



Singapore's great: Now let's leave town!

These weekend trips will get you from the city to exotic locales in less time than it takes to negotiate a causeway traffic jam

By Hui Fang, for CNN Travel 23 January, 2013

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COURTESY PULAU JOYO

Pulau Joyo: the biggest decision you'll have to make is whether to order a beer or cocktail.

Cash rich but time poor? That's life in Singapore for you.

Fortunately, being in the center of Southeast Asia means escape is easy and the choices are vast.

Only the unimaginative have to resort to the predictable Bali-Bangkok-Bintan routine.

In less than four hours you can get to places where the only "stress" is deciding from which deserted beach to watch the sunset.

Here are three easy, quick trips from Singapore.

Beach: Pulau Joyo, Tanjung Pinang, Indonesia



COURTESY PULAU JOYO

The perfect Singapore antidote: a remote but accessible island with no motorized traffic.

In the Riau Archipelago, Pulau Joyo resort delivers on its postcard promise of white sand beaches, clear water and underwater life.

The resort -- the only one on the island, which has the same name -- accommodates 20 to 30

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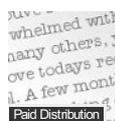


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people in rustic yet chic abodes fashioned in the form of driftwood palaces, traditional Javanese houses and tree houses.

Curios and art objects lend a personal touch and hanging daybeds mean you can laze away the day, rain or shine.

Popular activities include stand-up paddleboarding and snorkeling. The nearby islands of Binyoso, Lina and Murbai are within swimming distance.

Keen anglers can learn a trick or two from the locals in the comfort of the resort's 140-foot yacht, The Hang Tuah — bait and lessons included.

The sun dips by 6 p.m. and each evening a movie is screened from Pulau Joyo's own "Cinema Paradiso."

How to get there: Catch a ferry from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal (TMFT) to Tanjung Pinang, where you'll get picked up for a 45-minute private transfer and 20-minute speedboat ride to the resort. Total travel time from Singapore: four hours.

From S\$350-plus, per adult or S\$4,000-plus for the entire island, which accommodates 10 adults. Inclusive of all meals, non-alcoholic drinks and land transfers. www.pulau-joyo.com

City: Montigo Resorts, Nongsa, Indonesia



Montigo has three grades of villas, all two stories high: the hillside villa, hilltop pool villa and spa villa.

Thirty minutes. That's all it takes to get to a restful Batam weekend — with no golf or karaoke involved.

While the beach is only a kilometer long, the 88 modern double-story villas are good for city types who shudder at the thought of an outdoor bathroom and who demand creature comforts: down pillows, oversized beds and an open-air deck.

While all this sounds a bit family friendly -- and it is, the resort has its own kids club opening soon -- Montigo's **Tiigo Beach Club** is adults-only. In the villas you can remain behind closed doors and enjoy a private plunge pool, indoor stone bathtub (big enough for two and under a skylight) and roof terrace.

Bear in mind staying inside for the night means missing out on a sunset cruise onboard the *Aqua Voyage*.

How to get there: Thirty minutes via yacht from Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal, followed by a five-minute land transfer.

From S\$350 per night; Jl. Hang Lekir Nongsa-Batam, Indonesia; +62 778 776 8888; www.montigoresorts.com

Wellness: Mesa Stila, Magelang, Indonesia

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COURTESY MESA STILA

Mesa Stila is surrounded by eight volcanoes and grows more than four different types of bamboo — a perfect place to start a wellness regime.

You know a resort takes its wellness mantra seriously when it organizes an annual half-marathon that pits runners against paddy fields, mountains, coffee plantations ... and a moving train.

Held in October, the annual Mesa Stila challenge is one of many reasons to decompress at the former Losari Spa Retreat and Coffee Plantation (now called Mesa Stila).

The 55-acre resort is a seamless mesh of natural and man-made beauty.

Similar to Bali's former Begawan Giri estate (now renamed Como Shambhala) and Lunuganga in Bentota, the lush resort is filled with art, antiques and bric-a-brac. The 22 villas are reconstructed from antique Javanese limasan, joglo and kudas wooden houses.

The resort specializes in retreats (programs include cycling, wellness and yoga) and has an award-winning spa. The daily schedule is packed with yoga, pencak silat martial arts classes, coffee plantation tours and, most unusually, a traditional male-and-female hammam spa — a great way to detox.

How to get there: Air Asia flies direct to Yogyakarta daily (flight time 2 hours, 20 minutes from Singapore), followed by a 90-minute land transfer.

From US\$200 per night. www.mesahotelsandresorts.com

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