

‘The White Lotus’ Season 3 Jets to Thailand. Here’s What We Want to See

Has Mike White been rewatching *The Beach*?



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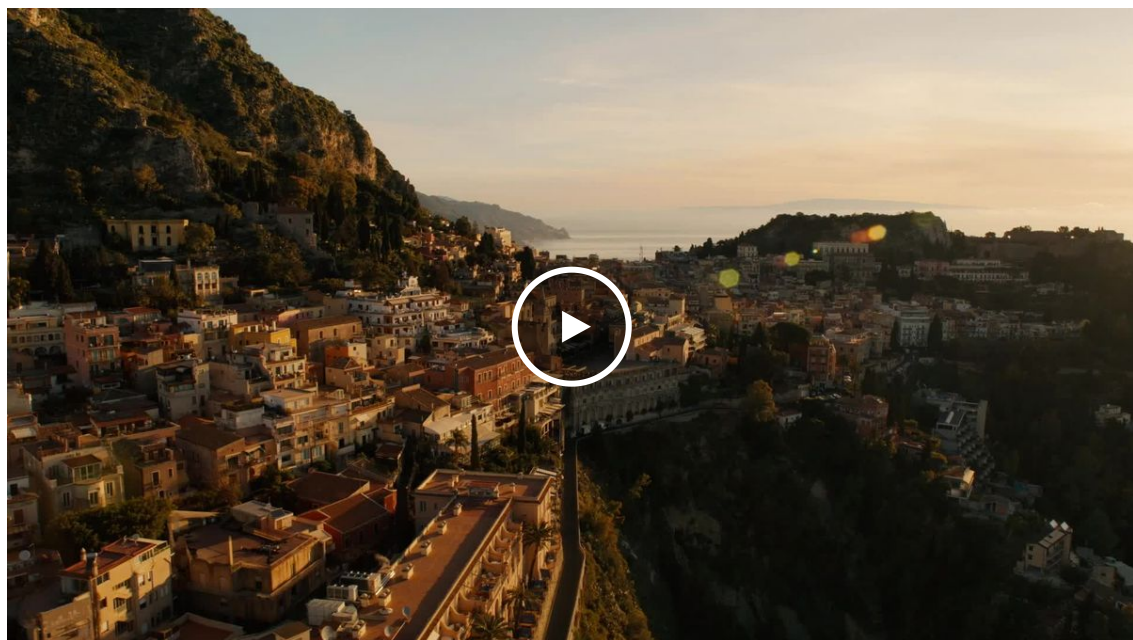


Fabio Lovino/HBO

In this long, drizzly stretch of March, you would be forgiven for only having one thing on your mind: a holiday. Perhaps a long weekend in Europe, or some endless white beach. Maybe a city break, with access to an infinity pool. Mike White, creator of HBO’s *The White Lotus*, is one step ahead of you, once again.

[Deadline](#) and [Variety](#) are reporting that the new series has a far-flung setting: Thailand.

It certainly makes logistical sense: there are four branches of the Four Seasons hotels, the luxury chain where the drama’s first two seasons were filmed, in Thailand. White could choose from spots in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, the island of Koh Samui, and a retreat in the north of the country. That final spot, the Four Seasons Golden Triangle, is described as a “a magical escape in tented camp luxury”, which is probably a far cry from a Duke of Edinburgh expedition to Wales, and an ideal spot for potential rich-person hijinks.



Even though HBO has yet to comment, none of this comes as a total surprise. In late January, White filmed a video for Instagrammer Evan Ross Katz, who regularly posts screen caps of the show, from a Thai beach thanking him for being “a king” (okay, sure!). And in a behind-the-scenes video posted after the Season 2 finale, White said that he’d be interested in a “satirical and funny look at death in Eastern religion and spirituality” for the next outing. “It feels like it could be a rich tapestry to do another round at the White Lotus,” he added, presumably scrolling a *Lonely Planet* guide to gap year destinations.

Thailand itself has long been a target for culture, and those traipsing in the footsteps of cultural heroes. Alex Garland’s 1996 novel *The Beach*, a cult classic you find dog-eared in dank hostel bars, turned the backpacker’s search for paradise into a noble, nightmarish, irresistible pursuit. The critically-panned (and, I would argue, underrated) film adaptation starring Leonardo DiCaprio confirmed Thailand’s status as a far-off paradise, filled with both dreams and horrors, and more importantly: nice beaches. (The actual location where *The Beach* was filmed, Maya Bay, was closed in 2018 because of overcrowding, but has since reopened.)

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It's impossible not to recall Season 1's confused handling of race when thinking about this new season. White was on much safer, and rewarding, ground with his exploration of sexual power dynamics in Season 2. But it would be wrong to doubt White, and he's pleasingly malleable, not averse to changing tack when inspiration strikes. In an interview with NPR, he explained how actually being in Sicily made him pivot from an exploration of power dynamics to what he calls "an operatic kind of bedroom farce". It's entirely possible that he's immersed himself in luxury Thai resort and realised he's not interested in Eastern religion, but, to take one example that springs immediately to mind, the spa industry. And against the backdrop of lazier depictions of Thailand in western culture – from *The Hangover Part II* to the *Bridget Jones's Diary* sequel – White has an opportunity to say something fresh.

Exactly who will be checking in once more to the hotel remains to be seen, though a couple of people are unlikely to redeem their loyalty points. Tanya (Jennifer Coolidge), the thread between Season 1 and 2, met her watery end in the season finale, and it would be bold for her sketchy husband Greg (Jon Gries) to show his face once more.

I can't quite imagine any of last season's central foursome, played by Aubrey Plaza, Will Sharpe, Meghann Fahy and Theo James, to return, at least not in that configuration. (And the actors all seem very busy: Sharpe is directing a film adaptation of Michelle Zauner's *Crying in H Mart*, and Fahy has a TV project with Nicole Kidman). Likewise, it might seem like a retread to revisit Season 1's dismal lovers Rachel and Shane (Alexandra Daddario and Jake Lacy).



HBO

It would be a thrill to see *Euphoria*'s Sydney Sweeney as Olivia again, perhaps meeting her parents, played by Connie Britton and

Steve Zahn, after a post-college year of travelling. Likewise, it would be hard to resist the messy charm of Haley Lu Richardson's assistant Portia, though working out how she might be staying in a luxury resort might be harder to manage. Perhaps her fledgeling relationship with Adam DiMarco's hapless Albie blossomed into something serious? But really, we would be happiest to reunite with last season's victorious party girls, Mia and Lucia, played by Beatrice Grannò and Simona Tabasco. They deserve a break!