

VALUE GUIDE Top Cities for Less, Hotel Deals, Money-Saving Tips

TRAVEL + LEISURE

MARCH 2004

50 AFFORDABLE BEACH RESORTS

**Caribbean, Hawaii
Spain, California
Costa Rica, Vietnam, France
Mexico, New Zealand**

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50 Affordable Beach Resorts

From Hawaii to Zanzibar, we've searched the globe for stylish getaways just steps from the sand. The best part: almost all are under \$200 a night.

It can be as smooth as glass, or as wild as a white-capped Alpine range. Yet even at its most powerful, the ocean is soothing. On the sand, the stress of modern existence drifts away. You return to your senses—feeling the warmth of sun on bare skin, savoring the salty air, listening to your internal engine slow down to match the rhythm of the surf. You regain enough perspective about life to ask the truly important questions of the day: Snorkel, swim, or ride on that silly banana boat? Isn't it time for a nap?

Of all the pleasures guilty by association—the trendy bags, designer blankets, plush towels, and mindless best sellers—none is sweeter than finding a place in the sun that doesn't burn a hole in the pocket. The 50 we've chosen cover the waterfront, from rustic cabins by the sea to lavish beachfront resorts at great values.

But these suggestions can cause a bit of inner conflict. Returning home, color in your cheeks and clarity in your eyes, you're likely to be asked where you've just been. Keep it a secret or share the wealth? You decide.

Prices listed reflect the lowest rates for a double room in high season (excluding holidays). Be aware that the cost can drop dramatically because of seasonal fluctuations or special offers. The symbol **o** indicates that rates drop by 20 percent or more in low season. For other affordable trips and tips, see the T+L Value Guide 2004 (page 124).

New York

\$195 Hotelier André Balazs transformed an old motel into a sophisticated, retro jewel overlooking Shelter Island Sound and Crescent Beach. It's known as **Sunset Beach** for its incredible sunsets. The 20 rooms have funky paper lamps and lounge chair-bedecked terraces. The atmosphere is not too "Hamptons," although at times it feels dangerously close, particularly when mainlanders boat in to visit the open-air restaurant. For the best deals, come midweek. 35 SHORE RD., SHELTER ISLAND; 631/749-2001; www.sunsetbeachli.com; open Memorial Day–Labor Day

Sunset Beach

35 Shore Road, Shelter Island, Long Island, New York 11965 phone: 631 749-2001 fax: 631 749-1843 www.sunsetbeachli.com