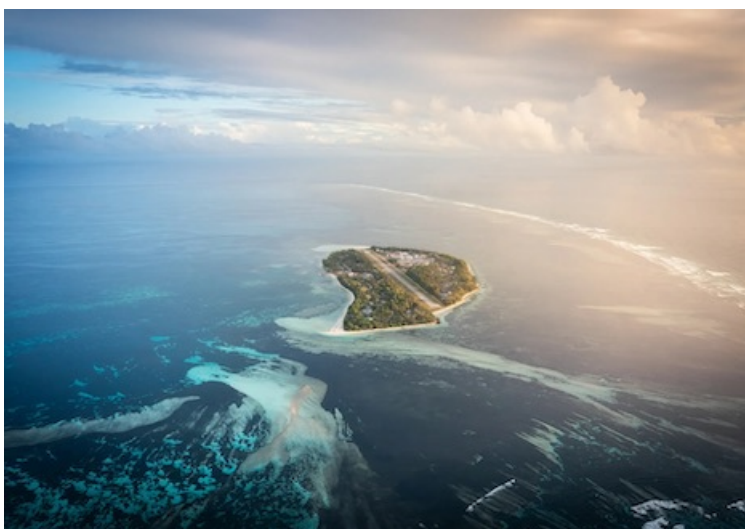
Many luxury brands are eyeing locals when setting up shop in countries here, from resorts in Tanzania ([see story](#)) to Cambodian high-rise properties ([see story](#)).

With Southeast Asia and India turning out to be golden ticket markets specifically for beauty ([see story](#)), wellness is also often emphasized in these spaces. This is reflected in many of the South Pacific’s new high-end hotels and expeditions.

International hotelier Six Senses’ [Samui hotel](#) in Thailand is embarking on an event series titled “A Year of Sustainable Culinary.”

Throughout 2024, the guest experience will be enhanced through quarterly gatherings guided by Michelin-starred chefs. The happenings center on locally grown ingredients, immersing visitors in the ecosystem through taste.

Also located in the country, the [Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui](#) is now featured in the Michelin Guide 2024. As the culinary organization has only been present in Thailand since 2018, the recognition puts the hospitality brand in a noteworthy position.



*Palette Island offers privacy, a value held close by many luxury travelers. Image credit: Hilton*

The five-star beach stay stages locally focused meals informed by traditional techniques, ingredients and presentations.

To the north, [Four Seasons Resort Chiang Mai](#) likewise is informed by nourishment.

This week, the hospitality brand revealed the [Trails of the North](#) itinerary, encouraging travelers to step away from the beaten track and see Thailand off the grid. Cuisine and adventure are two grounding factors, with premium glamping and signature herbal cocktails just a few offerings on the schedule.



*At the Four Seasons stay, guests can take in sweeping vistas of the tropics. Image credit: Four Seasons*

Hilton's [Waldorf Astoria Hotels & Resorts](#) debuted in the Seychelles, islands that dot the Western Indian Ocean, just weeks ago, touting the location's intimate setup on Platte Island.

Calling it a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience filled with "unsurpassed luxury" services, the company placed personalization at the heart of the 50-seafront-villa property. To protect its serene surroundings, the Waldorf Astoria has a resident environmental manager and marine biologist on-site and has teamed up with several nonprofits, such as the Island Conservation Society.

The resort also runs on solar energy and, among other green strides, promotes farm-to-table dining.

This is becoming a sticking point for luxury as a whole ([see story](#)), with peers in the region, such as Six Senses, embracing the trend. After winning multiple awards for its preservation actions at its [Laamu resort](#) in the Maldives, also in the Indian Ocean.



*The Waldorf Astoria has open-air footprints, allowing beach breezes to blow through. Image credit: Hilton*

Swiss hotel chain Aman Resorts International has been shining a light on its [Amanpulo](#) property in the Philippines, iterating its far-flung location. Situated on the Cuyo Archipelago of northern Palawan, the brand states it is "blissfully marooned."

Vibrant visuals of its private island, dusted with white sand and thriving reefs, rolled out on social media this week. Videos and still photographs bring to life the tropical oasis, advertising diving opportunities, jungle lookouts and tailored spa menus.

Those in less remote areas of the seaside Global South are bringing a sense of wildness to their urban hotels, such as IHG's recently opened, first [Hotel Indigo](#) in Malaysia.

The Kuala Lumpur stay borders the KL Forest Eco Park, the central city's only remaining bit of tropical rainforest. This positioning is referenced throughout the interiors, from tree roots as decorations to green hues coating textiles.



*Beachside dining and romantic settings are touted by Aman's resort. Image credit: Aman Resorts International*

Time will tell if locals or visitors will shape the luxury landscape of the Global South, but for now, it seems that those in the tropical seas have found a way to balance the desires of both.

"My friend at the ESSEC Business School in France, Professor Denis Morisset, who is an expert in luxury travel brands explains that no one needs' luxury," said Ms. Lanz.

"Rather, luxury caters to dreams, desires and emotions," she said. "So the objective of luxury is to present travelers and consumers with their dreams.

"People are traveling now more than ever to fulfill those dreams."

---

© 2024 Reliance Relocation Services, Inc. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.