

beyond

PHUKET | MACAU | NORMANDY

The sunny Dream Beach Club

CHECKING IN

Sand Castles

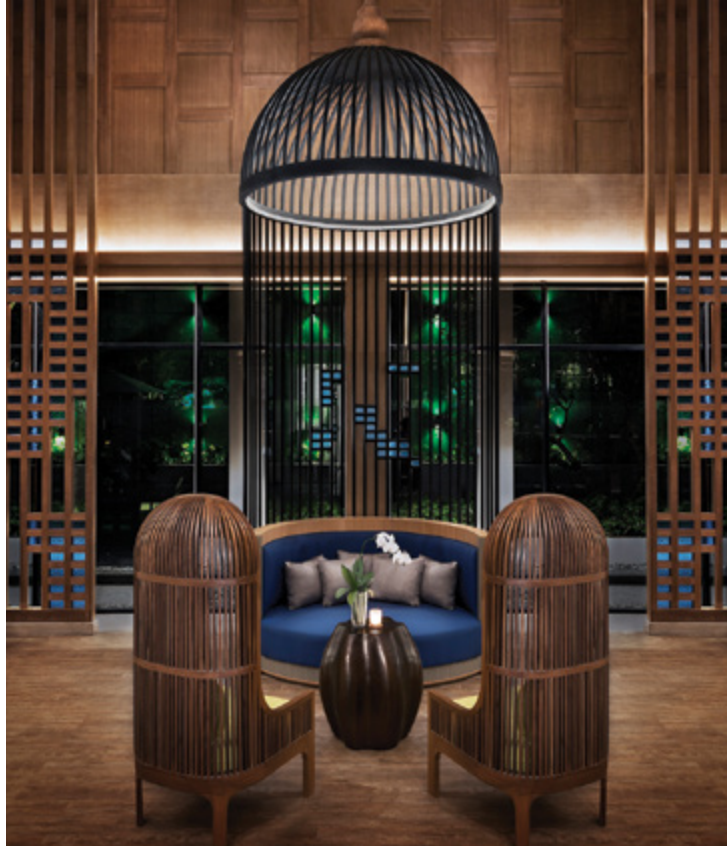
The powdery shores of Phuket have seen their fair share of luxury digs, but a new wave of beach hotels is cresting above the rest. Here, **Ashley Niedringhaus** calls out the island's most compelling newcomers.

Manathai Surin

When the Manathai Surin owners enlisted the Thailand-based CDG design group, they wanted to integrate regional interior designs while avoiding the all-too-common pitfall of overloading the room with dark teakwood and Thai silk. The result: clean-lined, light-filled rooms that are tastefully Thai and not overwrought. Lotus ponds surround the resort's pool, and the pièce de résistance is the oversized birdcage sofa in the lobby, a nod to the Phuket custom of keeping nice-looking cages outside the home. The hotel's restaurant caters to mild-palated Westerners, but with a prime location on the upmarket Surin Beach, Phuket's best eateries are easily accessible. manathai.com/phuket; doubles from Bt2,443.

Fishermen's Harbour Urban Resort

The 390 spacious rooms have a relaxed weekend-away vibe and, despite their massive size, the property manages to mute the noise of nearby Patong to create a relaxing, family-focused retreat. Rooms play to the area's elements, with crisp white walls, marine blue accents and under-the-sea murals. Nearly 100 of the resort's rooms are designed with families in mind, including bunk beds and a



FROM TOP:
Birdcage chic at Manathai Surin; Reflections, The Nai Harn's 50-meter rooftop deck.

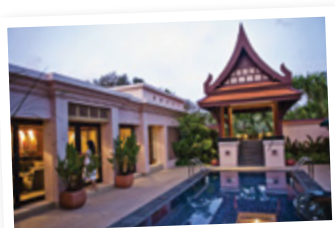
separate living room, plus access to youngster-friendly amenities, like a kids' club, game room and bike rentals. Parents will enjoy the swim-up bar and well-appointed spa. The hotel's organic farm sources herbs and produce for the three restaurants, which serve everything from teppanyaki to Halal to Thai. fishermensharbour.com; doubles from Bt7,500.



The Nai Harn

This property has had many acts in its 30-year-old lifespan, but high-end beachgoers will be flocking here for the new Côte d'Azur-meets-the-Andaman vibe courtesy of the cerulean blue water, whitewashed walls and accents of punchy on-trend Pantone colors. Last December, the resort emerged from an 18-month overhaul and nabbed the exclusive honor of being named the island's only member of The Leading Hotels of the World. Airy rooms with heavenly beds have private balconies with four-poster sunbeds overlooking Nai Harn Beach and Bay, >>

REBOOTS



BANYAN TREE

Who doesn't want to stay in their own private pool villa on an island vacation? It is the stuff of holiday dreams, and last year the Banyan Tree Phuket decided to answer the collective cry for a discreet dip by adding pools to all of their spacious villas. That's right, there is nary a dry lot in sight, and every one of their room categories comes with its own private pool for your lounging and paddling pleasure. The one-bedroom villas are perfect for couples, with en-suite bathrooms and his-and-hers dressing areas, while the two-bedroom villas are great for families—each comes with a big kitchen, cozy dining area, living room, two bedrooms and sliding glass doors opening onto a giant terrace with a sunken tub, a nine-meter swimming pool and lounge chairs aplenty. The Banyan Tree is set within the Laguna Phuket complex, where you can explore the many beaches, restaurants and bars that dot the enchanting enclave. banyantree.com; doubles from Bt12,240.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF MANATHAI SURIN; COURTESY OF THE NAI HARN; COURTESY OF BANYAN TREE



Beach Club, the hotel's tailor-made club on Layan Beach where in-house DJs spin beats and champagne flows freely. Looking for Phuket's young and trendy? This is where you'll find them Instagramming. dreamhotels.com/phuket; rooms, suites and villas from Bt5,249, Bt8,903 and Bt23,147 respectively.

Keemala

The design-centric Keemala, built into the forested hills just up from Kamala Beach, is a welcome alternative to the district's more traditional offerings. The 38 villas—grouped into cottages, tents, tree houses and bird's nests—draw upon tribal designs paired with posh perks, like private plunge pools, outdoor showers, and deep soaking tubs with sea views. Spend an afternoon at the organic Mala Spa, where signature treatments incorporate a wide array of essential oils. Honeymooners will find the proximity of neighboring villas to be a buzz kill to their privacy, but the staff is gracious, efficient and nearly invisible, so won't interfere with anyone's idyll. keemala.com; doubles from Bt19,600. 🍷

and the swish service extends from beachside butlers to an in-villa butler expressly for champagne. Fancy something other than bubbles? Try the Lady Nai Harn, a signature cocktail made with indigenous Chalong Bay Rum, which was crafted by legendary barman Salim Khoury of London's The Savoy Hotel, or peruse the wine list culled by expert James Suckling; you're bound to find a bottle you'll love. thenaiharn.com; doubles from Bt7,900.

FROM TOP: Fish for flare at the Fishermen's Harbour; cottages with private pools at Keemala.

Dream Phuket Hotel & Spa

This resort, with its youthful hospitality, eco-friendly attitude, in-pool bar with top-notch spirits, and trendy beach club manages to appeal to almost every segment of traveler. The newest outpost from the folks behind the ever-popping disco ball of a hotel Dream Bangkok is a seaside knockout north of Bangtao Beach peninsula. Feast at Trilogy, a three-part restaurant with offerings of Thai, Tuscan and contemporary European foods crafted by three world-class chefs, or puff on an imported cigar and sip wine at the leather-clad Indulge lounge. Head off property to the nearby Dream



REBOOTS



AMATARA RESORT & WELLNESS

Reborn as the Amatara Resort & Wellness last October, the goal of the resort was to sharpen its focus on wellness and create a luxury destination spa on the island. After an extensive renovation, the expanded 2,000-square-meter spa is set to open this month and will include a salt relaxation room (to battle common allergies and asthma) and services that incorporate *rhasoul* clay, a mineral-rich clay that promotes detox. The standout of the wellness overhaul is adding the world's first Thai Hammam—a combination of Turkish baths and Thai treatments. The revamped resort's 105 rooms and villas remain unchanged and if you want to splurge, make sure to book one of the pool villas, which are the hotel's most spacious and feature private pools perfect for soaking up the sun and sea views. amatraphuket.com; doubles from Bt12,200.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF FISHERMEN'S HARBOUR URBAN RESORT; COURTESY OF KEEMALA; COURTESY OF AMATARA RESORT & WELLNESS