

# Paradise Found

Vietnam's beach destination of Nha Trang has been quietly luring sun seekers looking for a lavish hideaway. Find out for yourself how this coastal town makes for an unforgettable seaside holiday

**By Mabel David-Pilar**

Located in the south-central coast of Vietnam, Nha Trang boasts the country's best stretch of soft, white sandy beach and the enviable climate of clear, blue skies almost all year round. It has even garnered international recognition as being one of the world's most beautiful bays. Aside from its alluring beach and weather, Nha Trang has a remarkable backdrop of rugged mountains, is steeped in fascinating history and culture, and has the best seafood you can feast on in that part of Southeast Asia. No wonder, tourists are being lured in.

According to Patrick Morris, managing director of Indochina Travel ([www.indochinatravel.com](http://www.indochinatravel.com)), a travel company that has been providing travellers – past clients include Hollywood studio executives and celebrities like Robert de Niro, Harrison Ford, Matt Dillon and most recently Danny DeVito and his family, and Silicon Valley bigwigs such as Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg – with innovative and unique private adventures in Southeast Asia, Nha Trang began seeing tourists by the early 1990s. While the coastal town started with standard accommodations (“where you hung your laundry over the balcony” type-of-digs, says Morris), it inevitably saw the rise of select luxury properties on its beautiful bay. For Morris, the dramatic change came when the luxury resort and spa management and development company, Six Senses ([www.sixsenses.com](http://www.sixsenses.com)), completed the Ana Mandara resort and the even more exclusive Six Senses Ninh Van Bay.





Grand Ballroom, Sheraton Nha Trang



Sashimi at the Sheraton Nha Trang



Executive Suite, Sheraton Nha Trang



Oysters & lobsters, Sheraton Nha Trang



Poolside, Sheraton Nha Trang

Just last year, Starwood Hotels & Resorts ([www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)), one of the leading hotel and leisure companies in the world, opened the 30-story Sheraton Nha Trang Hotel & Spa – the only five-star international hotel in Nha Trang. Yet even with these developments, Nha Trang remains “a little more off the radar,” says Nguyen Minh Tuan, marketing communications manager of Sheraton Nha Trang. It’s a quality that every affluent traveller appreciates. Nguyen adds, “It lacks the hustle and bustle of some of the more popular beach destinations, yet it still offers plenty of opportunities to indulge in new experiences.” So, let the indulgence begin.

## Between a penthouse or a villa

If you wish to behold the spectacular crescent-shaped seaside of Nha Trang over the tallest building in town, book any of the 284 guestrooms of the Sheraton Nha Trang. Of course, the best view is from the presidential or penthouse suite (US\$1,280++ per room, per night for the two-bedroom Penthouse Suite) – you can’t get a loftier view of Vietnam’s most beautiful bay anywhere else. And should you be staying in either of those suites, you’ll also have access to Sheraton Club Lounge, where you can enjoy a panoramic view of the city, the bay, and the islands surrounding the coastline. The beach is just two minutes away, but if you prefer not to leave your plush setting for a swim take a dip in their infinity-edged pool. The view is particularly worth it during sunset.



Hill Top Villa, Six Senses Ninh Van Bay

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Those with a predilection to stay closer to nature, but with all the exclusive amenities and privacy afforded by a premier resort should find the perfect hideaway either in the perfectly named Six Senses Hideaway in Ninh Van Bay or Evason Ana Mandara. The latter is the only beach-front resort in Nha Trang with a 600m stretch of shore and embraced by lush tropical foliage. “It has the finest location, right on the beach with unobstructed views,” says Morris. Among its 17 villas and 74 guest rooms – all of which are elegantly furnished with native woods and rattan – opt to stay at the most spacious Ana Mandara Suite (US\$597++ per night).

For the ultimate luxury and privacy, the Six Senses Hideaway in Ninh Van Bay is a favourite. Luxury travel companies such as Indochina Travel and Urbane Nomads ([www.urbanenomads.com](http://www.urbanenomads.com)) include it in any lavish Nha Trang itineraries. Morris commends how the hideaway’s various villas are built within the peninsula for maximum privacy and are only accessible by speedboat. Urbane Nomad’s founder, Hajar Ali finds the villas to

be built in a “chic castaway style” and their isolation “so glamorous”. We couldn’t agree with them more. After you’re whisked off from the airport, brought to a private jetty for a drink, then ride a high-speed boat directly to your villa, you’re greeted by your personal butler, who is on call 24-hours a day to cater to your every need.

The award-winning, eco-minded resort with a coral reef right on its beach has several types of villas, each with a private pool and built on stunning rock formations that open to a view of the South China Sea. The best (and priciest) one is the 271 sq m Presidential Villa (US\$2,800++ per night), wherein you have your own private bay only accessible to you for guaranteed privacy, a spacious terrace and sundeck that face the setting sun, and an infinity plunge pool set against magnificent boulders.

It also has its own spa treatment room where you can try something unique yet traditional – be pampered by the signature Vietnamese Experience or simply experience one of the





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Wine Cave

award-winning Six Senses Spa Signature treatments. If you're overwhelmed by the unrivalled selection of holistic and signature treatments, Sutasinee Khaosa-ard, public relations for Six Senses, informs us that, "complimentary lifestyle consultations are available to guests".

To satisfy your palate, you can have your own private barbecue dinner at your villa or in the Wine Cave (yes, it's as intimate and sexy as it sounds). If you have very particular tastes, a private chef can be secured for your entire stay. The villa also has direct access down to the water, but with all the pampered luxuries you have within reach, we won't blame you if you don't even think of leaving your paradise of a villa.

### Beyond lazing around

It's easy to perfect the art of doing nothing in Nha Trang – especially if you're doing it from cushy accommodations such as the Six Senses resorts or the Sheraton. Should you be able to peel yourself away from your sun lounger to see the rest of the once sleepy port town, expect unique cultural attractions that will leave you no

doubt that you are definitely in Vietnam.

Indochina Travel offers their guests a chance to visit the town's fish market at daybreak. Fishing is a major industry in Nha Trang and seeing the arrival of the colorful fishing boats on the bay is well worth the early morning wake-up call. Afterwards, take in the dramatic views from the ruins of the 1,200-year-old Po Nagar Cham Towers – the best-preserved Cham towers in central Vietnam.

Lastly, no trip to Nha Trang is complete without feasting on its seafood. Six Senses and Sheraton offer an outstanding menu of local dishes, but if you're dining in town, try Ngoc Suong ([www.ngocsuong.com.vt](http://www.ngocsuong.com.vt)). You'll get the freshest catch from the morning – grilled or fried Vietnamese-style. You can also learn to cook Vietnamese cuisine yourself in the cooking classes hosted at the Sheraton. Or if you're like Danny DeVito, who was really interested in street food, have Indochina Travel arrange for you to sample several places in each destination, away from the hordes of other tourists but still witnessing the lovely local colour of Vietnamese life. That is if you can tear yourself away from the beach. **INSPIRE**



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