

summer escapes *special*

Now is the time to book your summer break. Whether you're planning a **trip abroad** or **simply a weekend away closer to home**, we bring you the best deals and getaways.

want to stay here?

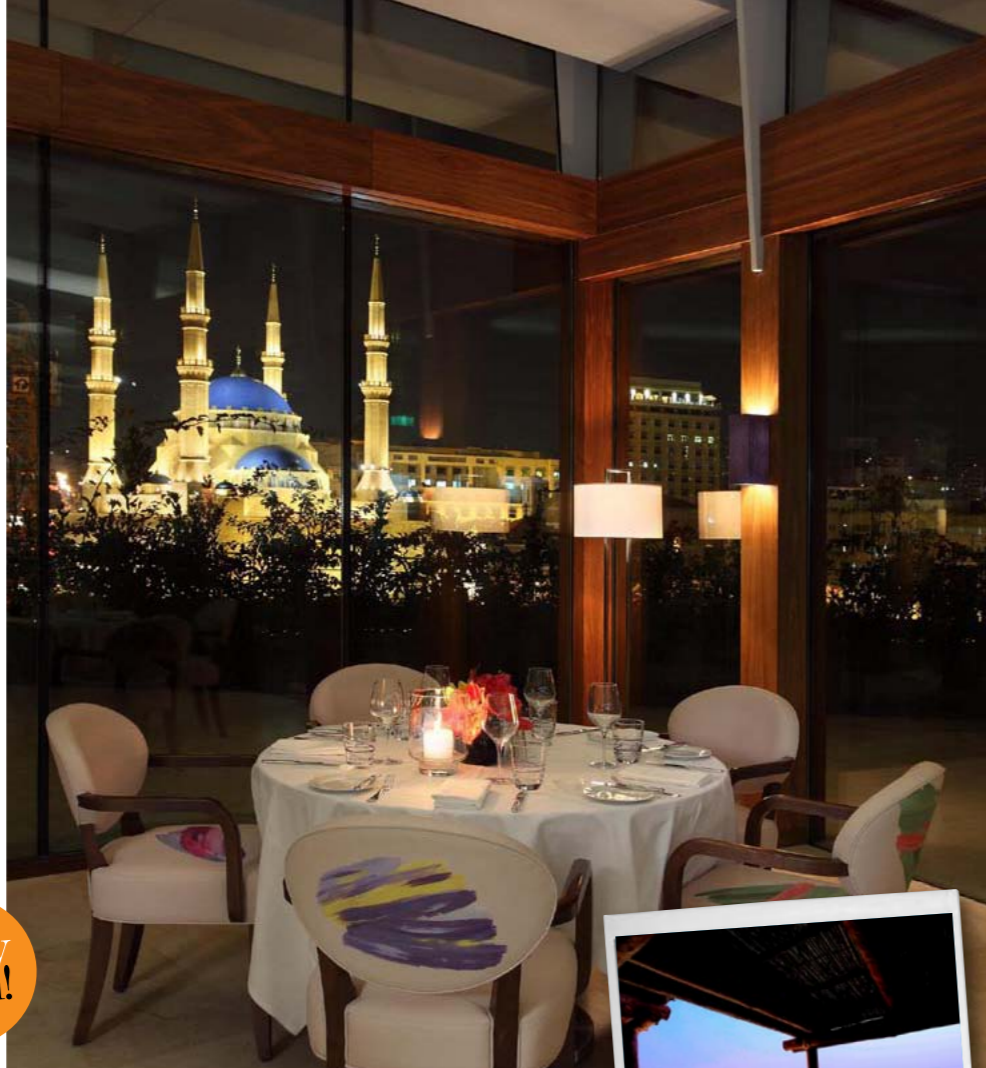
Turn over to find out where this lush tropical resort is located...

summer escapes special

LE GRAY HOTEL, BEIRUT.

Good Taste loves this contemporary, luxury retreat conveniently located in the heart of Beirut's Central District. Whether you're born to shop or party the night away (or both) this is the ultimate location to do both. With a lively, cosmopolitan vibe, the downtown area features markets, trendy shops and beautiful sandy beaches just a short hop away. During Ramadan, you can stay at Le Gray from just \$345 (Dhs1,267) for two people and get a free room upgrade, with either breakfast or Suhoor included. **The Ramadan package is valid between 1 and 31 August 2011. Call 961 1 96 28 28 or email reservations@legray.com; www.legray.com**

party town!



no passport required

Just deserts! Indulge your inner bedouin at Qasr Al Sarab

DISCOUNTS IN THE DESERT

Book a summer stay at Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara and get Dhs300 credit back for each night booked in a Deluxe room. The resort sits in a valley of rolling red sand dunes with views across the endless desert. Just a few hours drive from Dubai or Abu Dhabi, the resort is themed to perfectly complement its surroundings. Bedouin artefacts like silver knives, tea and coffee pots, jewellery and even bullets adorn the lobby and library of this magnificent low-rise property, while the rooms are rustic, with earth tones and natural materials reflecting the dramatic scenery outside. **Call 02 886 2088 or email infoqas@anantara.com**

It's Trisara!
The gorgeous resort overleaf is in Phuket, Thailand

STAY 4, PAY 3 IN PHUKET

Indulge your inner beach baby at this beautiful boutique resort in Phuket. Stay for four nights but pay only three, and get an upgrade to the next available room category. While you're here, you can do beach yoga, learn the secrets of Thai cooking and enjoy heavenly spa treatments, before retiring to your private villa with its own pool overlooking the oceans. **From Dhs3,965 per person, including airport transfers, breakfast and two massage treatments. see www.trisara.com for current offers and prices**

CHECK OUT PETRA

If you haven't yet made it to Jordan, take advantage of the long Eid weekend to visit this enchanting country. *Good Taste's Kelly Daniel went on a whistle-stop tour of Petra, Jordan's famous rose-red city*



CHEAP FLIGHTS!
Fly Air Arabia to Amman from Dhs1,296 during Eid

Exploring the Ancient City and getting lost in the magnificent red rocks, temples and mausoleums will leave you as inspired as you are intrigued. We stayed in the Möevenpick Resort, one of Petra's largest hotels. There is no shortage of restaurants, a relaxing pool to enjoy some sun and a lush rooftop bar which is the perfect setting for a picturesque sunset.

LOCATION The hotel is ideally located at the entrance of the historical Petra site, which means you can visit the site by day, and return in the evening for one of the magical candlelight concerts, where an oud player tells stories in near-darkness as the audience sips on Turkish coffee.

EAT Inside the hotel, Al Saraya Restaurant offers a large breakfast, lunch and dinner buffet with everything from chicken shawarma to pasta to desserts. If you're looking for something more casual, try the Al Multaqa atrium lounge, which provides a comfortable resting area with snacks and drinks. The more formal Al Iwan restaurant is opened for dinner only and offers

a selection of delicious options.

DO Take the essentials for walking around Petra: sunscreen, hat, water and comfortable walking shoes are a must. Flip flops are not advised, as the journey is rocky and dusty. Make sure you bring cash for the entrance fee as they do not accept cards.

EXPLORING PETRA You have a choice to take the journey via camel, donkey, horse or on foot. A sandy path takes you across Wadi Musa where you pass magnificent sandstone structures and Nabatean tombs. You shortly arrive at the Siq – the entrance into the ancient city – down a tunnel, carved from various shades of red and golden stone. It's wide enough to fit a horse and cart (if you're feeling lazy) but small enough to block out most of the sunlight, enabling a cool walk into the ancient city.

Then, with a sharp turn back into the sunlight, there is the sudden appearance of the Khazneh – a breathtaking temple carved into the edge of a cliff face. The intricacy of the details leave you marvelling at such



expert ancient engineering. The journey continues deeper into the city. You can climb into the mountains where the steps (eventually) flatten out to a tabletop which flaunts an astonishing 360 degree view of the mountain ranges. You can also head toward the Monastery, via through the ancient structures. Either way, it is hard to see everything in one day, so choose your path carefully if you have limited time. Back at the base of the ancient city is a modest restaurant, where you can enjoy a cold drink and take in the views.

SLEEP AND AMENITIES The rooms at the Möevenpick are quite cosy, modern with a traditional feel. Free WiFi is available. The view from the room is spectacular, overlooking

golden mountains and blue sky. Connecting rooms, no smoking rooms, balconies and terraces are available. Currency exchange, laundry and ATM are in the lobby.

GETTING THERE Although there are no direct flights to Petra, many connect Amman and the UAE. The cheapest options are Fly Dubai or Air Arabia (from Sharjah). A 2.5 hour taxi can cost around 70 Jordanian Riyals, depending on how good your negotiating skills are. The hotel can also arrange a driver to pick you up. Rental cars are also available at the airport if you wish to drive yourself.

RATES Rooms start from around Dhs800 per night. See www.moevenpick-hotels.com or phone 962 3 2157111 for room reservations.



THE BEACH HOUSE, GOA

Ramadan is a time of detoxing your life, says our inspirational Dedra L Stevenson on page 26, and if you've always wanted to learn more about fasting and its myriad health and spiritual implications, why not take some time out this summer to give yourself the best gift you will ever receive; a complete wellness and detox overhaul that will leave you mentally recharged, physically and emotionally cleansed and – a bonus no woman will ever say no to – a few kilos lighter at the end of it?

WHAT IS IT? The Beach House in Goa offers retreats between three and 14 days that focus holistically on your overall wellbeing. Their Weight Management Retreat starts from 45,000INR (Dhs3,692) for three days. On arriving at the boutique resort, which sits on the ocean's edge in sleepy South Goa, you'll be given a top-to-toe assessment, including fat percentage, bone density and blood pressure. You're then, scarily, told your 'biological age', the age you are in health terms.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? The resort offers a pure, organic nutritional

regimen of power food shots, vitamins and nutrients, fruit and vegetable juices, raw salads and almond milk. The diet is complemented by daily enemas, massages, yoga, one-on-one consultations with a doctor, nutritionist and therapist, and group meetings where the experts do their best to instill in you the incredible power of food to keep you healthy and happy. Our daily routine began each morning at 7.30am with a hot water and lemon. After an hour of yoga, we had breakfast (yummy juices, smelly vitamins, cider vinegar and honey.) A morning talk, spa treatment, or personal

consultation would be scheduled individually, and we'd have to self-administer enemas, which weren't nearly as frightful as we first feared. We'd all meet again for lunch, which was a raw salad, usually chick peas, sprouts, or grated carrots and beetroots (they tasted much nicer than it sounds). After lunch we might have a few hours to sunbathe and read, before reconvening for an afternoon exercise session, more juices, and finally an evening meal of broth.

WHO CAN GO? Anyone! When *Good Taste* went, guests included a Goan schoolgirl suffering from obesity, a frazzled mum of three from the UK, and a health-conscious 23 year old who had fasted before and wanted to improve her wellbeing.

BEST BITS You learn so much! From the benefits of using virgin coconut oil (you can eat it, cook with it *and* moisturise with it) to avoiding certain foods

(margarine: it's one molecule away from being a plastic), to starting each day with hot water and lemon... you'll come away with dozens of small things you can do to be healthy, balanced and full of beans. Oh, beans, you'll eat a lot of those, too.

WORST BITS The daily superfood shots we nicknamed 'pond' shots weren't too popular, while a soul-searching sofa session with the trained therapist ended in tears, but, as they explain, you need to let go of past traumas to be able to move forward. Deep stuff.

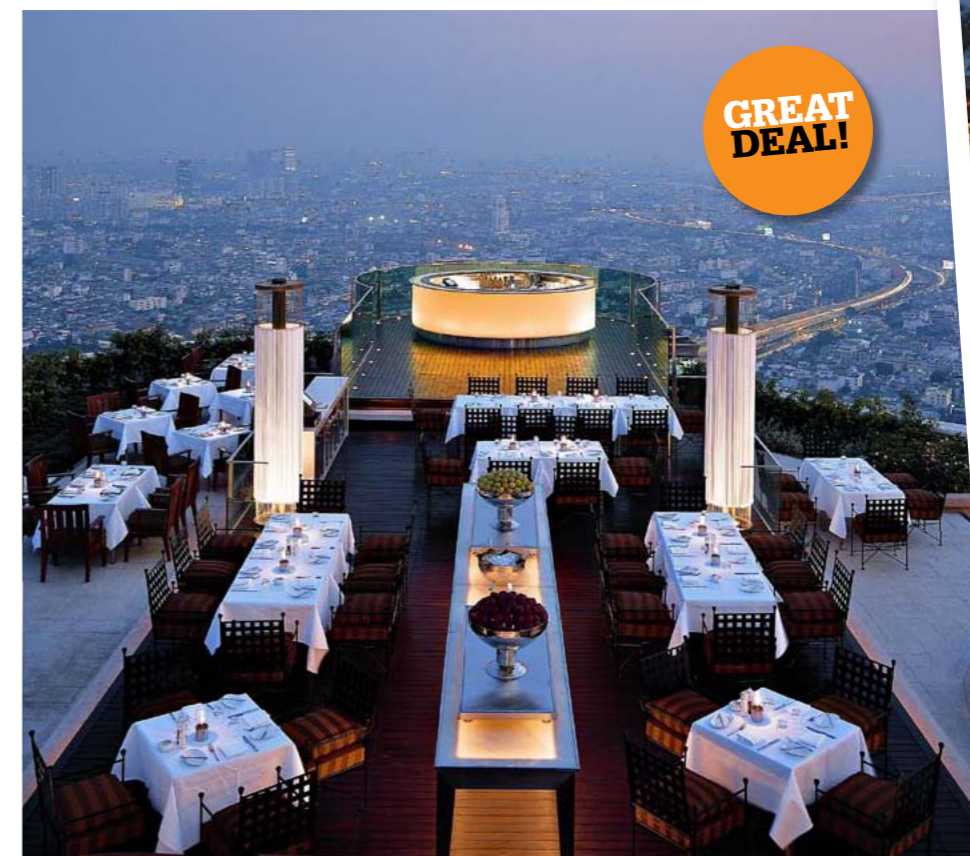
THE VERDICT I came back from Goa 1.5kg lighter, absolutely energised and revitalized, with a renewed awareness of healthy choices and how what I eat defines me. I've stopped smoking, kept the weight off and bought a juicer! **Return fares from Sharjah and Goa start from Dhs1,336; www.thebeachhousegoa.com**

FIND YOUR SHANGRI-LA

We love the Shangri-La Qaryat al Beri. From the fabulous restaurants, to the uber-comfy double beds, everything here is luxurious, stylish and a treat for the senses. This summer, enjoy a discounted room rate starting from Dhs555 including breakfast, or check into the sister hotel Traders Qaryat Al Beri right next door and get an even more wallet-friendly price of Dhs325. Bargainous weekends away never looked this good!

For reservations call 02 509 8630; www.shangri-la.com

LOCAL
GETAWAY

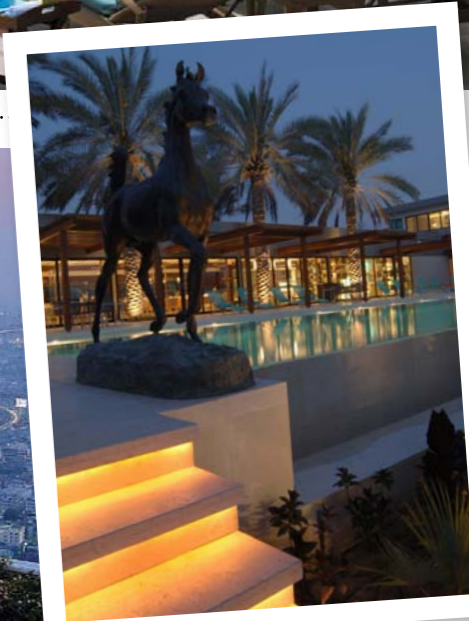


HEAD TO BANGKOK

The City of Angels is a mighty metropolis to get to grips with and merits some serious exploration. You can't do much better than a Tower Club Suite at the Lebu at State

Tower in the heart of Bangkok. This opulent, majestic hotel dominates the smoggy skyline and its rooftop bar is far and away the best in the city. Enjoy three nights in a suite, with

marble bathroom, and free Wi-Fi and Internet access as well as access to the fitness centre and pool, starting from Dhs1,100 per person. **www.lebu.com**



DESERT PALM

Visa taking a while to process? Scared of flying? Fear not, for you too can enjoy a luxurious spa break over Ramadan or Eid, without leaving Dubai. The lush retreat at Desert Palm is number one on our secret Dubai haven list. If you want to get away from it all without checking in luggage, why not check out this cool offer: get three nights in a pool villa with a Lime Spa massage for two and round trip transfers to the mall. If you're rich enough to be treating visitors to this gorgeous little deal, Desert Palm's limo will even pick them up from the airport. **From US\$1,050 (Dhs3,856); www.desertpalm.ae**

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MALDIVES

ALL-INCLUSIVE DEAL



If you haven't yet treated yourself to a Maldives holiday... what are you waiting for?

Set amongst perfect, unspoiled islands and the unforgettably blue waters of South Ari Atoll in the Republic of Maldives, the Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa Maldives features 112 luxe suites and villas. Once you've checked in, check out the

stunning diving and snorkeling, which includes an excellent house reef complete with a dedicated sunken ship wreck. The resort is also within easy reach of other top dive spots in the Maldives. Until October 31, enjoy a full, all-inclusive package

that includes accommodation in a Beach Suite, three meals and an open bar service, from USD620 (Dhs2,277) per night. This also gets you a daily buffet breakfast and all meals during your stay. You can dine at the Reef restaurant, Lotus Thai restaurant or Azzuri Mare, which features Italian classics.

Afternoon tea and an afternoon children's ice cream station, a pre-dinner snack service, and all-day soft drinks and mineral water are all also included in the deal. **Email reservations@chr.co.th for more info, or visit www.centarahotelsresorts.com/package/InternetRateMaldives.asp**



WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

Get a four-night package at the Istanbul Marriott Hotel Asia from Dhs3,520 per adult, with kids paying Dhs1,690. With views over the Marmara, the hotel is a great place from which to explore Istanbul. **www.dnata.com**

ANIMAL ATTRACTION

Explore East Africa and visit Giraffe Manor, Nairobi's most iconic historical building, dating back to the 1930s. While the building itself resonates with the past, very much present is the herd of nine giraffe who visit the manor to greet guests and sniff out snacks, before venturing back into their 140-acre sanctuary. This is an incredible destination to be one with nature (and eyelash batting giraffes!) **Giraffe Manor Nairobi; www.thesafaricollection.com**



3 NIGHTS STAY IN A MOKSHA SUITE

Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort is designed to ensure travelers seeking a luxurious, tranquil, or even spiritual experience have the freedom to enjoy a wide range of services and facilities. Get breakfast, lunch and dinner daily as well as welcome refreshments, daily in-room fruits and mineral waters at this unique Himalayan resort. Choose one spa experience per day and be pampered, rejuvenated and restored in the stunning surroundings of the Indian Himalayas. The spa experiences are designed to focus on your seven energy centres and to enable a renewed sense of wellbeing. Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, Centara Boutique Collection comprises 15 colonial inspired buildings, all within a few minutes convenient walk of all guest areas. Moksha guest

SAVE!

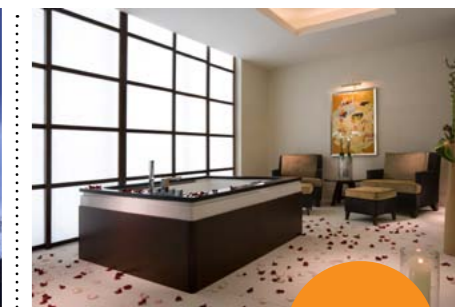
Holiday makers can save 10% on their summer holiday packages when travelling on selected airlines including Emirates, Austrian Airlines, Virgin Atlantic, Air France, Air Mauritius, Malaysia Airlines, KLM, Cathay Pacific Airways and Gulf Air. Bookings must be made prior to 15th July 2011. **www.dnatatravel.com; 800 8118**



suites are tastefully furnished in natural wood and stone finishes, reflecting the harmonious relationship with nature and

the surroundings. This special summer offer is valid between July until October 31, 2011 and includes return airport transfers,

taxes and service charges. It starts from Dhs3,080 per person. **See www.centarahotelsresorts.com for more information**



EUROPEAN GETAWAY

Schloss Velden, Capella Hotel is the perfect place to unwind in elegant surroundings infused with history. Surrounded by breathtaking scenery, the 400-year-old chateau has been transformed into a hotel. This summer, why not leave this magazine page open for your other half to see, with a big arrow pointing to this deal? Yes, husband, that's *you* we're hinting to! Be enchanted by a romantic deal that includes two hours of private spa time, champers, a massage and a five-course dinner for two. The price per person in a standard double room starts from EUR 415 (Dhs2,178). **www.schlossveldencapella.com**

TAKE THE FAMILY TO MAURITIUS

Book four nights and get three nights free at Anahita Mauritius. The resort is set in the middle of a tropical island paradise, framed by lush mangroves, green mountains and the stunning, rolling Indian Ocean. There's water sports galore to

be enjoyed in the still waters of one of Mauritius' largest lagoons, the perfect place for kids and teens to explore. Wind surfing, kayaking and snorkeling are all on offer, while mums can relax with a good read on the pristine beach. Dads will love the free

gold on the Ernie Els designed course. Plus, the family can be fed and watered with a daily breakfast and a three course evening meal as part of the package. **For more information, see www.fourseasons.com/mauritus/rates_and_reservations**