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NEWS

TWO PHUKET GEMS, EXPLORING GRENADA AND A NEW RESORT IN VIETNAM

BAY WATCH

Pansea Bay doesn't appear on many maps of Phuket – and that's just how its owners like it. This picturesque slip of beach on the west coast of Thailand's most popular resort island is home to two hotels that like to keep their secret to themselves and their guests.

The first is Amanpuri – the property that 24 years ago launched the Aman brand. Remarkably, it has retained its fresh appeal. The timeless architecture and strict maintenance regime keeps standards high throughout the many public areas, such as the expansive spa, the new gym and Pilates studio, as well as the 40 Pavilions and 30 Villa Homes.

An Amanpuri villa isn't all it seems. A Villa Home is in fact a large compound with two to six bedrooms in which each is a single Thai-style house; it's a great place to celebrate a big family occasion or holiday with friends. In the centre of the compound is a sizable pool and a communal living sala set in well-tended gardens. Some also have a 'sunset sala' from which you can watch night fall over the Andaman Sea with an Amantini in hand.

On the south of Pansea Bay, The Surin has recently completed a two-stage renovation that has seen the former Chedi transformed into a light, modern property with more



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT
Pansea Bay, Phuket. A villa
interior at The Surin. Views of
the Andaman from a sunset sala
at Amanpuri. A Pool Pavilion

facilities and a higher standard of accommodation – of a more affordable kind than Aman. The 103 one- and 25 two-bedroom suites and cottages, designed by Edward Tuttle (who also created Amanpuri), nestle into a hillside dense with mature trees. Walkways connect the villas, which are cleverly positioned to maintain guests' privacy, while the bright interiors are



accented with furnishings in gold and saffron Jim Thompson silk. A spa is due for completion in October.

Although the resorts are quite separate, Surin guests may charter Amanpuri's elegant junk, *Sealion*, for a cruise for up to six people in the picturesque Phang Nga Bay. Sail at a happy distance from other day trippers and drop anchor wherever takes your fancy for a dip in the warm, blue-green waters, or explore one of the limestone caves or lagoons by Zodiac.

Doubles at Amanpuri (www.amanresorts.com) cost from £560 per night, including transfers.

Doubles at The Surin (www.thesurinphuket.com), from £155 B&B. Thai Airways flies twice daily to Bangkok on its new Airbus A340-600 with individual in-flight entertainment screens in all classes. Onward travel to Phuket can be arranged using the internal, multi-use Domestic Discover Thailand Airpass. 0844-561 0911; www.thaiairways.co.uk



SPICE OF LIFE Mount Cinnamon in Grenada is offering a complimentary art, history and horticulture tour for guests booking a week-long stay this winter. The one-day tour visits the Underwater Sculpture Park (pictured), created by British artist Jason deCaires Taylor in Molinere Bay, followed by lunch at Mount Edgecombe, a plantation built by Lord Edgecombe of Devon in the late 1700s. Now owned by Mount Cinnamon's proprietor Peter de Savary, the estate has recently been restored. After lunch, guests can swim or sunbathe on the terrace overlooking the Caribbean Sea. *Caribtours* offers seven nights' B&B at Mount Cinnamon Resort & Beach Club from £1,489pp, with flights, transfers and lounge access at Gatwick. 020-7751 0660; www.caribtours.co.uk

Hip hip Hue Banyan Tree opens its first resort in Vietnam on November 1, on the central coast close to the UNESCO World Heritage city of Hue, part of an integrated property with sister brand Angsana. Banyan Tree Lang Cô comprises 32 one-bedroom lagoon villas and 17 one-bedroom beach villas. www.banyan-tree.com

LOCAL SPIRIT One of the finest hotels in Mauritius, Le Prince Maurice, has completed a major refurbishment in time for the new season, including the addition of a second pool and new Sisley Spa with a signature 'Rum Spirit' treatment using rum, sugar cane and cinnamon. www.princemaurence.com