

It's a 'Waterful' Life

Whether it's lazing by the sea or meditating by the riverside, here's a round-up of waterfront properties, handpicked for you.



Take a rain check

Sri Lanka has a tropical climate much like India, but the country receives rains twice a year. From December to April, it is rainy season on the North and Northeast coasts. From May to September, it is rainy season on the South and Southwest coasts. June and November are inter-seasonal months, which means it rains throughout the country. Take a moment to confirm which side of the coast you'd like to visit depending on the time of the year. There is no dearth of good hotels along the Sri Lankan coastline suited for every type of traveller.

Waterland – Negombo, Sri Lanka

Negombo is a popular gateway to Sri Lanka because of its proximity to the Bandaranaike International Airport and a vibrant beach scene. Waterland, tucked away in a corner of Negombo, is an oasis of calm. With only five villas, it is exclusive and intimate. Flanked by the Maha Oya stream and Dutch Canal, the property greets you to magnificent views. Each villa comes with its own infinity-edge plunge pool. The dining barge allows guests to not only simply dine by the water but also relish a meal on the water, while their floating spa gently rocks with the flow of the river.

Popular guest activities include on-site Sri Lankan cooking classes and tea tasting sessions, bicycling along a specially curated route in and around Negombo, and boat tours from their private dock. Go south to experience village life along the river and pass coconut plantations, paddy fields, and

picturesque mangroves. In the north you may see herons, egrets, water monitors, cormorants, kingfishers and parrots. Come back to a warm glass of toddy (fermented coconut sap), freshly tapped from the palm trees at Waterland.



Devnadi – The Heritage Hotel – Haridwar, Uttarakhand

Steeped in culture and tradition, Devnadi – The Heritage Hotel is a 150-year-old haveli located on the banks of the Ganges in the holy city of Haridwar. The waterfront property was once the summer holiday home of the Queen of Nepal and fondly called the 'Nepali Kothi'. It was later taken over by prominent Indian director-producer Ramanand Sagar, who wrote many tales of spirituality here, including the legendary TV serial *Ramayana* that aired in the 90s.

The eight-room haveli is more home than a hotel with most of

its original interiors still intact. It has the largest private ghat in Haridwar – Madan Mohan Ghat – allowing guests to take a comfortable dip in the holy river with complete privacy and hygiene. Every morning and evening, *aarti* and yoga sessions are organised by the banks of the Ganges. To get a pulse of the city, go temple-hopping in a cycle rickshaw around Har ki Pauri (literally, 'footsteps of the Lord') or set out on a food trail and try the city's famous *aloo puri* and *kachoris*.



Estuary Sarovar Portico – Poovar, Kerala

Marthanda Varma, a former ruler of Travancore, was so enthralled by the beauty of a tiny hamlet in southern Kerala near Kovalam, that he named the place Poovar – meaning a string of flowers. Rightly justifying the term 'estuary', Poovar's Estuary Sarovar Portico has a unique setting where Kerala's backwaters, the Neyyar River and Poovar beach meet to connect to the Arabian Sea.



The property, in the lap of nature, offers all things extravagant – from a swim in the pool under the stars to buffets on a floating restaurant. Experience relaxing massages – Vaidyashala and Paridisi – at their in-house Ayurveda centre after a stroll on the quiet Poovar beach. And if that isn't all, take a drop to their car park by a speedboat through the backwaters. Estuary Sarovar Portico is a world in itself, away from the hectic city life. It is a luxurious break to gift oneself, because we all deserve it, don't we?

GET A ROOM



Raga on the Ganges – Rishikesh, Uttarakhand

For a spiritual retreat, head to Raga on the Ganges, a luxury boutique hotel in Rishikesh. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, the property promises rejuvenation of the body, mind, and soul. Guests can head down to the Ganges through a private route to meditate by the river or indulge in a range of wellness treatments – sauna, hydrotherapy, Jacuzzi, and steam bath – at their in-house spa, Teertha.

The rooms are spacious and tastefully designed with a balcony that opens out to panoramic views of the waters of the Ganges and the Shivalik ranges. The chefs at the in-house restaurant Tarana work closely with the local community to introduce guests to authentic Garhwali cuisine. For a shot of adrenaline, sign up for activities such as white-water rafting in the Ganges, rappelling, trekking, cycling, and canoeing.



Barefoot Scuba – Havelock, Andaman and Nicobar Islands



*Beyond
the usual*

Havelock, the most popular island in the Andamans, is tourist-friendly. One can easily explore Havelock by renting a two-wheeler for a day. Make sure you visit the Radhanagar beach, which was once ranked as Asia's best beach and the world's seventh best beach by *Time* magazine. If you're up for a quick hike, visit the Elephant beach for its turquoise waters that can easily give any Southern European beach a run for its money.

The Andaman Islands is considered one of the best sites for diving in Asia. Barefoot Scuba is the first 5-star PADI Dive Center and Resort in the Andamans. The resort is renowned as the melting pot of Havelock where you can interact with a wide variety of fellow divers and travellers.

Barefoot Scuba Resort is located at Beach No.3 with four types of room offerings – from 5 euros per day to 50 euros per day. Their sea-facing duplex cottages are wooden air-conditioned bungalows that face the sea through a small grove of coconut trees. The airy bedroom on the upper floor opens to a private balcony, which is the perfect place to relax after a day of diving. They also have non a/c bungalows facing the sea that are as much cozy and ideal to unwind. For backpackers on a tight budget, they offer basic A Frame Huts that are small, elevated cane and bamboo structures. The resort's in-house restaurant, Cafe Del Mar, is the oldest and the best-known restaurant at Beach No.3 serving Indian and continental fares as well as some great seafood.