

MALTA ● PERTH ● CHEF FLOYD CARDOZ'S MUMBAI

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THE HOT LIST 2017

Our definitive guide to where
you should go this summer

WORSHIP THE SUN IN MALTA

Play out all your *Game of Thrones*
fantasies on these pristine
European islands



Plus
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PACIFIC
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MALAYSIAN
BORNEO

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WEEKEND TRIPS

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ALIBAUG, MAHARASHTRA
MUSSOORIE, UTTARAKHAND


 Do-nothing
Getaway


2

Kayal Island Retreat, Alleppey, Kerala

EASY DOES IT

There are some sounds you must like before coming to Kayal Island Retreat. Rustling palms, chirping birds, and the song of the cicadas. But, most of all, you must like the sound of your thoughts, because that will be the loudest of all.

Perched on the banks of Vembanad Lake, Kayal Island Retreat is a meditative space. It's located on Kakkathuruthu – the island of crows – named after its former inhabitants, just a half-hour drive (22km) from Fort Kochi and a 10-minute ride on a powdery blue canoe from the Kudapuram Jetty. Though the island is now home to 300 families, many of them farmers and fisherfolk leading the simple

life (though most of their offspring now hold day jobs in the city), this bite-sized boutique resort feels completely isolated.

This is the sort of place where the cell phone signal is iffy at best, where cloudy skies create dramatic reflections on the lake, the green verges on fluorescent, and staying in means ticking off all the books on your reading list. In short, it's where you go when you want to disconnect and recharge for a bit.

Two years ago, founder Maneesha Panicker turned this abandoned former artist's residency on the backwaters into

Above: Enjoy guided walks around the fish island.

Below: Fishlings can bear a hot coffee with a view of the backwaters.



a luxury retreat. Rooms are decorated with cute curiosities and black-and-white photographs of the locals, and have outdoor bathrooms that are roomy enough to rain-dance in.

But don't hole up inside – the lush village deserves exploration. Head out for winding strolls and you'll observe locals going about their day. If you're lucky, you might spot the toddy tapper high up in the tree, or the fishermen building dyes around natural fish farms. Follow the path behind the retreat to the island's singular grocery shop and stop off for a jeera soda – possibly the only purchase you'll make while you're here.



GREAT FROM

Bangalore, Ernakulam, Trivandrum

GREAT FOR

Pulling a disappearing act

GO NOW

To enjoy the lovely weather.

Instead, you'll spend days on the woven chairs overlooking the lake, taking in the sublime view and marvelling at the odd neighbour floating past in a sari blouse and skirt, catching fish with her bare hands. Each day a local makes pit stops to every home

to pick up each family's catch and pays them for their efforts.

Wake early one morning for a canoe ride (included with your stay) along the lake, through winding canals swathed in green and wider expanses, and past paddy cranes and brightly-painted local homes with boats in matching colours. If you're adept at recognising birds, there are a quite a few to observe in addition to the ubiquitous crow. Look out for elegant cranes and brilliant blue kingfishers.

Follow your boat ride up with an hour-long morning yoga session (₹ 750/ person) and, once you're limber and ravenous, make your way to the waterfront dining area for a hearty

1. Outdoor bathrooms are characteristic of all four rooms

2. Birding is one of the few distractions here

3. You can pick where you want to eat your next meal

4. Don't miss the fish darshan at the toddy shop by the jetty

5. Get limber with an outdoor yoga class

breakfast of something local – spicy kadala (chickpea) curry and swirly idiyappam (rice hoppers), or boiled kappa (tapioca) smeared with crushed chilli and shallots in coconut oil.

The resort prides itself on its simple, home-style cuisine and the produce it uses is fresh and largely organic. Lunches and dinner, more often than not, include the day's catch and are usually communal, so you can have conversations with other guests if that's your thing and, indeed, if there are any others.

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TURN OVER FOR ALL YOU NEED TO GET THERE