

JULY 2014
TRUTH IN TRAVEL

Condé Nast Traveler

THE AMERICA
ISSUE

33

REASONS TO HIT THE ROAD
THIS SUMMER

DREAMY
COASTAL HOTELS THAT
GET IT RIGHT

MAINE • SEATTLE • GEORGIA • THE AMERICAN WEST

where what how

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM FRANCO

FROM INSPIRATION TO ESCAPE

Our favorite high-design beachside hotels (above) 40

The small-town sophistication of Athens, Georgia 52

Family-style culture and adventure 60

WHERE WHAT HOW



HOTELS WE LOVE

At many seaside hotels, the beach, not the resort, is the main attraction. Perhaps that's as it should be. Nonetheless, the hotel that both complements its beachside setting and holds its own against it remains a rarity. These properties do just that, blending with the superlative stretches of sand and sea they overlook and, with their clean, sharp lines and graphic shapes, offering a stark juxtaposition to the color and lushness of their surroundings. They are also monuments to the two decades after World War II, when their three iconic settings—Hawaii, Miami, and Puerto Rico—were redefining what, and where, a vacation could be. To stay in one of them, then, is not just to experience a great architectural legacy but to follow in the grand tradition of the modern-day sun seeker, who made the tropical getaway a fact of American life. —John Wogan

COOL IN THE HEAT

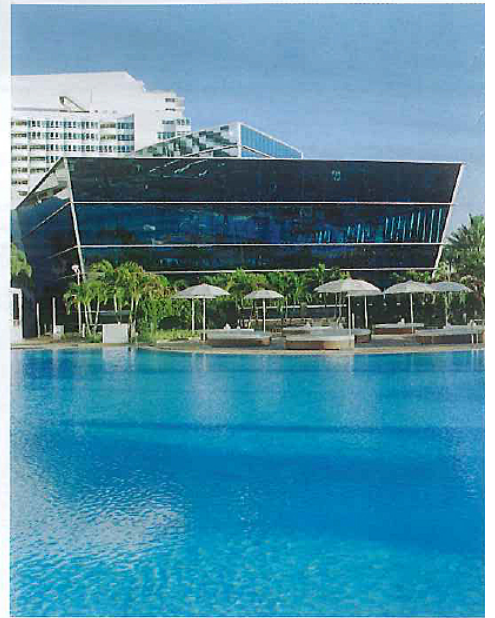
Three of our favorite resorts in Edenic locales prove that modernism in the tropics wasn't just a mid-century fad . . . but a new architectural style built to last.

WHERE WHAT HOW

MAUNA KEA BEACH HOTEL

Big Island, Hawaii

Like many unexpected pairings of architecture and location, the Mauna Kea Beach Hotel (see previous page), on the Big Island's Kohala Coast, shouldn't feel as perfect as it actually does. The scene before you, after all, is Hawaii at its dazzling, primal best: a white beach preceding a sheet of water so blue it hurts your eyes. And yet overlooking it all is a multi-tiered white stucco and lava rock structure, an icon of mid-'60s Brutalist architecture. The Mauna Kea—named for the extinct volcano that looms over the island—was the creation of conservationist and businessman Laurance Rockefeller, who visited the Big Island in 1960 and fell under its spell. Five years later, his Skidmore, Owings and Merrill–designed hotel opened to great fanfare: At \$15 million, it was the most expensive hotel ever built, and quickly became a favorite of the stylish Los Angelenos who flocked to Hawaii after World War II, when the islands became a tourist destination. Today, in an era of *Mad Men*, it feels more relevant than ever. The rooms, decorated in sunny, mod-inspired oranges, have been given a refresh (thanks to a \$150 million renovation in 2008), but the facade and Rockefeller's own 1,600-piece Pacific and Asian art collection—a selection of which is displayed in the public spaces—remain intact. As, of course, does the view. And the beach. And the weather. Everything, in other words, that makes Hawaii what it inimitably is.



FONTAINEBLEAU

Miami Beach, Florida

The massive white curvature of the Fontainebleau has symbolized the decadence and excess of Miami Beach since 1954, when Morris Lapidus created the defining emblem of Miami Modern architecture. Rising starkly against the Atlantic Ocean like a cruise ship at port, the hotel was a base for moneyed snowbirds from the Northeast. But it was the frequent presence of the Rat Pack, along with star turns in *Scarface* and *Goldfinger* (in which James Bond lounged poolside in a cabana), that really solidified

the property's reputation. Today, following a \$1 billion, three-year renovation completed in 2008, Lapidus's radical vision is attracting yet another generation of fans. The two new towers, which flank the main structure, bring the number of rooms to 1,504 (there are also 12 restaurants, a network of swimming pools, and a \$50 million spa), but the soul of the Fontainebleau—in all its flashy, opulent glory—is in the details, both old and new: the signature bow tie motif of the marble lobby floor; the famous "staircase to

nowhere" (originally constructed with the sole purpose of allowing couture ball gowns and the women wearing them to make a head-turning entrance); the James Turrell light sculpture behind the concierge desk; chandeliers designed by Ai Weiwei; and LIV, the two-story mega nightclub. Lying by the immense main pool among the see-and-be-seen revelers, while a DJ-of-the-moment spins, you get the sense that, as in Lapidus's era, this is what it feels like to be at the center of it all in Miami Beach.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBIN HILL; PAUL COSTELLO (3)



DORADO BEACH

Dorado, Puerto Rico

In the '60s, the Dorado Beach Hotel—a 1,400-acre resort on a former citrus and coconut plantation on Puerto Rico's north coast, 30 miles west of San Juan—was a tropical playground for Hollywood stars like Elizabeth Taylor and Joan Crawford (not to mention an occasional getaway for John F. Kennedy). This was another modernist hideaway conceived by Laurance Rockefeller, who saw Puerto Rico as a fitting alternative to post-Castro Cuba and was one of the first to bring a mid-century design aesthetic to the region, which was dominated by a more

traditional, colonial-inspired look. While the project was a success in its time, the hotel slowly decayed throughout the '80s, losing its celebrity luster before eventually fading from the spotlight and finally closing in 2006.

But in 2012, the glamour returned full force after a ground-up rebuild by Ritz-Carlton. With 114 rooms and suites, the latter housed in sleek two-story villas built of coral stone, the newly redesigned Dorado Beach takes its mid-century design cues from Rockefeller's original resort. Each room has direct access to the hotel's private

white sand beach, and every ground-floor unit has its own plunge pool, which complements the geometric lines and soft palette of the buildings themselves. And like the villas that seem to be at one with the landscape, the contemporary art scattered around the grounds (such as the collection of geometric cubes by Puerto Rican artist Carlos Mercado, perched on a lawn, and the mermaid chiseled from stone by Milton Rosa Ortiz) and in the rooms (the sculptures by Kiki Smith) feels oddly at home here. Yes, legacy is something to celebrate—but so too is innovation. ♦

STAY

Dorado Beach, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve

100 Dorado Beach Dr., Dorado; 787-626-1100; ritzcarlton.com; doubles from \$800.

Fontainebleau

4441 Collins Ave., Miami Beach; 305-538-2000; fontainebleau.com; doubles from \$300.

Mauna Kea Beach Hotel

62-100 Mauna Kea Beach Dr., Waimea; 808-882-7222; princeresorts.hawaii.com; doubles from \$400.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM FRANCO