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Emerald Maldives Resort & Spa is a 120-villa property perched on a wraparound reef in the Raa Atoll.

# ASIA 2020

Aman, andBeyond, Avani, Four Seasons and other top brands open new hotels.

INTEREST IN VISITING ASIA has remained exceptionally consistent over the past five years. Year after year, just about one in five respondents to MMGY Global's Portrait of American Travelers say they are considering a leisure trip to the continent. The 2019-2020 edition also shows higher interest among Millennials, approaching nearly one in four. With that in mind we're taking a look at recent and forthcoming hotel openings, additions and upgrades. Here is a sampling.

**Ace Hotel Kyoto** is set to debut in mid-April as the first property in Asia for the brand that's known for its hip, design-centric lifestyle hotels that tap into the local communities.

The idea is to create a happening hub for locals and travelers, and Kengo Kuma, the principal architect for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Stadium, was recruited to design the Ace Hotel Kyoto as a "Cultural Catalyst" reflecting the spirit of the neighborhood. The Ace Hotel will comprise a historic building that was once home to the Kyoto

Central Telephone Company, alongside a new-build structure. Expect original artwork, a gallery featuring collaborations with local artists, multiple courtyards, and meticulously landscaped gardens.

The 213 guestrooms will be split across eight different categories such as the Historic Double rooms, housed in the historic building; Garden Terrace rooms, overlooking the verdure; and Tatami suites, kitted out with four tatami futons and turntables. All rooms will come with Japanese soaking tubs. Facilities at the Ace Hotel Kyoto will include a lively lobby, event spaces, a cafe and three restaurants.

**Aman Kyoto**, set in a garden at the heart of a 79-acre forest, opened on November 1. Six Guest Pavilions — a contemporary homage to traditional Japanese ryokan inns — house 26 guestrooms and suites. All afford garden views and optimum privacy. Living Pavilion by Aman, with its central fireplace and floor-to-ceiling glass doors that open onto a terrace overlooking the Kerry Hill garden, is the signature

restaurant, specializing in Kyoto-style cuisine, and innovative Western dishes. Taka-an is the resort's Japanese restaurant. The Aman Spa's offerings include Japanese holistic rituals, guided yoga and meditation, as well as Shinrin-yoku, the healing art of forest bathing.

**The Tokyo Edition** is slated to open in the Toranomon district of Japan's capital in June. This property will have 206 rooms with views of the city's skyline, including 21 suites and a penthouse, as well as a signature restaurant, cocktail bar and wellness spa. Thirteen of the rooms and two of the suites have an outdoor terrace.

**Avani Central Busan Hotel** opened in February in the heart of Busan, South Korea's second largest city. About 15 minutes from the train station and a 45-minute drive from Gimhae International Airport (PUS), the new hotel has 289 contemporary guestrooms and suites, offering mountain or city views. The CUBE offers all-day dining, serving local Korean flavors and international dishes, using locally sourced

ingredients, while The Lobby Lounge welcomes visitors with light snacks and beverages. A beach and various cultural centers are just minutes away. The AvaniFit gym is open 24/7.

Thailand's brand new **Four Seasons Bangkok at Chao Phraya River** occupies nine acres on Charoenkrung Road.

There's a spa, two infinity pools with river views, a complimentary kids club, a private boat dock and extensive event space, including a waterfront ballroom. The 299 guestrooms includes the Presidential Suite, which sprawls across two floors, and suites with garden terraces.

Dining is a focus here, with concepts running the gamut from French to Cantonese cuisine (with a show kitchen overseen by Michelin-starred chef Qui Xiaogui). Another highlight of the hotel will be the Art Space showcasing works by contemporary Thai artists.

Belgium-based hospitality company Zannier Hotels is set to make a splash in Vietnam this summer with the opening of **Bãi San Hô**, a new beachfront resort. Nestled on a 240-acre estate of lush gardens and pristine beachfront in Phu Yen province, a coastal enclave known for its stunning beaches and landscapes in the south of the country, Bãi San Hô will have 71 villas divided into three architectural types: Hill Pool Villas, designed in the style of the Ede tribes; Beach Pool Villas, inspired by the Cham tribes; and Cluster Villas, built on traditional stilts next to rice paddies. Note that 46 of the villas will come with their own private pools.



**Avani Central Busan Hotel**, which opened in February in the heart of Busan, Korea, has 289 contemporary guestrooms and suites, offering mountain or city views.

Bãi San Hô will also have plenty of facilities to entertain guests on property — gym, yoga studio, two tennis courts, kids club, the Hoa Sen spa — but guests will be encouraged to explore the waters surrounding the sports center, which will offer scuba diving, fishing and boat trips. Farther afield, the resort will offer immersive cultural excursions such as market tours, visits to local fishing villages, rice planting and cooking classes.

In Bhutan — the isolated Himalayan Kingdom once forbidden to outsiders that has become a bucket list experience for intrepid travelers — **andBeyond Punakha River Lodge** is slated for an October 2020 debut. Perched on the banks of the Mo Chhu River in the fertile Punakha Valley, the luxury lodge is andBeyond's first property in Asia and is therefore a well-timed investment in the country that famously touts its "Gross National Happiness" index.

Because of its subtropical climate, the Punakha valley is a year-round destination, known for its rice pad-

dies and chili farms, alongside its rich culture (the valley is the winter home of the Chief Abbot and Monastic Body of Bhutan). The location of the andBeyond Punakha River Lodge will give guests access to adventure and recreational activities such as rafting, kayaking, fishing, biking, and myriad hikes and longer treks.

Surrounded by rice paddies and a rolling canopy of forested hills, the lodge is inspired by traditional Bhutanese architecture. There will be six luxury tents, one honeymoon villa, and a two-bedroom family villa with a living area and swimming pool. The spa will have a scenic setting next to the river, where yoga sessions will also take place. Guests will be able to dine on Bhutanese cuisine at the lodge, or venture out for lunch with the locals.

The **Apurva Kempinski Bali** has launched a collection of 43 private villas set in tropical gardens on the clifftops of Nusa Dua. Named after the kingdoms that once ruled over Indonesia, each of the two-story villas (ranging from one to three bedrooms) affords complete privacy and indoor-outdoor living spaces. All of the villas have private plunge pools and outdoor terraces, while the larger options also have kitchens and rooftop dining areas. Interiors are finished with rattan bamboo furniture, woven Sumba textiles and handmade woodcarvings from Bali and Java.

Named after the kingdom that ruled in the 13th century, each of the Singhasari One-Bedroom Villas has nearly 2,200 square feet of living space with a private pool and terrace on the ground

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**Four Seasons Bangkok** has 299 guestrooms.

## DESTINATIONS

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floor and a king-sized bedroom and outdoor rain shower upstairs.

Sriwijaya Two-Bedroom Villas range from 2,150 to 5,000 square feet, with an additional twin bedroom and a rooftop lounge and dining area, while the Majapahit Three-Bedroom Villas open out onto their own tropical gardens, with private kitchens, outdoor living area and room for six adults and three children to sleep. The latter villas occupy 6,800 to 9,600 square feet.

Set on the water, adjacent to the Apurva Wedding Chapel, the three-bedroom Nusantara Presidential Villa is the top accommodation, with 15,000 square feet of space. It has a master suite, living area and swimming pool on the ground floor and two additional bedrooms and a smaller infinity pool on the upper level. Note: Because of its self-contained facilities and quick access to the chapel, the Nusantara Presidential Villa can host a wedding reception or private event.

This past December, Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas opened its first property in Malaysia: **Anantara Desaru Coast Resort & Villas**. Set along nearly 11 miles of beachfront facing the South China Sea, the 108-key resort has 90 en suite rooms in low-rise, traditional Malay buildings overlooking the gardens, lagoon and ocean.

Thirteen stand-alone, two-story one- and two-bedroom pool villas are set around a lagoon, with their design drawing heavily from traditional kampong houses that are made to suit the tropical Malaysian climate with floor-to-ceiling windows, slanted carved wooden panels, louvres and vents under the roof and wide-open doors to allow natural airflow to cool the interior. Five family-sized three- and four-bedroom residences offer guests an infinity pool, spacious living areas, a full kitchen and chef and butler service.

For dining, guests can enjoy grilled seafood and steaks served beachside at the al fresco Sea.Fire.Salt restaurant, while The Turmeric specializes in authentic local Malaysian fare and Thai, Chinese and international cuisine.



The Apurva Kempinski Bali has launched a collection of 43 private villas in Nusa Dua.



The 108-key Anantara Desaru Coast Resort & Villas in Malaysia includes 13 stand-alone pool villas.

The elevated Observatory Bar affords 360-degree views of the resort and ocean, as well as an extensive range of top vintages and spirits, plus imported cigars. The brand's signature Dining by Design private dining experience is also available as well.

Two swimming pools provide freshwater alternatives to the ocean, while kids and teens can play high-tech games or partake in cross-cultural educational activities in separate, dedicated clubs. An Anantara Spa and health and fitness center, meanwhile, offer guests a chance to relax or reinvigorate. Nearby, golf buffs can check out two courses with 45 holes in total at The Els Club Desaru Coast.

Also making its debut in December 2019 was **Emerald Maldives Resort & Spa**. The 120-villa property is perched on a wraparound reef in the Raa Atoll, which means guests are never more than a few footsteps away from an encounter with exotic fish, turtles or manta rays. Each villa has modern interiors, including white marble bathrooms with lavish silver mirrors and

color-blocked bedrooms with exotic marine life wall art.

All guests stay on deluxe all-inclusive basis, which allows guests to dine at any of the resort's four restaurants as many times as they wish during their stay. They also have unlimited access to the villa minibar, which is fully restocked daily. Guests can enjoy premium spirits and all non-motorized water sports at no additional cost.

GHM has announced plans to launch **The Chedi Kudavillingili**, its first resort in the Maldives, later this year. The 99-villa property will have 36 overwater villas, a 490-foot-long central pool and proximity to the Malé International Airport, a 25-minute speedboat ride away.

The Chedi Kudavillingili will also have a spa with eight overwater treatment rooms, a beach club and bar, an all-day dining restaurant and Hawkers Stalls with four live cooking stations. Recreational options will include sunset cruises, surfing and fishing expeditions.

—ADAM LEPOSA, MARY WINSTON NICKLIN AND MATT TURNER