

the o g guide

Sort By Price

A roadmap to affordable accommodation
across Asia. BY DIANA HUBBELL
ILLUSTRATED BY AUTCHARA PANPHAI

Gone are the days when frugal travelers could expect nothing more than schlepping their own luggage to bare-walled rooms in properties so generic they'd wake up and forget where they were. Luckily, hotels have learned that personality goes a long way and that mantra has trickled down to even their lowest-cost options. Nimbler labels are focusing on catering to specific clientele, be they flashpackers, fitness fanatics or digital nomads. While some properties flaunt splashes of local color, others may feature meeting spaces reminiscent of a Google office. Best of all, these high-end extras are often available at bargain prices. Read on to find the hotel that best fits your wallet-conscious wanderlust.

SOURCE ILLUSTRATED FROM TOP: COURTESY OF HOTEL INDIGO SINGAPORE KATONG;
COURTESY OF TUNE HOTEL SEPANG; COURTESY OF RAMADA BALI SUNSET ROAD KUTA



Tune Hotel, Yogyakarta.

Tune Hotels

What they lack in frills, hotels from this Malaysia-based chain more than make up for by nailing the basics every business or short-term leisure traveler needs. Expect super-comfy beds with 250-thread-count duvets and powerful showerheads. Base rates are a steal, but you might want to fork over a little more for extras like air-con and TV.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** India, Indonesia, Malaysia

+ **NEWCOMER:** While the Malaysian mogul behind Tune has been busy lately opening properties in Nairobi and London's Shoreditch, the recently rebranded **Tune Hotel Sepang, Malaysia** (doubles from \$58) offers a place to crash 15 minutes from the Kuala Lumpur airport. The hotel will let you book a shorter stay between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. and pay even less.

+ tunehotels.com.

Ibis Hotels

Sometimes all you really want is a clean, comfortable place to sleep without breaking the bank, which is where the 2,000-plus Ibis, Ibis Styles and Ibis Budget hotels come into play. While the latter keeps prices as low as \$25 with compact cocoon rooms and the like, there are still some serious bargains to be found in the former two lines.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** Burma, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam

+ **NEWCOMER:** As the name implies, the main draw at the **Ibis Saigon Airport** (doubles from \$54) is its location, especially useful if you've got a long layover transferring between Tan Son Nhat International Airport and the domestic terminal.

+ ibis.com.

FabHotels

For those traveling to the Subcontinent, this budget brand boasts more than 150 properties. Most veer to the spartan side, but with average rates starting at around \$30 per night and convenient locations in more than a dozen cities, no one seems to be complaining.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** India

+ **NEWCOMER:** **FabHotel Sai Village Sushant Lok** (doubles from \$25) features simple, functional rooms for a low price.

+ fabhotels.com.

COURTESY OF TUNE HOTEL YOGYAKARTA

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF RAMADA BALI SUNSET ROAD KUTA; COURTESY OF CINNAMON RED COLOMBO; COURTESY OF NOVOTEL PHUKET PHOKEETHRA

Base price:
\$100
or less

A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA

Plenty of small perks are available for those willing to shell out a few more bucks on their stay.



Ramada Bali Sunset Road Kuta.



Cinnamon Red Colombo.



Novotel Phuket Phokeethra.

Cinnamon Red Hotels

While Cinnamon Hotels & Resorts across Sri Lanka and the Maldives can be fairly opulent, the brand's recently launched sibling targets switched-on urbanites looking for a stay with character at an affordable price. The budget brand, which bills itself as "lean luxury," only includes one property at this point, but as flashpackers continue to flock to the Pearl of the Indian Ocean, that's likely to change quickly.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** Sri Lanka

+ **NEWCOMER:** From the swift paperless check-in to the rooftop infinity pool with Indian Ocean views, there's a lot to like about **Cinnamon Red Colombo** (doubles from \$85), the brand's splashy debut.

+ cinnamonhotels.com.

Ramada Hotels

Run by the Wyndham Hotel Group, which boasts the largest number of hospitality properties in the world, Ramada Hotels has been a low-cost favorite for more than 60 years. Although many of its 1,000-plus properties are concentrated in North America, the brand has ambitious Asian expansion plans. Options range from Ramada Limited, with a modest number of amenities, to full-service Ramada Hotels.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand

+ **NEWCOMER:** Kuta may be the epicenter of Bali's party scene, but the **Ramada Bali**

Sunset Road Kuta (doubles from \$60) makes it easy for guests to take a break from all the action. Sip sundowners by the rooftop pool, book a treatment at the spa, and unwind in true Balinese style. + ramada.co.uk.

Holiday Inn Express

The sheer number—more than 2,400 worldwide—of outlets in this chain by InterContinental Hotels & Resorts is a testament to their popularity among thrifty travelers looking for reliable standards like fully stocked business centers and smaller fitness clubs. Holiday Inns and Holiday Inn Resorts around Asia often sport full-service amenities and cushy on-site restaurants, while Holiday Inn Express outposts >>

Base price:
\$60
or less

BASIC BUNKS

Working under the philosophy "less is more," these accommodations bypass unnecessary extras and pass the savings onto you.

focus on savings. For the love of families, kids aged 12 and under can stay and eat for free across Asia.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Maldives, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand

+ **NEWCOMER:** A super-central location near one of the Malaysian capital's main shopping districts makes the **Holiday Inn Express Kuala Lumpur City Centre** (doubles from \$50) a practical choice for shorter stays.

+ ihg.com/holidayinn.

Mercure Hotels

Slightly swisher than Ibis but a touch less upscale than Novotel, this mid-range entry from AccorHotels features free Wi-Fi connectivity, an efficient online check-in system, and stylishly functional rooms from Tokyo to Chiang Mai.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Philippines, Singapore,

South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam

+ **NEWCOMER:** The **Mercure Manila Ortigas** (doubles from \$65) gives guests easy access to Pasig City, plus plenty of meeting facilities for work travel, and 150 comfortable rooms.

+ mercure.com.

Jin Jiang International Hotels

This Shanghai-based powerhouse operates a string of four- and five-star hotels throughout the People's Republic. Both categories are moderately priced and often offer some of the cushiest beds in farther flung cities such as Urumqi.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** China

+ **NEWCOMER:** In a green area outside of the city center, **Jin Jiang International Hotel Xi'an** (doubles from \$100) gives visitors a break from all the bustle with relatively easy access to the Terra Cotta Warriors and the Bell Tower.

+ hotels.jinjiang.com.

Centra by Centara

Unlike the huge five-star Centara Grand hotels or the petite but pricey Centara Boutique Collection, this economic offshoot keeps it simple in urban and seaside spots in the Kingdom of Smiles.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** Thailand

+ **NEWCOMER:** **Centra by Centara Phu Pano Resort Krabi** (doubles from \$80) exudes chilled out ocean vibes.

+ centarahotelsresorts.com.

Doubletree by Hilton

Warm chocolate chip cookies at check-in and other thoughtful touches help the 450-plus outlets of this brand across 39 countries stand out from the crowd.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand

+ **NEWCOMER:** Relax at the indoor sauna and steam room when you stay at the **DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Chongqing Nan An** (doubles from \$87).

+ doubletree3.hilton.com.



Centra by Centara
Phu Pano Resort
Krabi.

COURTESY OF CENTARA BY CENTARA PHU PANO RESORT KRABI



Holiday Inn Express
Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

COURTESY OF HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS KUALA LUMPUR CITY CENTRE

Novotel Hotels

With more than 430 locations worldwide, Novotel Hotels provide travelers with all the basics and then some. Wi-Fi, generously sized flatscreens, iPod docking stations, online check-in and fast check-out, plus around-the-clock dining options are just a few of the standard amenities. Families will love both the play areas and the fact that two children under the age of 16 can stay and eat breakfast for free.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand

+ **NEWCOMER:** Historic Phuket Town is at your doorstep when you stay at the new **Novotel Phuket Phokeethra** (doubles from \$100). The sky lounge offers especially pretty views of old Sino-Portuguese roofs.

+ novotel.com.

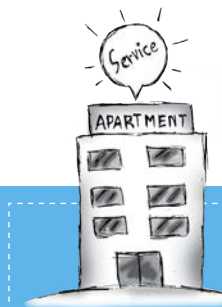
Four Points by Sheraton

Travelers flock to the more than 200 of these hotels across 30 countries thanks to tech-savvy perks that go way beyond free Wi-Fi. For instance, a downloadable training app will help you come up with a customized workout in the gym, while select rooms come equipped with smart mirrors and dual HD televisions so that you and your boo can stop fighting over the remote.

+ **WHERE IN ASIA:** Australia, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam

+ **NEWCOMER:** Conveniently located near the city's CBD, the **Four Points by Sheraton Jakarta, Thamrin** (doubles from \$64) provides in-room massage treatments in lieu of a spa.

+ starwoodhotels.com/fourpoints.



Exceptional Extended Stays

These serviced apartments combine the comforts of home with the convenience of a hotel.

BANGKOK MODENA BY FRASER, BANGKOK

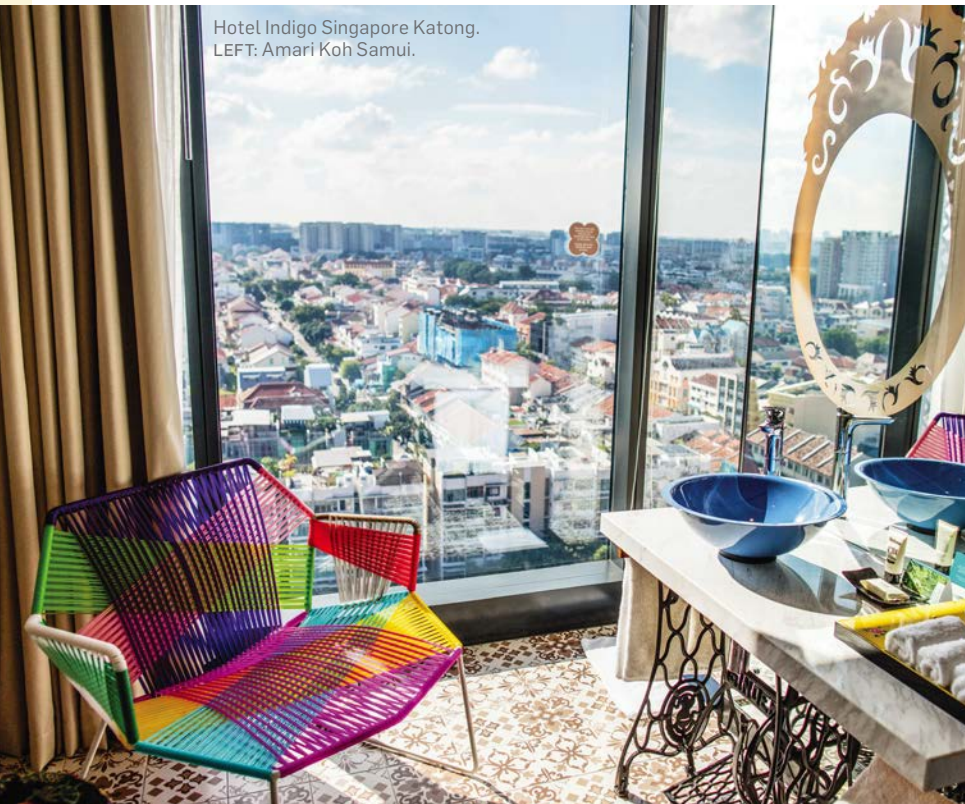
Huge windows, custom art pieces, and a location near the MRT make this new debut a hit with business travelers. bangkok.modenabyfraser.com; doubles from \$54.

KUALA LUMPUR ASCOTT KUALA LUMPUR

Plush kitchenette-equipped pads come with access to a top-notch gym, a sauna and pool, and plenty of playspace for kids, making this central residence feel like an upgraded version of home. the-ascott.com; doubles from \$95.

HONG KONG V WANCHAI HOTEL

With just 25 opulently appointed rooms, this hotel and serviced apartment makes for an intimate abode exclusively for longer stays, with a price tag that's a steal in Hong Kong. thev.hk; doubles from \$3,158 per month (\$102 per night).



Hotel Indigo Singapore Katong.
LEFT: Amari Koh Samui.



Taiwan, Thailand
+ NEWCOMER: Opened in January, **Aloft Taipei Beitou** (doubles from \$126) is ideally positioned for travelers looking to scope out the capital or kick back at the nearby natural hot springs.
+ starwoodhotels.com/aloft-hotels.

dusitD2 Hotels & Resorts
 The savvy little sibling of Dusit Thani Hotels & Resorts, dusitD2 Hotels sport contemporary interiors dappled with splashes of primary colors, full connectivity, and often extras including spas, fitness studios, and activities such as cooking classes.
+ WHERE IN ASIA: China, Maldives, Philippines, Thailand
+ NEWCOMER: Guests at the **dusitD2 Khao Yai** (doubles from \$100), overlooking Khao Yai National Park, can partake in fun outdoorsy activities, such as visiting a near by alpaca farm or dining in a private treetop “pod.”
+ dusit.com/dusitd2.

Hotel Indigo
 Local culture infuses every element of these boutiques, from the design schemes of the suites—think: murals and bespoke artwork inspired by the surrounding neighborhood—to the menus serving traditional specialties made with regional produce. Spa-style bathrooms

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF HOTEL INDIGO SINGAPORE KATONG; COURTESY OF AMARI KOH SAMUI

with rainshowers, plus business and fitness centers available around the clock, are added bonuses.
+ WHERE IN ASIA: China, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand
+ NEWCOMER: Taking over a former police station, **Hotel Indigo Singapore Katong** (doubles from \$140) features a rooftop infinity pool with a killer view of one of the Lion City’s historic ‘hoods.
+ ihg.com/hotelindigo.

Avani Hotels & Resorts
 They may not offer quite the same level of luxury as swankier sister brand Anantara, but Avani properties still sport plenty of flair, not to mention kids’ clubs, spas and fitness centers. Activities go local, including mangrove tours in Malaysia, basket boats in Vietnam, and watersports in Sri Lanka.
+ WHERE IN ASIA: Malaysia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Vietnam

+ NEWCOMER: A Sri Lankan oasis ringed with palms, **Avani Kalutara Resort** (doubles from \$125) offers yoga classes, spa treatments, watersports and games for kids. But, given its stunning location at the intersection of the Indian Ocean and Kalu Ganga River, you may be tempted just to kick back and watch the waves roll by.
+ minorhotels.com/avani.



Fusion Suites, Saigon.

FIVE FABULOUS AFFORDABLE BOUTIQUES

These newcomers and classics feature sharp designs, loads of local color, thoughtful extras—all sans sticker shock.

SAIGON **Fusion Suites Sai Gon**

With its frenetic pace and ferocious traffic snarls, Vietnam’s busiest metropolis isn’t often touted as a relaxation destination. These Zen suites may be set to change that, thanks to a wellness center and a 24-hour restaurant dishing up wholesome, produce-centric fare. Holistic healing is so integral to the hotel’s concept that a daily spa treatment comes gratis with the room rate. You’ll want to take advantage, as the spa features a chromatherapy lighting scheme that adjusts to your mood, with expert therapists trained like those at Fusion Maia Da Nang, the boutique’s swish sister property. fusionsuitessaigon.com; doubles from \$120. >>

COURTESY OF FUSION SUITES SAIGON

Base price:
\$140
 or less

LIVING LARGER

Creature comforts abound at these decidedly upscale, but still affordable options.

Amari
 The “Amari Hosts” at these family-friendly hotels and resorts are always available to babysit or keep the kids occupied with a slew of games and crafts, giving parents the chance to take a breather and sip a cocktail by the pool. Flexible all-day dining and modern décor add to the overall experience.
+ WHERE IN ASIA: China, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand. (Malaysia opens June 2017)
+ NEWCOMER: On the powdery strip of Chaweng Beach, **Amari Koh Samui** (doubles from \$120) features dual swimming pools in a lush, green setting.
+ amari.com.

Aloft Hotels
 With modish furnishings and a palpably hip vibe similar to more upscale sister brand W Hotels & Resorts, these urban outposts tend to revolve around buzzy cocktail bars and dining options targeted at young professionals on the go. Guests can take advantage of high-tech perks such as the SPG Keyless system, which allows you to open your door with a wave of your smartphone. At select properties, Botlr, a robotic butler, attends to the needs of guests by delivering towels, toiletries and other necessities right to their doors.
+ WHERE IN ASIA: China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Nepal,



Shanghai Mansion, Bangkok.

UBUD

Suarti Boutique Village

Balinese jewelry designer and dancer Desak Nyoman Suarti has created an intimate oasis that channels Ubud's eco-friendly ethos and free-spirited charm. The 25 traditional Javanese joglos in this village are made of sustainable materials and spruced up with furnishings by local artisans. Daily cultural activities range from yoga to traditional dance to a course in local herbs and spices. suartiresorts.com; doubles from \$104.

KUALA LUMPUR

The Kuala Lumpur Journal

Copious nods to KL's cultural landscape make this spot pop. Photographs of urban street life by local Che' Ahmad Azhar adorn rooms, while rotating installations spotlight other Malaysian artists. Business travelers will appreciate The Hub, a plugged-in workspace complete with espresso bar, and the Workers Union and Gallery, which provide a casual setting for meetings and presentations. Also, there's a rooftop infinity pool. kljournalhotel.com; doubles from \$65.

TAIPEI

Amba Taipei Songshan

A funky communal space with ping-pong tables, and enviable views of Taipei 101 are just two perks at this dead-central spot. Amba is especially geared towards a global clientele, with nice touches like friendly staff speaking five languages and universal power outlets everywhere. When you dine in, woodfire-charred steaks in bright eatery Que overlooking the Keelung River hit the spot. amba-hotels.com; doubles from \$110.

BANGKOK

Shanghai Mansion

Oozing Suzy Wong-worthy vintage glam, this Art Deco gem is ideally located in the heart of Yaowarat Road. That puts guests a quick tuk-tuk ride away from the banks of the Chao Phraya River, or a leisurely stroll from Soi Nana and Chinatown's other increasingly vibrant alleyways. Explore the surrounding shophouse galleries and bars, then return to the soaring lantern-lit lobby and rooms dripping with chinoiserie finery. shanghaimansion.com; doubles from \$125.

What's Next

Low-Cost Hotels, High-Value Innovations

Technology is likely to continue to play a vital role, both in streamlining the experience for leisure travelers and helping business travelers stay connected on the road, says Nathalia Wilson, Senior Director, Hotels Asia Pacific at Savills. While high-speed Wi-Fi is all but standard throughout Asia, many boutiques are taking matters a step further. For instance, Butterfly on Morrison in Hong Kong provides guests with a pocket unlimited 4G Wi-Fi device and a smartphone that can make free local calls. Tablets may soon become the norm at hotels' front desks, making it easy to check-in while seated in the lobby.

Wellness is also likely to step into the spotlight. Think: "yoga mats and vitamins instead of chocolates on the bedside table," Wilson says. That also extends to on-site eateries, where kale salads will be just as prevalent as club sandwiches. At Naumi Hotel Singapore, guests start the day with vegetable juice shots and fresh-pressed fruit juices spiked with vitamin supplements or skin-perking collagen.

It comes all down to creating a more personalized experience. To keep refining their approach, hotels are likely, Wilson says, to start "collecting more information before check-in, to the point of asking about food allergies and favorite dishes." While already a standard practice among many of the top luxury brands, Savills anticipates that it may soon be common among boutiques at the affordable end of the spectrum.

This is good news for consumers. Finely customized options make it easier than ever for travelers to find a place that's just right.

