

BAZAAR

Harper's

Laid-back living finds
new meaning at
Constance Lodge
Tsarabanjina,
Madagascar

Escape Exotic Seclusion

Far-flung destinations meet ROMANTIC
HOTELS in Bazaar's pick of the best places to
relax and unwind in



The Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi revels in its natural surroundings



Allow the sun and sea to indulge you at the Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi

Best for Eco-Lovers

Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi Thailand

1 One look at the Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi, and you'd be convinced it was made for the express purpose of giving couples some serious alone time. Nestled in the lush forests of Phang Nga Bay, where on a normal day you'd just have the chirrup of birds and the sound of sea waves for company, are private, elevated villas dotting 24 acres of the property. In keeping with owners Sonu and Eva Shivdasani's commitment to the environment, the resort mimics a natural paradise where wood, stone, and leaves merge to create an experience seeped in nature. Its private infinity pools become perfect vantage points for enjoying the surrounding karst topography, while the open plan allows for a perfect evening spent under the velvet sky. Go cycling to explore the forests nearby or opt to learn traditional Thai cooking along with your partner. For a truly romantic touch though, the villa staff can create something special—choices range from dinners at a private location to lavish bubble baths at nighttime.

Contact: Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi, Phang Nga, Thailand; tel: +66 0 76 418 500; www.sixsenses.com

Best for Hipsters
Casa Turquesa Brazil

2 Until the 1960s, Paraty was only accessible by boat, the cobbled streets and fine colonial villas protected from the open sea by a cluster of islands where Brazil's billionaires built their James Bond-style lairs. Now it's where fishermen and fashionistas mingle, particularly at the hip new hotel in town, Casa Turquesa, housed in a two-storey 18th-century townhouse. Each of the nine bedrooms has a different, vibrant colour as its theme, and gives out wonderful views of the bay, the famous rooftops of Paraty, the mountains, and the dome of the historic church of Santa Rita where, come dusk, swallows swoop and glide.

Contact: Casa Turquesa, Paraty, Brazil; tel: +55 24 3371 1037; www.casaturquesa.com



Casa Turquesa, Brazil, is an intimate boutique bolthole

THIS PAGE: COURTESY SIX SENSES HIDEAWAY YAO NOI; CASA TURQUESA; BORGO SANTO PIETRO; CASA LA SIESTA



La dolce vita comes alive at the Tuscan retreat of Borgo Santo Pietro



Casa la Siesta in Spain is a luxe home away from home

Add to this the advantage of home-made jams, a world-class wine cellar and fresh, light yet artful cuisine, and you understand why the hotel has already notched up a high percentage of return guests.

Contact: Borgo Santo Pietro, Tuscany, Italy; tel: +39 0577 75 1222; www.borgosantopietro.com

Best for Homely Relaxation

Casa la Siesta Spain

4 What do you do with your days at Casa la Siesta? The clue lies in the name. British owners Lee and Amelia have re-created an authentic hacienda-style property in Andalusia. There's no formal check-in, room service or over-eager waiters—which creates a genuine sense that their casa is your casa. Along with a superior suite, there are six bedrooms, each with a terrace and thoughtful details: antique furniture, books to read, a wood burner for winter nights. Breakfast—starting with fruit, followed by pots of chopped avocado to spread on *pan con tomate*—is served in the garden. The whitewash-and-bougainvillea town of Vejer de la Frontera, a perfect place for wandering, is a five-minute drive away.

Contact: Casa la Siesta, Cadiz, Spain; tel: +34 956 232 003; www.casalasiesta.com

Best for Romance
Borgo Santo Pietro Italy

3 This is the Tuscan retreat you dream about for the perfect long weekend. Located 35-minutes' drive south of Siena, the hotel opened to guests in April 2008, after seven years of rebuilding, redecorating, and restructuring. The main house occupies a 13th-century pilgrims' lodging, with antique roll-top baths in the bedrooms, layers of open-weave linen, silks, tapestries, and hand-painted murals. There are 13 acres of garden, plus a further 27 acres of olive groves and vineyards, with mature parterres, box gardens, organic vegetables, and herb patches (used in the kitchen), as well as a tennis court concealed behind rose bowers.



Live out all your water fantasies at the Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru



Gift yourself a stunning sunset view while at the Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica



The Tamerza Palace is set amidst a gorgeous mountain oasis



With its cobbled pathways and colonial architecture, Casa de Sierra Nevada has an old-world charm



Apart from being Cairo's first boutique hotel, Villa Belle Epoque is a gourmet haven

Best for Water Babies Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru Maldives

5 There's no denying that Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru is as far removed from civilisation as can be, but that's what's so darn awesome about it. In Maldives's Baa Atoll, a private airplane deposits you on an island that is all about pristine white sands, azure waters, and swaying palm trees. Days here are spent diving and discovering exotic aquatic life—snorkelling with schools of manta rays and whale sharks at Hanifaru Bay is particularly popular—while nights are for intimate dinners by the beach. You could also board the luxury Four Seasons Explorer cruiser that gets you up, close, and personal with the vistas of the Indian Ocean. If you are in the mood, you could also participate in the resort's interactive marine programme where you can do your bit for the delicate

ecosystem while enjoying once-in-a-lifetime encounters with marine creatures.
Contact: *Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru, Baa Atoll, Maldives; tel: +960 66 00 888; www.fourseasons.com*

Best for High Living Canopy Tree House at Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica Peru

6 The jungle lodge run by Inkaterra, deep in the Amazon, has always been luxurious. But it has gotten better with the new Canopy Tree House, almost 100 ft up in the jungle, giving guests unparalleled access to the rainforest's treetop flora and fauna. Built in the local style with a thatched roof and wooden interior, it is accessible via rope walkways lodged in a wooden tower. If the altitude is too much to handle, a second suite is available free of charge on the ground below; and there is a dedicated 'canopy butler' to provide room service. Once atop,

you'll be treated to the most breathtaking sunrises, as the sun lights up the tops of ceiba trees so they look like fibre-optic lamps.
Contact: *Inkaterra Reserva Amazonica, Tambopata, Peru; tel: +51 1 610 0400; www.inkaterra.com*

Best for Cinematic Mystique Tamerza Palace Tunisia

7 Just outside the small town of Tamerza near Tunisia's border with Algeria, in one of the most stunning mountain oases sprinkled across this isolated landscape of spectacular gorges, ravines, and waterfalls, is one of the country's most surprising and elegant hotels. Tamerza Palace is built like a long, low Berber house, with all its rooms

THIS PAGE: COURTESY FOUR SEASONS RESORT MALDIVES AT LANDAA GIRAAVURU; INKATERRA RESERVA AMAZONICA; TAMERZA PALACE; CASA DE SIERRA NEVADA; VILLA BELLE EPOQUE

overlooking the 'sleeping village'—the ruins of an old settlement abandoned after the great floods of 1969. Rather than faux-Tunisian décor, soft modern colours are mixed with antique hangings and fine, old wood carvings. Do not miss the hammam, with its indoor pool and exquisite treatment rooms providing traditional Berber rituals, one using hot sand rather than hot stones. You are led through the baths wrapped in a soft *fouta* (a local kind of towel) and a matching *djellaba*. There's also a wide range of Western spa treatments on offer.
Contact: *Tamerza Palace, Tunisia; tel: +216 76 485 344; www.tamerza-palace.com*

Best for Colonial Character Casa de Sierra Nevada Mexico

8 It is impossible not to be captivated by San Miguel de Allende's cobbled labyrinths, fountained courtyards, gardens, and fine colonial architecture. Many find it a wrench to leave, and the city has become a place to reinvent yourself. If you are only passing through, the preferred hotel is Casa de Sierra Nevada—six adjoining villas dating back to the 16th century. The hotel has just unveiled its own makeover, adding Casa Palma, a 19th-century mansion converted into six suites, which adjoins the pool and has access to the hotel's facilities and services. The décor pays homage to colourful local traditions in textiles and handicrafts. Mod cons run to under-floor heating, flatscreen TVs, iPod docks, and heated outdoor plunge pools. From the terrace of the Presidential Suite, you can drink in the San Miguel skyline with its roofs and bell towers, and reflect on this picturesque city that's considered the heart and soul of Mexico.
Contact: *Casa de Sierra Nevada, Guanajuato, Mexico; tel: +52 415 152 7040; www.casasierranevada.com*

Best for Aesthetes Villa Belle Epoque Egypt

9 Cairo's first boutique hotel may have been a long time coming, but Villa Belle

Epoque was worth the wait. It's located in Maadi, a leafy suburb populated by the city's literati and expat community, about 15 minutes from the chaos and thrills of downtown Cairo, and from where you can easily walk to the Nile.

The interiors of the vanilla-hued villa recreate a more elegant '20s past, with Egyptian antiques and classic colonial furniture, including trunks and exquisitely inlaid table lamps. The sun-and-shade-filled gardens are perfect for relaxation; from the Rosetta Suite, you are within plucking distance of a mango tree. The conservatory leads on to the garden, with its poolside dining area shaded by fig, guava, and peach trees, where meals, mint tea, and cocktails are served. You could visit for the food alone: for breakfast, there are Egyptian pastries and vegetables; for lunch in the mango tree's shade, a zingy cold orange soup; for dinner, perhaps the Nubian-style stew packed with homegrown okra, tomatoes, and velvety lamb, accompanied by cocktails.

Contact: *Villa Belle Epoque, Cairo, Egypt; tel: +20 2 2358 0265; www.villabelleepoque.com*

Best for Beach Enthusiasts Constance Lodge Tsarabanjina Madagascar

10 Relax and watch the iridescent flycatchers flit across the whiter-than-white sands of Nosy Tsarabanjina, a private island off Madagascar, surrounded by coral reefs and a lush mountain landscape. At Constance Lodge, a beach hotel of 25 thatched bungalows, you can get sporty with aqua-gym, beach volleyball and pétanque, or just wander about barefoot in a sarong, doing very little.
Contact: *Constance Lodge Tsarabanjina, Nosy Be, Madagascar; tel: +261 32 051 5229; www.tsarbanjina.com* ■