

**Best home-away-from-home setting:** Villa Castello, Anse Kerlan Beach, Praslin Seychelles.

We felt very much at home here. The villa was styled in such a way that on entering the grounds, you got the impression of a house amidst a tropical garden of palm trees, hibiscus plants, bougainvillea and other indigenous trees.

But, once inside the villa, the living, dining room and two bedrooms open out onto a lovely, long veranda, a swimming pool made from rocks and a lush green garden that lead to the beautiful white sand and sea of the private beach.

Those of us whose rooms were on the ground level, slept with the doors and windows ajar and enjoyed the sea breeze, occasional torrential rain, lush lawn, trees and the crashing sound of the waves in the distance. It was absolutely paradise.

**Ultra modern décor and amenities:** Villa 29, Frond E, Palm Jumeriah, Dubai  
Frond 29E sits on a man-made island off the shores of Dubai and from the outside, this could be any luxury accommodation in any large city.

But, as you enter the foyer with its contemporary chandelier hanging above your head to the fine details of the décor, which was a fusion of contemporary elegance with 60's styled pieces, exuded time, money and effort had been invested in this place.

From the computerised stereo system that enabled music to waft through every room, to the home-styled cinema room where the children could watch stacks of 3Dmovies through 3D glasses, to the coffee maker that came with its own specialty coffees, to the air conditioning that was digitally controlled, we immediately stepped into another world.

At the end of the day, no matter where we've stayed the most important factor has been that we are all together sometime during the year because in this world, there's nothing like family.

Unfortunately my mother passed away suddenly this year, March 17, 2011 but we shall continue this tradition because she was the stalwart of our trips and would hate to think we would stop on account of her.

Today, many of our friends and family have begun to do the same as a result of us. My message to you is to find ways of doing things with close friends and family because, they are all that we have and can leave us suddenly with no forewarning.

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<sup>i</sup> Porte-fenetre: Windows that open out as doors usually made of glass.

<sup>ii</sup> Jalousie: Window with parallel glass, acrylic or wood

## 6. Unbearable heat

For reasons stated, these are our top four (4) out of seven villas we've stayed in so far (those not mentioned did not 'wow' us or were either homes or hotels).

**Best location:** Villa # 1, Plantation Beach Villas, Stonehaven Bay, Black Rock, Scarborough, Tobago, West Indies

This remains a strong favourite. It was the very first villa we rented and the one that set the standard.

The contrast of living in a double-storey plantation house set in lush, green, tropical, vegetation with exotic blooms with the most picturesque view of our private beach and the most remarkable weather was sensational.

The quiet and tranquility of the resort throughout our stay gave it an exclusivity that remains unparalleled. We felt cordoned off from the rest of the world, which was exactly what we wanted.

It was Xmas time and the staff had added a nice touch by putting a nicely decorated tree with faux gifts underneath it in the living room. The best feature of the house was the wrap-around veranda where we lounged or ate our meals and the staff and management were there at our beck and call.

What more could we ask for?

**Best architectural plan and best use of materials from the environment:** Villa Loiki, Matemwe, Zanzibar

A very spacious, open plan villa with porte-fenêtres<sup>i</sup>, jalousies<sup>ii</sup> and verandas on both floors; built to experience every aspect of the beautiful sea and lush garden no matter where you were in the villa.

Every room overlooked the sea or the beautiful garden outdoors. The architect ensured the experience of the outdoors being indoors and utilized materials indigenous to the village and the island.

The verandas on each floor enabled us to sit outside and enjoy the occasional torrential storm in December, eat dinner under the stars or simply lounge.

The wood used to build the villa was from the local breadfruit tree; the concrete floors were stained red with locally grown red henna seeds. The concrete patio around the pool was filled with shells and coral from the beach; the décor in the villa used coconut shells, wood and bamboo from the island, the shower stalls were made from slate from the island and that wasn't all.

### Sample #3: Tourism (non-fiction)

#### **Private Holiday Villas: Top 4**

At the end of each year my family of ten (my parents, my sister and her husband, my brother, his wife and three children) set off to some exotic location to escape the humdrum of everyday life. We have been doing this since the death of my older brother ten years ago. Instead of meeting at my parents' house for Xmas we now travel around the world together.

We've always chosen villas because we are a big family that loves home cooking as much as we like to eat out, love the outdoors as well as a good lie-in and we are all such 'individuals' we each need our space to do whatever we feel and villas provide these options.

As time has gone on, we have been able to fine-tune our likes and dislikes about the villas we have stayed in. The key for us is that our villa must be spacious and comfortable because we spend an equal amount of time in it as we do out of it and the whole point of our trips is fun and relaxation.

Top twelve things we demand:

1. Villa on a private beach (2 minutes away is just too far for us).
2. 5 bedrooms. 3 is a little cramped but we've managed
3. Sunny, 25+centigrade weather, no flies and mosquitoes preferably.
4. Swimming pool (especially for the children).
5. Housekeeper
6. Driver and 4x4. Otherwise, we've found its better to rent two decent cars instead of one van because we don't always want to do the same things.
7. Internet service
8. Satellite TV
9. All modern amenities (washer, dryer, dishwasher, family-size fridge/freezer, en-suite bathrooms, spacious kitchen with all modern gadgets)
10. Good home theatre or stereo system (we travel armed with Ipods, Wii's, digital games, movies etc.)
11. Water activities, bars, clubs and restaurants accessible, close enough but not near our villa (A five minute walk or drive is reasonable).
12. No cold weather

Things we don't like:

1. Swimming pools with a heating option that never works
2. Lazy staff (sanitation is key)
3. Tiny kitchens and tiny rooms
4. Child and senior citizen-unfriendly villas e.g. slippery floors, steep and dangerous staircases.
5. Flies and mosquitoes