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by Fiona Harper

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Travel writer Fiona Harper puts the humble hammock to the test, to find the best hammocking holiday hot spots.

Admittedly hammocking is not really a word. But still, it conjures up an enticing image doesn't it? Strung between two palm trees on a sun-drenched beach cooled by trade winds, hammocks are the stuff of relaxed tropical holiday dreams. Is there a more chilled out way to sink into holiday mode? Add a good book, a comfy pillow and some good old fashioned smartphone-free solitude for some personal 'me time'.

We put the humble hammock to the test as we kick back in hammocking holiday hot spots you should check out for your summer vacation.

## 1. Palm Cove, Queensland



Officially a beachside suburb of Cairns, Palm Cove is a well-known haunt of the rich and famous for good reason. The small village shaded by melaleuca trees and coconut palms is gorgeous. Those coconut palms are to blame for Palm Cove becoming one of Queensland's most photographed beachfronts. They're also rather conveniently spaced for stringing a hammock between them.

## 2. Orpheus Island

A national park island within the Palm Island Group, Orpheus Island is also home to the uber plush Orpheus Island Resort. Accessible by helicopter from Cairns or Townsville, Orpheus is a favourite with foodies who like to indulge in tropical island seclusion. Head Chef Arie Prabowo is a major drawcard while Maggie Beer is known to drop in. The beachfront bespoke resort faces west with a number of mandatory palm trees dividing a grass area around the swimming pool from beach. With hammocks strung considerably between the palms, it's a favoured spot for sundowners for loved up couples sharing a hammock.

## 3. Hobart

Credit: woodbridgenn.com.au

Hobart? What's Hobart doing on a list of idyllic hammocking spots you're probably wondering? We threw it in as a teaser for those who shun tropical beaches in favour of cool climate relaxation. There are few more soothing places to chill out in a hammock besides the upper reaches of Hobart's Derwent River.

Woodbridge on the Derwent was a ramshackle old ruin (c. 1825) before the current owners took on the mammoth restoration. The grand Georgian mansion we see today is enjoyed by maximum 16 guests in an enchanting hotel furnished with antiques and artefacts from across the globe. A member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, it's the kind of place where you'd curl up with a local pinot noir and perhaps a side plate of local cheeses, plump up the cushions and thank your lucky stars you found this sanctuary.

## 4. Malolo Island Fiji

Fiji is synonymous with chilled out vibes so it comes as no surprise to find Malolo Island Resort in the Yasawa Islands making our list. With an uninterrupted beachfront view of Fiji's famous sunsets, Malolo Island Resort does beach house style with a hefty dash of Fijian hospitality. Palm trees are strewn between beach house-style rooms and the beach features inviting hammocks. The resort is popular with families thanks to an innovative kids club that keeps kids entertained from dawn to dusk. With the kids taken care of that leaves plenty of relaxation time for parents. Yes, you guessed it, hammock time is highly sought after by stressed out parents who stretch out with a longed-to-read book in uninterrupted peace and quiet. Can you feel the serenity?

## 5. Bali

Bali is probably not the first place you'd think of when it comes to chilled out hammock time – it's far better known for its shopping, nightlife, restaurants and beachfront bars pumping out flamboyant cocktails along with ubiquitous doof doof. However, travel beyond the tourist strip and you'll come across the tranquillity that attracted travellers to Bali in the first place. Candi Dasa on the east coast is our tip for slinging a hammock, particularly if you're also keen on snorkelling or scuba diving in between hammock sessions. You could also try outlying areas of Ubud where private villas have sprung up overlooking lush valleys' terraced with rice fields. Perfect for some hammock contemplation time.

## 6. Tahiti

There are few countries that conjure up lazy holiday hammocking dreams like Tahiti does. We've been salivating over their sun-drenched lifestyle ever since the mutinous boys from the Bounty tossed aside their Captain in favour of returning to Tahiti and its hedonism. Who can really blame them – Tahiti is every bit as beautiful in the flesh as it is in those dreamy brochures in travel agent windows.

With Papeete the arrival port for most visitors, our advice is to hop straight onto another aircraft or boat and carry on to nearby Moorea Island or anywhere in the Leeward Group (this is where you'll find gorgeous Bora Bora). Better still board the passenger carrying cargo ship Aranui 3 and string up a hammock in the rigging as you cruise the Marquesas Archipelago.

## 7. Samoa

Known as the friendly isles, Samoa slips under the radar when it comes to 'most visited tropical-paradise' lists. Which is kind of the way the locals like it. Don't get me wrong, happy-go-lucky Samoans are every bit as welcoming as their moniker alludes to. It's just that Samoans are pretty laid back and they seem content to let the world get on with itself without their interference. After all, they're well aware that they live in paradise though they seriously don't mind sharing some hammocking space with the travellers that do venture to their shores. There's no shortage of coconut palms to string them from that's for certain.

## 8. Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Another little island gem not short on coconut palms are the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. One of Australia's island territories, Cocos are geographically closer to Indonesia than they are to the Australian mainland, ensuring a multi-cultural Cocos Malay flavour.

The archipelago is made up of a string of atolls and fringing reef circling a vast central lagoon. Thanks to consistent trade winds and this shallow lagoon, kite surfers flock to Cocos from across the planet. So too divers, snorkellers, surfers, bird watchers and sailors. Hammockers aren't left out of the equation. The clue is in the name. Cocos as in coconut trees – there's a gazillion of them. A former thriving copra industry (operations ceased in 1987) was built upon the abundant coconut palms. If you can't find two suitably spaced to string a hammock, well, you're really not trying.

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