

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

CONDÉ NAST

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Traveler

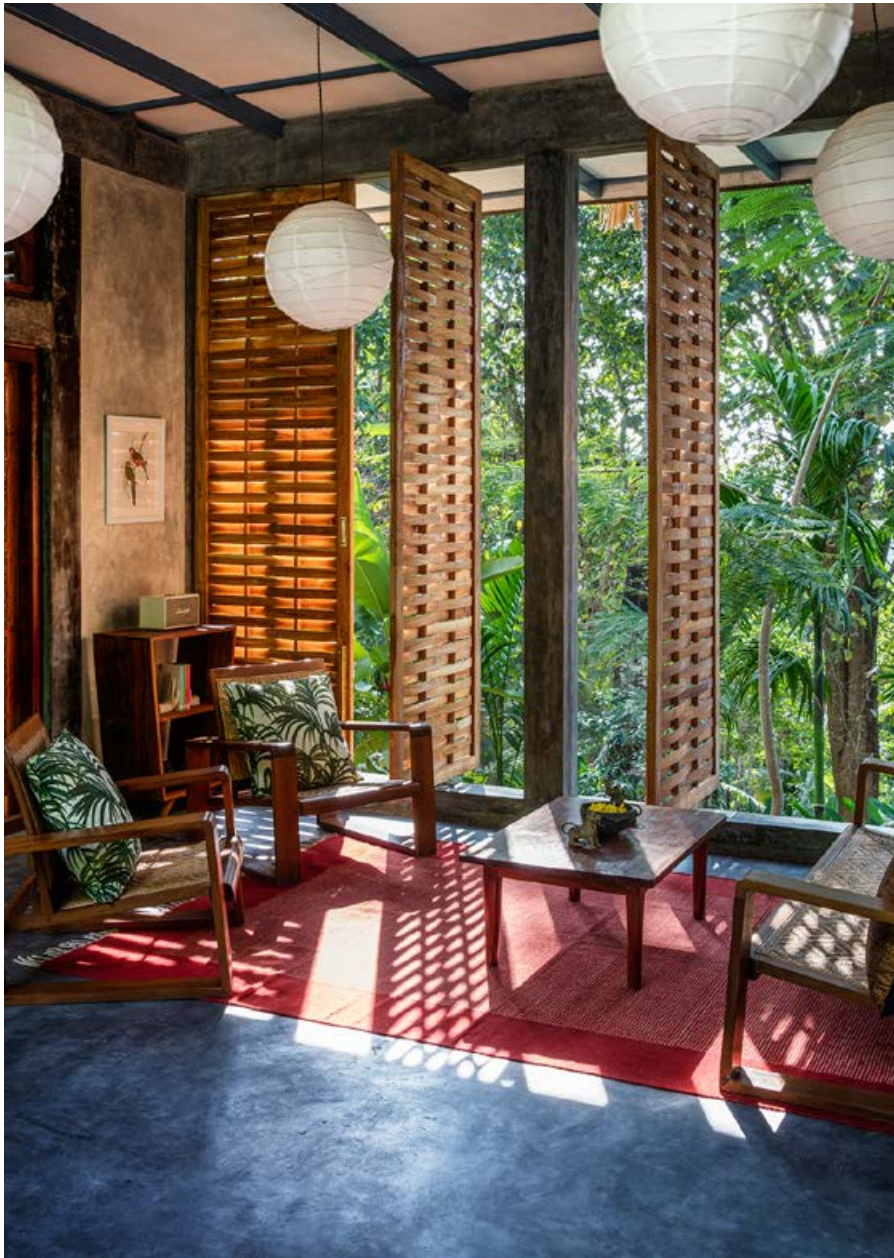
Obsession

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THE
HOT
LIST

HOT SPOTS



The villa at the Jalakara hotel is cantilevered on a hill and surrounded by rain forest.

- ▶ A journey to Radhanagar Beach in the Andaman Islands, off the coast of Myanmar (but technically part of India), is not for the weary: You fly to Calcutta, connect two and a half hours to Port Blair, take a 90-minute ferry to Havelock Island, then drive another 30 minutes on a bone-rattling road. The payoff is huge—a one-and-a-quarter-mile strip of blinding white sand wedged between electric-green trees and the bluest water you've ever seen. For decades, its remoteness and lack of infrastructure, but abundance of coral reefs, attracted serious divers, adventurous backpackers, and few others. But the February opening of the [Taj Exotica Resort & Spa](#), a 46-acre spread along Radhanagar Beach, has put the islands on the radar of those of us who need a *really* good reason to spend 24 hours getting to a beach. In true Taj form, the destination's cultural inheritance is on full display, from the Nicobari welcome song to the 72 villas on stilts with domed roofs modeled after huts of the region's Jarawa tribe. And though Taj's nearly deserted beachfront is perfectly conducive to five days of hardcore relaxing, doing so would be kind of missing the point of making it to the Andamans in the first place. You'll want to take a fishing trip to John Lawrence Island, dive near Neil Island, or hike to Elephant Beach. It's imperative that you tack on a couple of nights in the villa, or one of the six rooms or suites, at [Jalakara](#), a two-and-a-half-year-old retreat surrounded by betel-nut and banana trees in the rain forest on Havelock Island, whose wildness channels the jungles of Costa Rica. While there, definitely kayak the mangrove forests at night to see bioluminescence sparkling like fireworks around your paddle. You haven't traveled all this way just to stay by the pool, now, have you? SARAH KHAN

ANDAMAN ISLANDS

Our Next Island Escape Will Be to India