



What a dish: green papaya salad; right, clockwise from top left, fish amok; khao niew mamuang; chilli crab; Beerlao



Go down in surfing legend

Where? Telescopes, Indonesia
Once whispered about from Bondi to Bude, the point breaks of the Mentawai Islands, off the west coast of Sumatra itself, are now getting a reputation in surfing circles. The lefthander (a wave that breaks from the left), at Telescopes on Pulau Sipora, might be one of the best and most beautiful in the world: perfect, 2m-plus waves unfurl onto an amber, coral-fringed horizon of sand. The area's burgeoning fame means there's more to the accommodation than just the shaggy-haired-beach-bum stuff. Aloita Resort and Spa (00 62 70153742, www.aloitaresort.com) has eight thatched-roof cottages dotted across a kilometre of pristine private beach a few coves away from Telescopes; doubles from £117, full board.

Join the party crowd

Where? Haad Yuan, Thailand
While the masses merge on Ko Phangan's Haad Rin beach for the monthly full-moon mash-up, those in the know creep round the cove to the classier secret parties on Haad Yuan. Accessible only by boat, this quiet smile of honeyed sand hides Thailand's hippest hedonistic scene. Clamber up to clifftop Eden Bar, where twice-weekly parties (every Tuesday and Saturday) host a hundred or so Fendi-clad ravers dancing on the deck 'til well beyond dawn. Further into the jungle, every Friday the same crowd gather at Guy's bar, where water buffaloes join the party on the open-air dance-floor. Nearby, the Pariya (00 66 876 236678, pariyahaadyuan.com) has neat little thatch and concrete bungalows from £83, B&B, sleeping three.

The 10 best signature snacks in Southeast Asia

Ca Phe Sua Da

Where? Vietnam
What? The literal translation of *ca phe sua dai* 'coffee, milk, ice', and these three together form one outrageous drink. Vietnam-grown coffees often have accents of cocoa and butter, and the milk here is of the sweet, sticky, condensed variety, making this practically a pudding.
Travel's tip: Vietnam favours the drip method of coffee-making. Pick up a traditional stainless steel one-cup 'phin' filter for less than £1, so you can recreate this dream back home.

Nasi goreng

Where? Bali
What? Fried rice is fried rice — except when it's *nasi goreng*. It's the flavour-packed Balinese paste that does it: a combo of chillies, nutmeg, nuts, spices, shrimps, palm sugar and shallots. Street vendors sell it into the wee hours.
Travel's tip: If you're brave, try *nasi goreng gila* or 'crazy fried rice', which might come with a medley of sausage, chicken and meatballs.

Sankhya lapov

Where? Cambodia
What? Why this pumpkin-coconut pudding hasn't made it beyond the border is a mystery. The special-occasion version is cooked and

served inside the actual pumpkin: the lid gets lopped off, the seeds get scooped out, a coconut custard mix goes in, and the whole shebang gets steamed.
Travel's tip: In Siem Reap, Marum is a charity-run restaurant that trains disadvantaged children in the kitchen. It's a beautiful wooden house with a candlelit garden — and the creamy *sankhya lapov* comes with black sticky rice (00 855 17 363284, tree-alliance.org; mains about £3).

Beerlao

Where? Laos
What? Bottles of this jasmine rice-based local lager are everywhere. It's light and crisp and *Time* magazine called it 'Asia's best beer'. It's not easy to find once you've left, so drink it while you can — for just 80p.
Travel's tip: Beerlao Gold comes in a beautiful gold-labelled bottle. It's made using 'precious' Khao Kai Noy rice, which gives it a better aroma.

Chilli crab

Where? Singapore
What? Take one fat mud crab bathed in salty-sweet, spiky-hot sauce — then devour it. The chilli crab is one of Singapore's greatest gifts, so cherish it. You can mop up the fiery gravy with *mantou* — soft, deep-fried buns.

Travel's tip: Get your fix at No Signboard Seafood, which used to be a hawker stand and now has six fancy branches (nosignboardseafood.com; crab about £20pp).

Chicken baguette

Where? Laos
What? You might know it as Vietnam's *banh mi*. It's called the *khao jee* in Laos, where the French influence means great baguettes. Try the chicken one, with watercress and carrot.
Travel's tip: It's all about the *jaew bong*, a punchy, sweet jam of Laos-specific chillies, garlic and the ginger-related *galangal*. Get as much of it on there as you can.

Fish amok

Where? Cambodia
What? Khmer food is one of the oldest cuisines in the world; it works magic with spices, preferring elegance and subtlety to blowing your head off. And fish amok is the classic. Made using mild, white local fish, coconut milk, and a curry paste called *kroeung*, it's a sort-of stew, all lemongrass, *galangal* and turmeric.
Travel's tip: In some of Cambodia's fancier establishments, the fish gets whipped into a mousse, so the amok is *soufflé*-like.

Kaya toast

Where? Singapore
What? Two slim slices of toasted white bread are used to sandwich a layer of *kaya* — a curd made of egg, coconut milk, sugar and fragrant *pandan* leaves. You'll find *Kaya* toast

everywhere, but there are few reliable franchises. Try Ya Kun (yakun.com; about £2).
Travel's tip: Order it as a set meal, with a side of two very soft-boiled eggs and a strong coffee.

Som tum

Where? Thailand
What? This green papaya salad is exactly what you need when the weather is getting the best of you — it's zesty, fresh and uplifting. The papaya is cut into matchsticks, with carrots, tomatoes, chillies, green beans, peanuts, fish sauce, palm sugar and tons of lime. Find it in the city as a side dish, or on the beach as a snack.
Travel's tip: For extra protein, try *som tum poo*, which has little crabs from the rice field pounded into it; other variations contain shrimp and pickled fish.

Khao niew mamuang

Where? Thailand
What? One of the greatest pleasures of being in Southeast Asia is the mighty mango — at its best when sliced and popped in a polystyrene tray with a portion of steamed coconut sticky rice. Get it from vendors on Khao San and Sukhumvit Roads — and don't be ashamed if you need to eat three trays in a row. That's normal.
Travel's tip: For mango enthusiasts, Mango Tango has *khao niew mamuang*, plus smoothies, ice creams, *panna cottas* and chia-seed puddings (various locations; mymangotango.com).

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THE NEW HOP TO HALONG
Gone is the three-hour drive to Halong Bay from Hanoi in Vietnam. You can now arrive in style on a new 30-minute seaplane service (seaplanes.vn; from £188 one way)



Quad-bike on the beach

Where? Mui Ne, Vietnam
The sunset-hued sand dunes of Mui Ne in Phan Thiet, three-and-a-half hours from Ho Chi Minh City, rise and ripple like an ochre mirror to the choppy South China Sea. And quad bikes, dune buggies, sand-sleds and ostrich rides are the many ways folk can frolic in the sand hills that skirt kilometres of wild beach and sea. Mui Ne is something of a foodie spot, too: the town's known for its fish sauce, with man-sized pots of the stuff lining the streets. Anantara Mui Ne (00 84 62374 1888, mui-ne.anantara.com) has hilltop villas overlooking the local fishing village; doubles from £98, B&B.



Follow the scuba set to unspoilt sands

Where? Gapang Beach, Indonesia
The wispy sands of Pulau Weh, an island off the northernmost tip of Indonesia, are tumbleweed-empty, while the hotels are always full. Look out from the lapping shoreline of Gapang Beach and you'll see why: the blue horizon shimmers and froths with the rising bubbles of divers below the surface. Turtles, too, can be seen rising for breath before dipping back down to join the Atlantis of fun. The talk in the hotels and restaurants around Gapang is correspondingly dominated by chest-beating divers' tales. Escape down the coast to the appropriately named Casa Nemo (00 62 812 6912884, casanemo.com), which has no-frills beachfront bungalows from £16 per night, room only. ■