

FOUR-STOP & fabulous

FROM A MEGA THAILAND EXPLORATION TO AN OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK LATIN AMERICAN ADVENTURE, THESE ITINERARIES GUARANTEE A HONEYMOON WITH A DIFFERENCE...



AROUND THAILAND

1 Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai, Thailand

THIS IS NOT A HOTEL; it is a veritable kingdom. Built in the style of an ancient city, complete with city walls, gates, a moat, a watchtower and even an amphitheatre, the whole experience at the Dhara Dhevi is like no other. But the resort is not only a wonder to explore, it's also a super-luxurious retreat. Check in to one of the opulent Grand Deluxe Villas for a seriously spoilt stay. Set over two floors, with large terraces on both, plus a plunge pool, they are every bit as impressive as the main buildings that are just a buggy-ride away. There's no shortage of things to do within this kingdom. The library holds more than 5,000 books and 2,000 DVDs, and then there's the lavish spa, the cookery school, two swimming pools, and even a traditional Thai shopping village. For the more outdoorsy, a day of elephant trekking in the spectacular mountains of Chiang Mai is a must; or

try riding a buffalo (yes, it is possible) or planting rice in the resort's very own paddies. There's also plenty of choice when it comes to dining. Choose from exquisite Thai, Chinese and French restaurants; the Thai option, Le Grand Lanna, has even hosted the King. It's easy to be bowled over by what the hotel has to offer aesthetically, but it's also important to note that beneath the awe-inspiring façade, toils a dedicated team who will go to any lengths to make your stay even more enchanting.

WOW FACTOR The cake shop, managed by Belgian pastry chef Fabrice Leblus, could rival Ladurée. **GO** The Turquoise Holiday Company (turquoise.holidays.co.uk) offers four nights from £1,535 per person, B&B. Includes flights and transfers.

FLIGHT TIME 12hrs to Bangkok; 1hr to Chiang Mai →



Four stops

3 Rancho Valencia, San Diego, USA

LEAVE THE MADNESS of LA behind. Three-and-a-half hours' drive from the City of Angels is the serenity of Southern California – think wide-open spaces and big sky. The all-suite, five-star Rancho Valencia is snuggled away in 45 acres of olive groves and gardens. All roads on the estate lead to the Club House. Here, you'll find The Pony Room bar – a nod to the region's equestrian heritage – and the elegant-cosy Veladora restaurant, with its mammoth open fire and views of the surrounding canyons. Once you've eaten breakfast here – mini pastry appetisers followed by Huevos Rancheros (eggs, black beans, bacon, tortilla, salsa and guacamole) – you'll definitely need a mid-morning nap. Each suite is designed to be as homely as possible; kitchens, log fires, secluded patios (most with plunge pool and outdoor fire), and you wake each morning to fresh OJ. Fitness and wellbeing are big here. Along with 18 tennis courts, you'll find a 'floating' yoga studio, croquet lawn, bike hire and Pilates classes. Last night's overindulgence – sampling the 100 varieties of tequila with lobster burger chasers – will be all but forgotten with a sweep of a racket!

WOW FACTOR The Sixth Sense Signature Ritual at The Spa. A fully naked soak in a (very private) al-fresco roll-top bath followed by a blissful 90-minute massage with myrtle, jojoba, avocado and olive oils.

GO A suite costs from £415 (ranchovalencia.com)



4 Esperanza, Cabo San Lucas, Mexico

AS YOU STEP out of your chauffeur-driven Escalade into the hot Mexican air, your first thought will be, 'How soon can I strip off and dive into *that* view?' The sparkling sapphire vista of the Sea of Cortez is Esperanza's crowning jewel; you will spend most of your time staring into the mesmerising horizon, whether eating at one of the resort's three beachfront restaurants or idly paddling in its sea-view infinity pool. Esperanza has a community feel, but – make no mistake – this is not boutique *eco-Mexico* – this is mega-luxe Mexico. The welcome is crazy-friendly, service super-slick and resort *huge*. Esperanza has 57 rooms and suites, all over-16s only, as well as a separate 'residences' resort for families. But, thanks to your personal butler (you're given his mobile number), it feels intimate. The luxury suites come with all the mod-cons that make a long-haul trip easier (hello washer-dryer,

goodbye two weeks' worth of dirty laundry). The food fairies leave daily treats – homemade nachos and guacamole, or cookies and cakes – while the fridge comes stocked and is replenished as required, no charge. Dining out is an experience not to be missed. The 'Mexicanisimo' night at the beachside La Palapa Bar & Grill features a Mariachi band and fireworks, and we're definitely in-Mexico fish tacos. With every sip of the heady Margaritas, you'll feel yourself floating away with the waves lapping below. **WOW FACTOR** Settle down on your terrace to catch a glimpse of the region's other tourist, the migrating blue whale. To witness one of these majestic creatures breaching from your comfy sunlounger, Tequila Sunrise in hand, has to be whale-watching at its most decadent.

GO A double room costs from £350 (esperanza.aubergeresorts.com) →

