

REST ASSURED:

Singapore

A Down Under stop-off? In town for a Sling? Book a place to remember, says **Amanda Hyde**



£400
Capella Singapore
'Morphs space-age
steel curves with an
old Colonial mansion'

A swift 15-minute monorail from the mainland, Sentosa is Singapore's very own pleasure island, ringed with perfect beaches, covered with burgeoning forest and home to a clutch of beach bars, theme parks and hotels. Capella is its poshest accommodation by far, a Foster + Partners-designed hideaway that merges space-age steel curves with an old Colonial mansion. Architecture buffs will appreciate the design, *everyone* will love the loafing potential. Hiding here is what lazy stopovers are made for – it's all on site, from the best spa in town (where even an eyebrow-tidy takes 45 minutes and involves a mini facial) to superb dim sum at Chinese restaurant Cassia. True, rooms are

hi-tech to the point of absurdity (everything's controlled from a bedside keypad that makes opening and closing the curtains manually impossible), but the views more than make up for it, towards a lush, green courtyard or over tumbling, multi-pooled gardens out to the South China Sea. Then there are the bathrooms – with floor-to-ceiling glass and outsized marble tubs to make the most of those vistas. If you do plump for this hotel, don't be sniffy about Sentosa's theme parks – Universal Studios and the Skyride cable car are the most fun you'll have in Singapore.

Doubles from £400, room only (00 65 6591 5000, www.capellahotels.com/singapore).

£230 Mandarin Oriental 'Scarily slick service soothes guests prone to diva demands'

The football teams and movie stars who stay here don't care that it's a 10-minute taxi drive west of the city centre – they come for the scarily slick service. If you're prone to diva demands, the Mandarin's for you, too. (Halfway through that house exchange? They'll converse with your solicitors while you go sightseeing). This agreeable sycophancy makes up for the hotel's slightly business-like rooms, decked out in pale woods and leather. Elsewhere in the hotel, there's a pleasant buzz – especially in the revamped pool area, with its loungey white cabanas, breezy gardens and twinkly views of the jagged skyline come evening. Nab a poolside table at Dolce Vita restaurant and tuck in to Michelin-starred lobster minestrone as the lights from surrounding skyscrapers reflect on the water. This Italian is one of six restaurants here, including a branch of the famous Californian steakhouse Morton's and a Japanese/Californian hybrid bistro, and they all fill up with Singapore's suited expats at night (book ahead). There's a decent spa, too, where therapists administer megastar-worthy Oriental signature massages.

Doubles from £230, room only (00 65 6338 0066, www.mandarinoriental.com/singapore).



£126 New Majestic Hotel 'Glass ceilings afford views of swimmers in the pool above'

Prefer your hotels small and characterful? This cool Chinatown wonder in central Singapore (converted from a row of old shophouses) comes with rooms decorated by local artists and designers, a lobby full of classic '60s furniture and a pool surrounded by sunloungers in ice-cream shades. It's all very LA, down to the sunglass-toting clientele and the constant ambient music that pumps through

the speakers at reception. But this place isn't *all* style over substance, as demonstrated by the restaurant – the ceilings may be glass and afford views of swimmers in the pool above, but the food is traditional Chinese done fantastically (by a chef who's worked at Singapore *grandes dames* Raffles and The Fullerton). Try the rib-eye with sesame sauce or chilled mango pudding with sticky black rice, in a dining room that draws a traditional crowd as well as bright young things. Post-dinner, you're a stroll from the opera singers, stilt walkers and colourful stalls of Chinatown's frenetic night market. One word of warning, though: ask to see pictures of the bedrooms before you book – some have stunning outdoor baths on glamorous decked terraces; others come with giant neon murals or a bleak lack of soft furnishings.

Doubles from £126, room only (00 65 6511 4700, www.newmajestichotel.com).

AND THE BEST OF THE REST...

£80 HOTEL 1929

If you're after a historic feel, this Art Deco-inspired old row of shophouses should tick all boxes. Beware teeny bathrooms, though – some rooms only have 'shower cabinets'. **Doubles from £80, room only (00 65 6347 1929, www.hotel1929.com).**

£175 MARINA BAY SANDS

When this one opened last year, the papers were full of pictures of its dizzying infinity pool, 55 storeys above ground. There's a casino, mall and theatre, too. **Doubles from £175, room only (00 65 6688 2011, www.marinabaysands.com).**

£213 SHANGRI-LA RASA SENTOSA

This just-refurbished '60s block (pictured right) has the best

spot on Sentosa – beside a broad sweep of perfect sand. Mature palmy gardens and rooms in light greens and greys add to the attraction. **Doubles from £213, room only (00 65 6275 0100, www.shangri-la.com).**

£533 RAFFLES

Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad both famously stayed here. It's now busy with tour groups and tea- and Sling-drinking visitors, but the

old glamour still remains.

Doubles from £533, B&B (00 65 6337 1886, www.affles.com).



Get me there

Kuoni (01306 747002, www.kuoni.co.uk) has four-night citybreaks in Singapore from £1,130pp, with flights from Heathrow.
Virgin Atlantic (0844 209 7777, www.virgin-atlantic.com) flies from Heathrow to Singapore, from £800 return.