

TRIP IDEAS > ISLAND VACATIONS

A New Private Island Opened in French Polynesia in 2021 — and We Got a First Look

The ultra-luxe property is highly Instagrammable, with eco-chic digs and a cerulean lagoon.

By [Stephanie Vermillion](#) | Updated on October 22, 2022

Fact checked by [Elizabeth MacLennan](#)

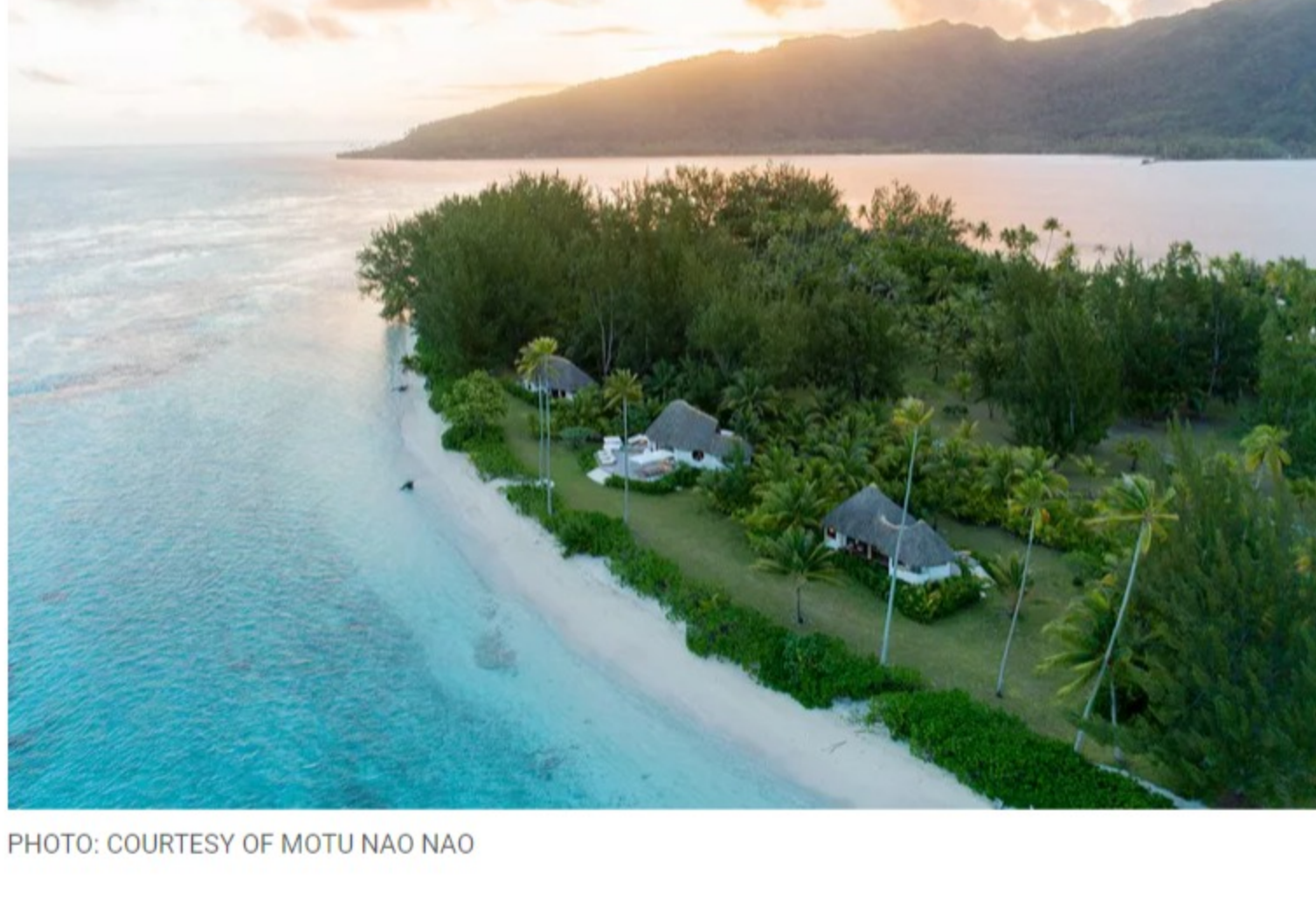


PHOTO: COURTESY OF MOTU NAO NAO

Paradise got a little more perfect with the opening of French Polynesia's newest private island, [Motu Nao Nao](#), a 75-acre motu (reef islet) brimming with South Pacific splendor.

This luxe getaway, located in the lagoon of Raiatea, is as eco-friendly as it is awe-inspiring. It welcomed its first official guests in December 2021 — and I stopped by for a first look just weeks before that (and only agreed to leave knowing a trip to [Bora Bora](#), a 20-minute flight from Raiatea, was on the horizon).

Rentable on an exclusive basis for no more than six guests at once, Motu Nao Nao promises the ultimate [private island](#) experience. But privacy merely scratches the surface when it comes to its perks.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MOTU NAO NAO

Posh Polynesian Architecture

I took Air Tahiti's 45-minute flight from Pape'ete to [Raiatea](#), where I caught a complimentary transfer boat to Motu Nao Nao. That tranquil lagoon ride was dazzling enough to take my breath away — and I hardly got it back before the island's architecturally immaculate villas left me speechless once again.

Motu Nao Nao's three thatch-roof villas are the brainchild of Polynesian designer Alain Fleurot. They blend modern flair, from soaring ceilings to minimalistic exteriors, with Polynesian flavor, including the washed-up coral that accents each villa's walls. (The captain of our boat fastened each tiny piece of coral by hand.)



PHOTO: COURTESY OF STEPHANIE VERMILLION

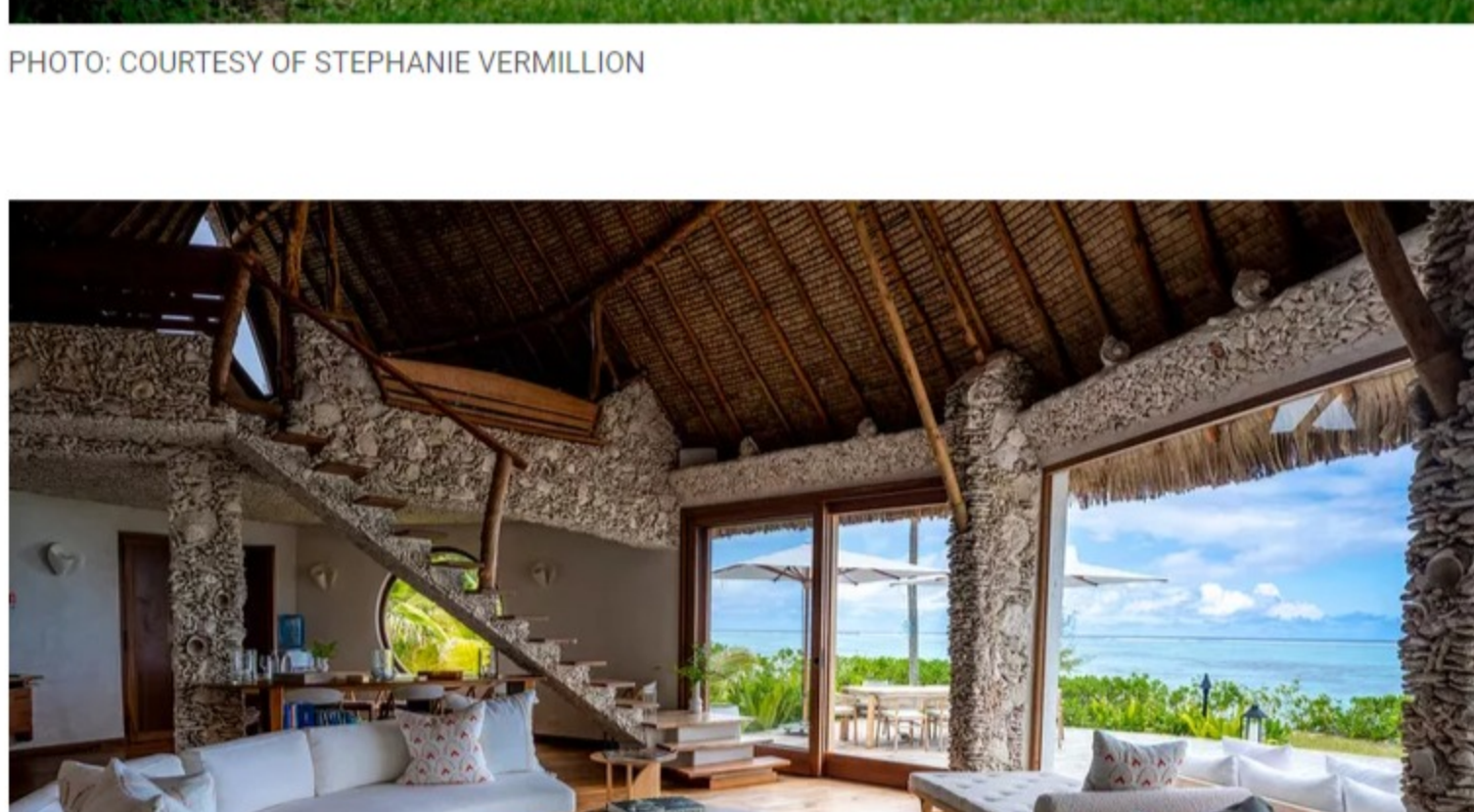
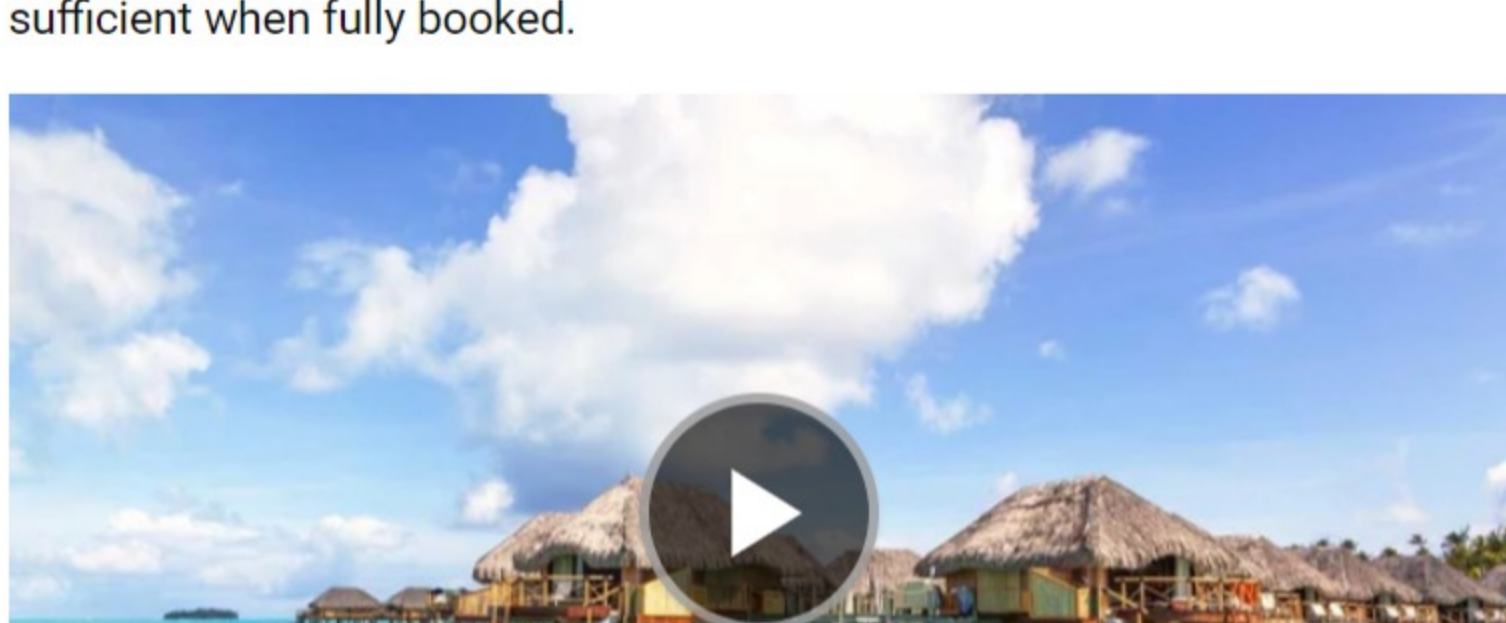


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Fleurot kept the hues here simple. The stars of the show — the shimmering, crystal-clear lagoon and lush green palms — bring ample color pops that complement the white-and-tan aesthetic. In fact, the dining area, living room, and even bathrooms boast floor-to-ceiling windows, although the posh ocean-view patios make it tough to go inside.

Style Meets Sustainability Meets Delicious Farm-to-table Food

The aesthetics are impeccable, but Motu Nao Nao's beauty is more than skin deep — starting with the property's [hyper-focus on sustainability](#). The island is 100% self-sufficient with no guests, and it remains 83% self-sufficient when fully booked.



Motu Nao Nao's locally sourced cuisine is another case study in sustainability. Wilfrid Kobylt, who's just as much an artist as he is the property's private chef, grows about 30 edible plants on the motu; he raises chickens here as well. Kobylt takes advantage of Motu Nao Nao's easy lagoon access, whether it's to make his own salt from the local seawater or to create a delicious, fresh fish concoction like smoked king mackerel, a salmon and fruit salad, or the local Tahitian favorite: *poisson cru*, raw fish in lime juice and coconut milk. Don't miss the hand-carved melon — Kobylt's signature artistic dessert.

Adventure by Day, Indulge by Night

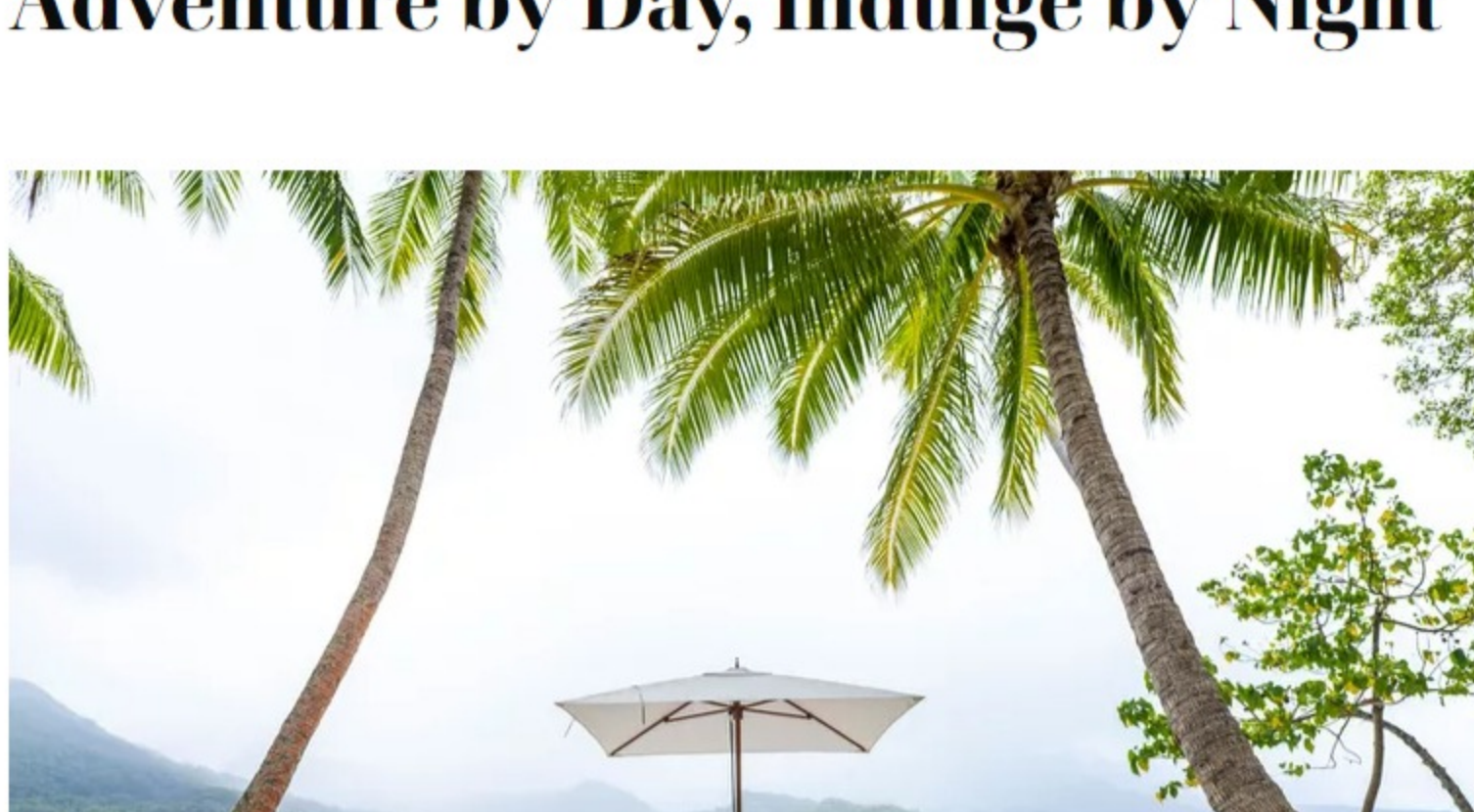


PHOTO: COURTESY OF STEPHANIE VERMILLION

From 75 palm-dotted acres to sandy lagoon-front beaches, Motu Nao Nao is teeming with adventure potential. You can bike the island trails, kayak, paddleboard, or even snorkel with mesmerizing rays, vibrant fish, and small blacktip reef sharks — all steps from the shore.

Motu Nao Nao can also help book excursions, including visits to Raiatea's local pearl farms, private dives, jet-skiing tours, and a hands-on paddle experience with Polynesian v'a'a canoe.

No matter how you spend your days, though, don't miss nights on the villa patios, where cocktails mixed with fresh ingredients from Kobylt's garden promise serious private island bliss.

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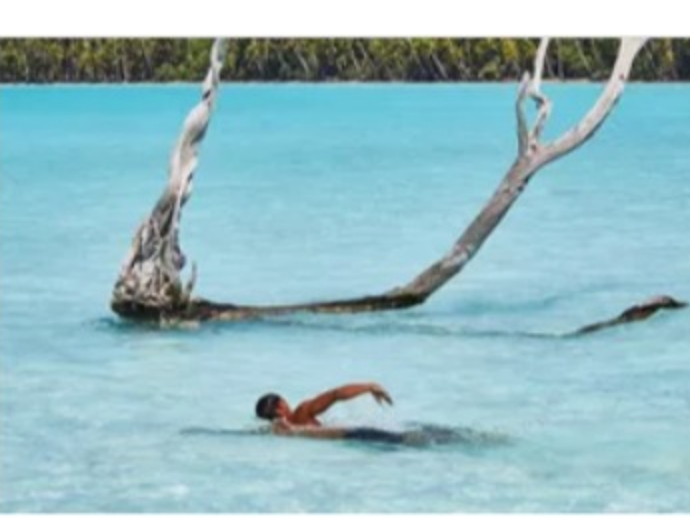
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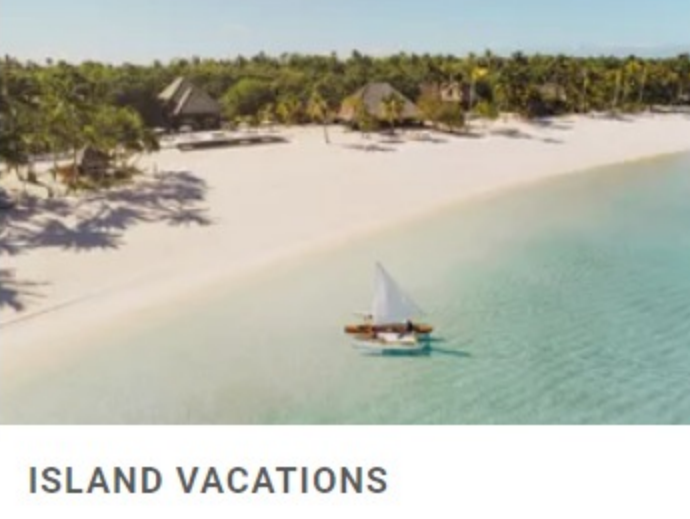
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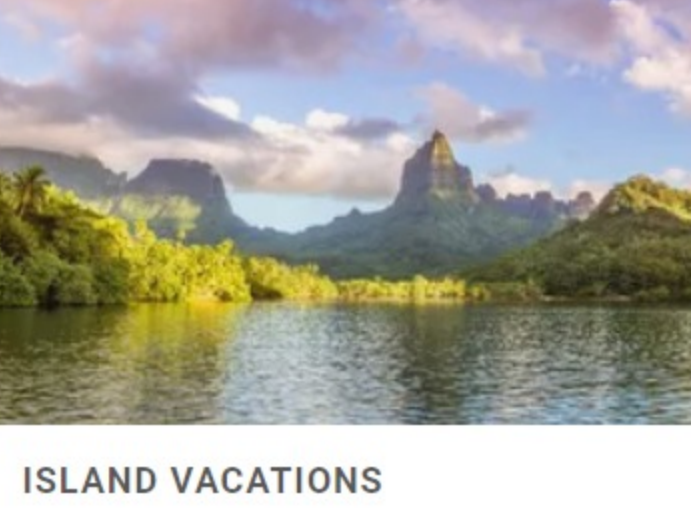
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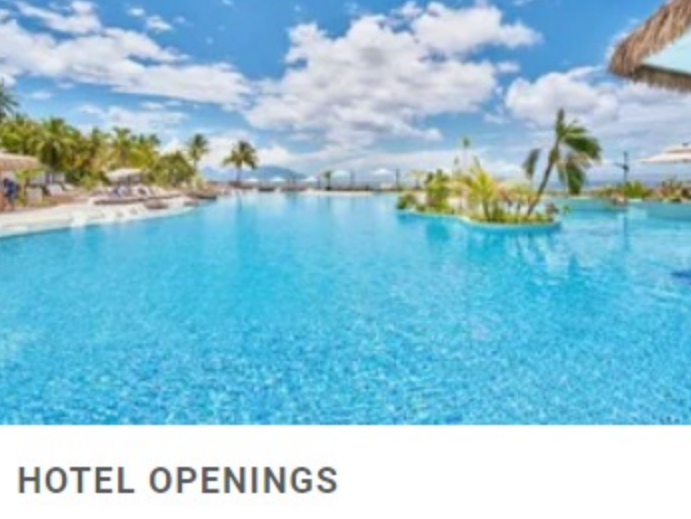
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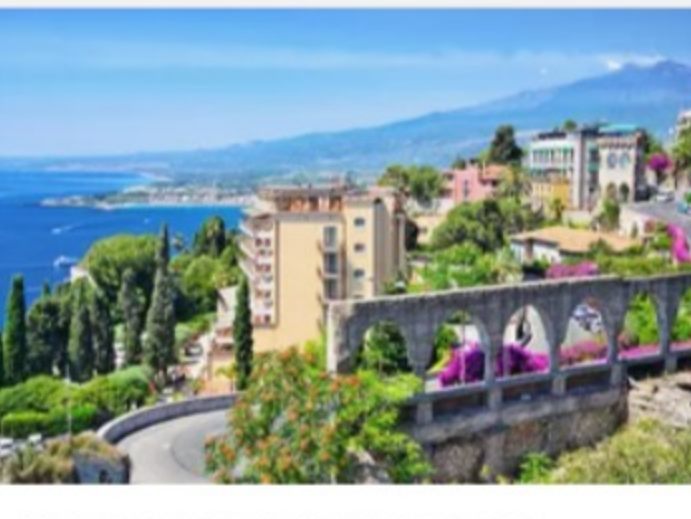
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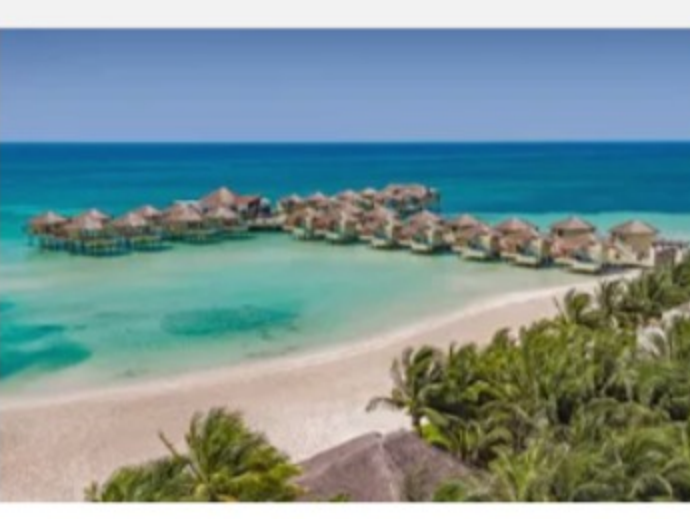
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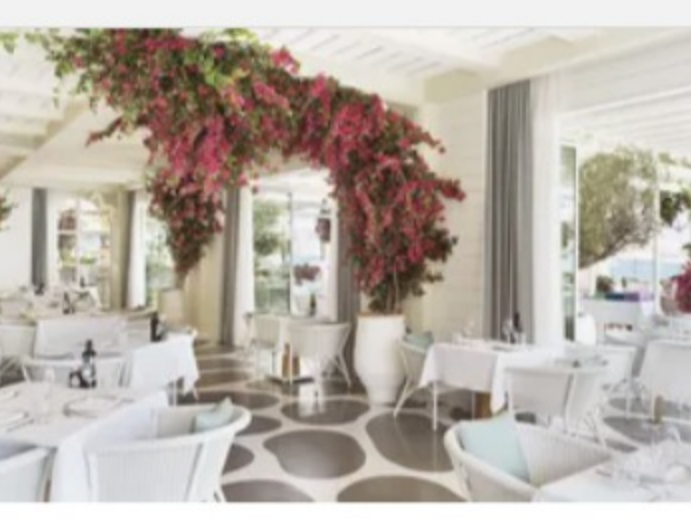
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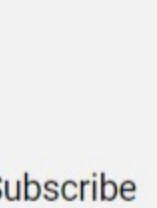
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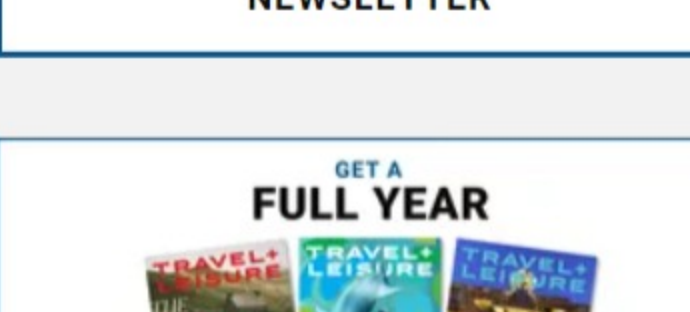
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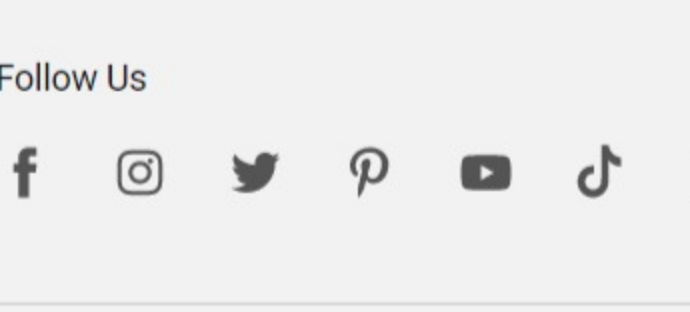
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