

oceanhome

Home Away
from Home

BY STACY H. SMALL

Renting an ultra-luxe villa is a unique way to test-drive destinations from from St. Barts to South Africa

What better way to sample a destination than to rent a luxury villa with all of the comforts and amenities of your very own oceanfront home? Or perhaps you just prefer to rent this year in Miami and next year in Mexico? Regardless of reason, if you're just not yet ready to commit to purchasing property in a given location, renting an oceanfront vacation home—better known as a villa—is the next best way to enjoy life as a local.

The "villa vacation" concept has spread worldwide as homeowners open their doors to part-time residents willing to pay top dollar for their oceanfront digs. The best villas come fully staffed, stylishly furnished and, typically, loaded with extras and amenities (be sure to inquire at time of booking exactly what the rate includes). If you wouldn't live without WiFi, a swimming pool, a gourmet kitchen, a high-quality sound system and beachfront access at home, you probably won't be happy in a villa void of such luxuries. You also want to rent a villa from a knowledgeable company with staff members who are well-versed in the properties they represent. It's a nice touch when the villa rate includes perks like day passes to a nearby resort or golf club, a rental car or a boat, so always be sure to ask.

"What sets a villa apart is that guests are not sharing it with anyone else," says Burt Hixson, owner of Villa Verano, a celebrity favorite, in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. "You don't end up vacationing with whoever booked the room next to you, as there is only room for one group at a time. It all comes down to privacy, security and service. Villas are tailored to the traveler looking to truly get away from it all and be taken care of in a superb lifestyle."

We've scoured the globe to uncover some of the newest and best oceanfront villas—including several located and run by top luxury resorts—now available for rent. Additionally, we've highlighted the top villa rental agencies that represent the best of the best.

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