

DELUXE DIGS

From rural farmhouse to minimalist mirage, TOM NEALE rounds up an eclectic collection of unique holiday villas



Our love affair with holiday homes began with simple gîtes and rustic farmhouses in the 1970s, moved on to more sophisticated houses with pools in the 1980s, went all designery in the 1990s, and has recently embraced the ‘ultra villa’, which has shown the biggest rise in demand of late. UVs come with all mod cons (cinema rooms, saunas, staff, boats), and are either architecturally or topographically bold (or both) and are usually aimed at extended families or several families sharing. These are just some of the luxurious villas on offer at the moment. Prices are for rental only, unless specified.

7 TURKISH OPULENCE

Aria would be an interesting spot even if it were a shack - positioned in a tucked-away location at the end of a long private drive, it has the most incredible views over the Turkish Mediterranean coast, where woods and mountains tumble down to the sea. Yet the bustling harbour of Kalkan is a 10-minute drive away. But it is far from being shabby - the grand house is on two levels, with a pool terrace (the master bedroom opens on to this) and a dining terrace, and the opulent living space (no cold minimalism here) makes the most of those vistas, which are especially fine from the hi-tech kitchen. It comes with gym, sauna, Turkish bath and a tennis court. *Aria sleeps 11 and a week costs from £900 to £1,500pp, including return flights to Dalaman, transfers and seven days’ jeep hire (one per group), through Exclusive Escapes (020 8605 3500; exclusiveescapes.co.uk)*

7 ITALIAN IDYLL

Villa De Lanfranchi is a flamboyant 18th-century villa set in private grounds in a village



Above: Aria in Kalkan boasts stunning views of the Turkish coast. Left: the 18th-century Villa De Lanfranchi offers an eclectic blend of styles

at the base of the hills between Lucca and Pisa. The villa is like the home of an eccentric explorer uncle, its large rooms with high frescoed ceilings packed with curiosities and art. It has its own conservatory with an array of botanical and tropical rarities, and is home to peacocks, cockatoos, parrots, owls and the chickens that lay the eggs for breakfast. It also possesses an extensive film collection of more than 6,000 titles, for which the owner can arrange open-air, midnight showings. *Villa De Lanfranchi sleeps up to 14 and a week costs from £3,780 to £5,420 through Tuscany Now (020 7684 8884; tuscanynow.com)*

Clockwise from right: Understated tranquility at Habaraduwa House; the quirky Trulli Ferragosto gives traditional architecture a modern flavour; the clear blue seas of Paraty Bay

➤ SRI LANKAN SEASIDE

Sri Lanka is well equipped with villas, but few have the pedigree or positioning of Habaraduwa House, which sits bang on the beach at Weligama, on the south coast, not far from Galle. Built in 2001, but completely redesigned and redecorated in 2011, it features soaring ceilings and an impeccably understated style, enlivened by flashes of vibrant colour from both local materials and exotic plants. It has four en-suite bedrooms (two with outdoor showers), a games room and a large swimming pool lined with shaded lounge chairs. Plus that soft sandy beach is just steps away. The villa has been designed as a series of airy, stand-alone buildings – the central one houses the huge living room, flanked on each side by bedrooms and a dining ‘ambalama’ (traditional pavilion), and they all face the ocean.

Habaraduwa House sleeps eight, and a week costs from £1,270pp, based on full occupancy, including flights and transfers, through Ampersand Travel (020 7819 9770; ampersandtravel.com)



↖ BRAZILIAN BAY

The Beach House is built on Paraty Bay, right on the shoreline of Brazil’s Cairuçu Environmental Protection Area, overlooking the clearest, bluest of seas, and can only be accessed by boat. The skipper is always on hand to take you for an isolated swim or to deliver groceries, and there are two double kayaks and a stand-up paddle board for local adventures. The two-storey house, which is 27m wide on the lower level, has refreshingly simple, clean lines and is mainly constructed

from local (sustainable) materials. Outside, there’s plenty of wooden decking and a verandah for slinging your hammock. *Paraty Bay Beach House sleeps seven and costs from £2,765 to £3,640 per week, through SJ Villas (020 7351 6384; sjvillas.co.uk)*

➤ TRULLI ITALY

Trulli Ferragosto combines the best of both worlds, keeping the endearing quirkiness of Puglia’s traditional circular stone houses

(it’s a cluster of five *trulli*, fused together), but expanding into a light, spacious area more suited to modern living. The house opens out onto a verandah, which has both a barbecue and a pizza oven. All six bedrooms have direct access to the outside, which has a large pool that can be heated if required, as well as some fantastic grounds to explore. You may come across the ruins of some derelict *trulli*, no doubt awaiting resurrection.

Trulli Ferragosto sleeps 12 and costs from £3,535 to £5,800 per week through CV Villas (020 7563 7999; cvvillas.com)



7 CARIBBEAN ESTATE

At Virgin Gorda's Valley Trunk you can play at being Richard Branson at a fraction of the cost of his gaff, Necker Island (also in the British Virgin Islands). This is not a private island, but a beach-front estate spread across 19 acres of tropical gardens, complete with spectacular water features. There are nine suites housed within several villas, each one individually decorated in a chic, modern Caribbean style. The estate comes with a chef, butlers, yoga instructor and spa therapists and the use of *Xanadu* - a 68ft sailing vessel, available around the clock, complete with crew (only fuel is charged, at cost).

Valley Trunk sleeps 16 adults and eight children and costs from £7,431 per night for up to six guests and £1,004 per extra guest (valleytrunk.com)

7 CONTEMPORARY PORTUGUESE

Villa Vidro is one of the most architecturally impressive houses on the sunny Algarve, a minimalist slab of glowing white concrete and shimmering glass that sits in a beautiful escarpment meadow, surrounded by wild



lavender, olive, wild fig, pomegranate and almond trees as well as stunning panoramic sea-and-sunset views of the coastline. And its extensive transparent walls give the impression the house is floating above the hillside. The villa comes with a large outdoor pool, games room (with pinball machine), professional-standard inside/outside kitchen, sliding glass walls that open out onto a barbecue terrace and into an inner pool and a courtyard with a wood-burning firepit. *Villa Vidro sleeps eight (adults only) and costs*

From top: Impressive landscaping at the sprawling Valley Trunk beachfront estate; minimalist beauty at Villa Vidro; the Ronda Estate is a modern-style cortijo in the Andalucían countryside

from £8,250 to £11,800 per week through The Wow House Company (01242 220006; thewowhousecompany.co.uk)

7 RURAL SPAIN

The elegant Ronda Estate in Andalucía, which borders the UNESCO-protected Sierra de las Nieves National Park and Biosphere Reserve, has the Río Grande river meandering through its extensive grounds (which, at 600 acres, are roughly twice the size of Kew Gardens). The house itself is built in a *cortijo*- or rural farmhouse-style, but this particular one comes with seven bedrooms and seven bathrooms, a library, cinema room, games room, lounge with open fire, sauna, infinity pool and hydrotherapy pool with far-reaching views over the Andalucían scenery.

The Ronda Estate sleeps 14 and costs from £3,711 to £5,179 per week through Spain-holiday.com (020 3384 7066; spain-holiday.com)



Stockists

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DOLCE & GABBANA 020 7659 9000, dolcegabbana.com

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MULBERRY 020 7491 3900, mulberry.com

OLIVER PEOPLES 020 7235 5000, oliverpeoples.com

ORLEBAR BROWN 020 7734 5892, orlebarbrown.com

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PIQUADRO piquadro.com

RAY-BAN 020 7287 1128, rayban.com

SAMSONITE samsonite.co.uk

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