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'Thai fantasy': the 7 best hotels in Thailand (one for every mood)



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From the spiritual north to the idyllic south: the best hotels in Thailand

Thailand has more hotspots than I have excuses to go back, with a stay for every mood. You can come to explore or to retreat, to detox with conviction or undo it just as efficiently. Between the Andaman's limestone-framed bays, Bangkok's kinetic sprawl, and the mist-slicked jungles of the north, it is Southeast Asia's great shapeshifter.

Consider this your definitive guide to Thailand's most unforgettable stays, from the supreme luxury of [the White Lotus hotel](#) to elephant experiences, spas, and world-leading food and design. But mostly, it's about switching off in possibly the most storied exotic locale on Earth.

Best for lovers of Thailand's beaches: Rayavadee



Whenever someone asks me which Thai island to visit, I always say Railay. It's a slightly problematic answer, since this slice of paradise is technically on the mainland. Sitting around 500 miles south of Bangkok, near Krabi International Airport, Railay is one of Thailand's most arresting coastal enclaves.

A limestone-framed peninsula cut off from the mainland by jungle and sea, accessible only by boat. A longtail from Ao Nang takes ten minutes, with views of limestone karsts rising sharply out of the water. Rayavadee occupies a privileged position, straddling all three beaches, and is nothing short of stunning, wrapped in tropical gardens, with curved-roof villa pavilions carefully threaded through the existing palms and lush jungle foliage.

The result of a build that left the landscape intact, great for the dusky leaf monkeys that live here. The crown jewel is Phra Nang Beach, which can draw in day-trippers, but Rayavadee's guests experience it differently: unhurried and undisturbed, stretched out on shaded sun loungers by the beachfront pool. Being the only hotel here makes a difference.

As day slips away, the sun drops between the rock towers and, on rare evenings – particularly in Thailand's dry season – guests witness diagonal beams of molten gold shoot into the sky, a phenomenon called crepuscular rays. The best place to watch is from The Grotto, the hotel's cave-set restaurant beneath a vast limestone overhang, and the nearby Phra Nang Cave.

My day-trip recommendation is to take a 30-minute speedboat to the emerald lagoon on the Hong Islands. It's even prettier than Phi Phi, which takes just under an hour, and is much less busy.

Rates for the Deluxe Pavillion start at £600 per night