

Relaxation comes naturally at Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary on Ko Samui.



JON WHITTLE

THE BEST ISLAND RETREATS



HEALTH DEPENDS ON LIFESTYLE. IT'S THAT SIMPLE. Where you are, what you eat, how you exercise and how you feel about it all can determine how long you'll live and how well. And the lifestyles on islands, as a rule, are healthier. People on islands can eat fresher food, get more sunlight on their skin, find solace in nature and feel great. Whether you go to visit or to live, experiencing the wellness-focused traditions and habits on these 10 islands can make you feel better now and for years to come — many, many more years to come.

BY MATTHEW MILLER, ASHLEY FRAXEDAS AND JON WHITTLE

Hawaii Island
Retreat, Big Island**BEST FOR QUIET MEDITATION****Kamalaya, Ko Samui**

➤ Small fishing boats drift by golden pagodas and beaches of rippled sand. That's the serene setting you might see here on the Thai island of Ko Samui. Of course, that's only if you open your eyes between an Indian Kati Vasti hot oil treatment and a Thai massage at Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary and Holistic Spa resort. After those indulgences, enter the monks' cave nestled between granite boulders. Stay a while by the small altar to breathe in the cave's heady atmosphere alongside pictures of the Buddhist monks who meditated in this blessed space. That island tradition of self-discovery inspires the therapists who practice at the Wellness Sanctuary today, combining naturopathy, the Indian "science of life" practice called ayurveda, and full-

body Chinese medicine analysis, incorporating acupuncture, herbs and more. In all, Kamalaya offers more than 70 treatments. Five-star cuisine customized to the program you choose makes the experience whole. Just lie down and close your eyes. kamalaya.com

BEST FOR DE-STRESSING
Hawaii Island Retreat,
Big Island

➤ Ancient Hawaiian royalty knew how to relax. In *lomi lomi* massage, designed to relieve the *ali'i* ruling class from the stresses of power, practitioners use hands, arms and elbows to restore good energy flow through the body. A *lomi lomi* devotee for 30 years, Jeanne Sunderland recently opened the Hawaii Island Retreat at Ahu Pohaku Ho'omaluhia. It's an eight-room boutique hotel in a striking

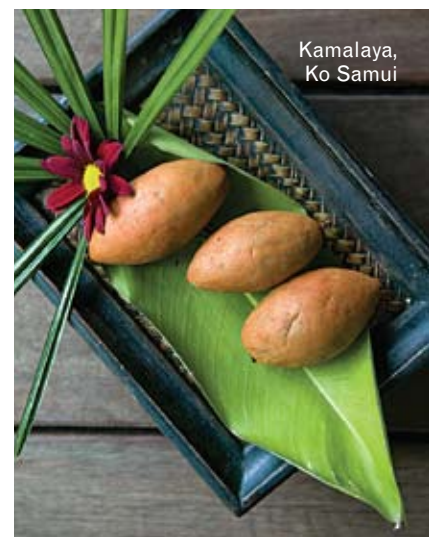
north Kohala setting of green swales between braces of volcanic rock. Along with signature massages, the retreat has a full suite of spa treatments, many using locally grown kukui-nut oil. Guests dine on greens from the garden tended by Jeanne's physician husband, Robert Watkins. Walking adventures include the "Legends and Lore" hike, which visits the sacred council stones said to be used by Kamehameha the Great. If this place is powerful enough for him, imagine what it will do for you. hawaiiislandretreat.com

BEST OVER-WATER RETREAT**Deep Ocean Spa, Bora Bora**

➤ Here's one recipe for health: Combine a 20-minute swim in the lagoon with a light meal of vanilla-crustured mahimahi and one Tahitian over-water massage. It all blends together at the Deep Ocean Spa, part of the InterContinental Bora Bora Resort and Thalasso Spa. In the treatments, the spa uses cold water pumped from 3,000 feet below the Pacific's surface. The water is rich with minerals and protected from air pollution. Start with a marine crystal scrub for exfoliation; then walk through cold jets of deep-sea water, followed by a dip in the seawater pool. A Polynesian flower bath and customized seaweed wrap get you ready for your recharging massage with hot volcanic stones. Now look down — the over-water massage bungalow has a glass floor. The colorful fish below swim by as if just for you. Don't feel guilty. Feel better. deepoceanspa.com >>

FROM TOP: COURTESY HAWAII ISLAND RETREAT; JONWHITTLE

The ancients knew how to relax and restore energy flow through the body.

Kamalaya,
Ko Samui

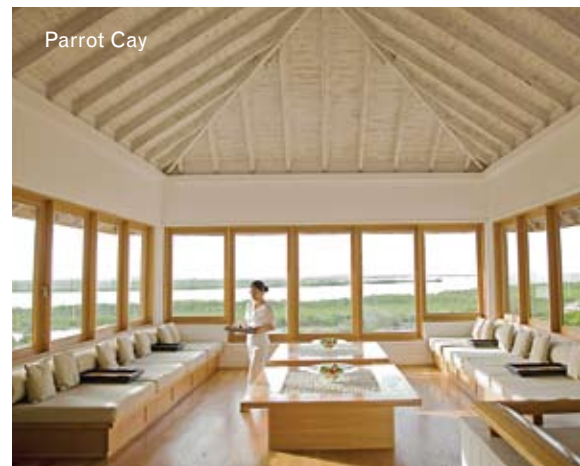
BEST FOR THRILLING HEIGHTS Gayana Eco Resort, Borneo

> Many people on Borneo believe that everything in nature contains life, even the rivers and mountains. They also believe our spirits must be appeased through ritual. Let the Sabah region show you how animated and spirit-soothing nature can be. From your home base of Gayana Eco Resort, commune as many people have with the “Summit of Borneo.” Mount Kinabalu rises over 13,000 feet, making for an exhilarating two-day trek. If that sounds daunting, Mount Kinabalu National Park has other less demanding forest walks amid an amazing concentration of biodiversity — see epiphytic orchids *and* pygmy squirrels. Or go kayaking over reefs in the blue waters of the South China Sea. Get a Bornean *urut* massage back at the resort’s Solace Spa. Warm hands

deliver oil pressed from local coconuts to dispatch stress. Treat your body well; treat your spirit well. Isn’t that what retreat means? gayana-eco-resort.com

BEST PRIVATE ISLAND RETREAT COMO Shambhala Retreat, Parrot Cay

> Mere images of the Caribbean inspire wellness — desktop wallpapers of infinity pools emptying into the calm sea, posters of hammocks swaying on the beach. But being here can’t be topped — especially at Parrot Cay, a 1,000-acre private island in the Turks and Caicos. On the 35-minute boat ride from Providenciales, every passing wave delivers a little more of that laid-back Caribbean attitude, so by the time you enter the COMO Shambhala Retreat, you can barely flex a muscle. During three-, five- and seven-night packages,



Parrot Cay

do yoga next to the surf, meditate on the sand and get massages overlooking the Caicos Passage. The exclusive field-to-table COMO Shambhala menu honors the “living foods” tradition — minimal cooking to maximize nutrients. Start the experience with a cleansing juice of fennel, cucumber, spinach, celery, apple, spirulina, sunflower seeds and macadamia nuts. Follow that with a salad of freshwater crayfish, pomelo, chili and lime; then indulge in orange and almond cake with wild honey yogurt and cardamom sauce for dessert. Finish on that perfect hammock. parrotcay.como.bz

Treat your body well; treat your spirit well.
Isn’t that what retreat means?

Gayana Eco
Resort, Borneo

BEST FOR FRESH-AIR EXERCISE Bicycle Adventures, New Zealand

> If you lived in New Zealand’s fantasy scenscapes, you might want to be outside all the time too. Fresh-air activities are a way of life here. On Bicycle Adventures’ 10-day tour of the South Island (January to March), you’ll get your cardio in. The van-supported ride averages 45 miles a day, with stays at scenic hotels. You’ll feel the workout in your quads, but as you pass the snowcapped peaks along Lake Mapourika, the basking seals in Glendhu Bay and the wineries of Central Otago, you won’t mind. Sheep outnumber humans, so you won’t see many cars. The pedaled pace is fast enough to get your heart pumping, slow enough to let you savor the island. bicycleadventures.com >>

Jungle Bay Resort,
Dominica**BEST FOR BALANCE****Jungle Bay Resort, Dominica**

➤ Nothing restores low spirits and a weary body like an uplifting environment. Dominica is that place. Its people thrive on the island's mountainous walking terrain, largely organic diet, clean air and good water. Yoga retreats and fitness boot camps scheduled throughout the year at Jungle Bay Resort and Spa let you tap into that power. Work out morning and evening with professional instructors in Jungle Bay's open-air studios built of sustainably harvested woods. And experience Dominica all day long while hiking to lonely beaches, swimming through waterfalls and snorkeling on stunning reefs. Add massage and dancing, plus classes on healthy Caribbean cooking, and a picture of wellness emerges. The human body, like an island ecosystem, seeks balance and thrives on it. Let Dominica give you a head start. junglebaydominica.com

BEST FOR LONGEVITY**Ikarian Winery, Ikaria**

➤ Famous for its healthy culture for thousands of years, the Greek island of Ikaria has been called "the island of healing"

and "the longevity island." More recently, Dan Buettner included Ikaria in his book *The Blue Zones*, about the lifestyles of the longest-lived peoples in the world. Ikarians, one in three of whom live into their 90s, typically eat lots of greens and drink antioxidant-rich herbal teas, goat's milk and organic red wine. Share that lifestyle at the Ikarian Winery in Pigi. Stay in one of the winery's renovated stone houses, take cooking classes on the Ikarian version of the vaunted Mediterranean diet and learn about the wine. (And yes, drink what's left at the end of each wine class.) Enjoy mountain walks in good company. Owner Giorgios Karimalis will send you home not with souvenirs, but with an understanding of how health and lifestyle intertwine. ikarianwine.gr

BEST CUSTOM RETREAT**Pure Kauai, Kauai**

➤ Think a 15,000-square-foot spa is impressive? Enter the 15 billion-square-foot spa that is the island of Kauai. Oldest and most isolated of the main Hawaiian Islands, the Garden Isle creates a sense of remove that gives permission to breathe deeper, eat healthier and exercise better. And if you count beaches,

mountaintops and cool forest pools, the treatment rooms go on forever. Pure Kauai sets up pampering custom tours with stays at cottages and estate homes. Want to do pilates in the morning on a cliff overlooking Hanalei Bay, rinse off in a waterfall, then take a thrilling hike down the Na Pali Coast? Your Pure Kauai "island host" will set it up, deliver you to the trail head, pick you up at the end and escort you back to your accommodations. Choose the Pure Fitness retreat for personal training, private yoga lessons, surfing and stand-up paddling, meals by a private chef and multiple massages. The experience redefines spa. purekauai.com

BEST FOR SECLUSION**Labriz Silhouette, Seychelles**

➤ In trying to be healthy, some things are beyond your control, so go beyond those things. Happily floating in the Indian Ocean, Silhouette Island in the Seychelles is home to Labriz Silhouette resort, where you can retreat poolside, beachside or jungleside. The on-site Aquum spa combines all of these. Start in the relaxation villa and Spa Beach. Then move to Creole-inspired body-soothing rituals that use local ingredients sensitive to your body in treatment areas tuned to the surrounding environment. Get lost in the granite boulders, jungle showers, crashing waves and aromatherapy steam rooms. Escape to find the wellness that's escaping you. labriz-seychelles.com ■ ISLANDS.COM/best

Labriz Silhouette,
Seychelles

FROM TOP: COURTESY, JUNGLE BAY; COURTESY LABRIZ