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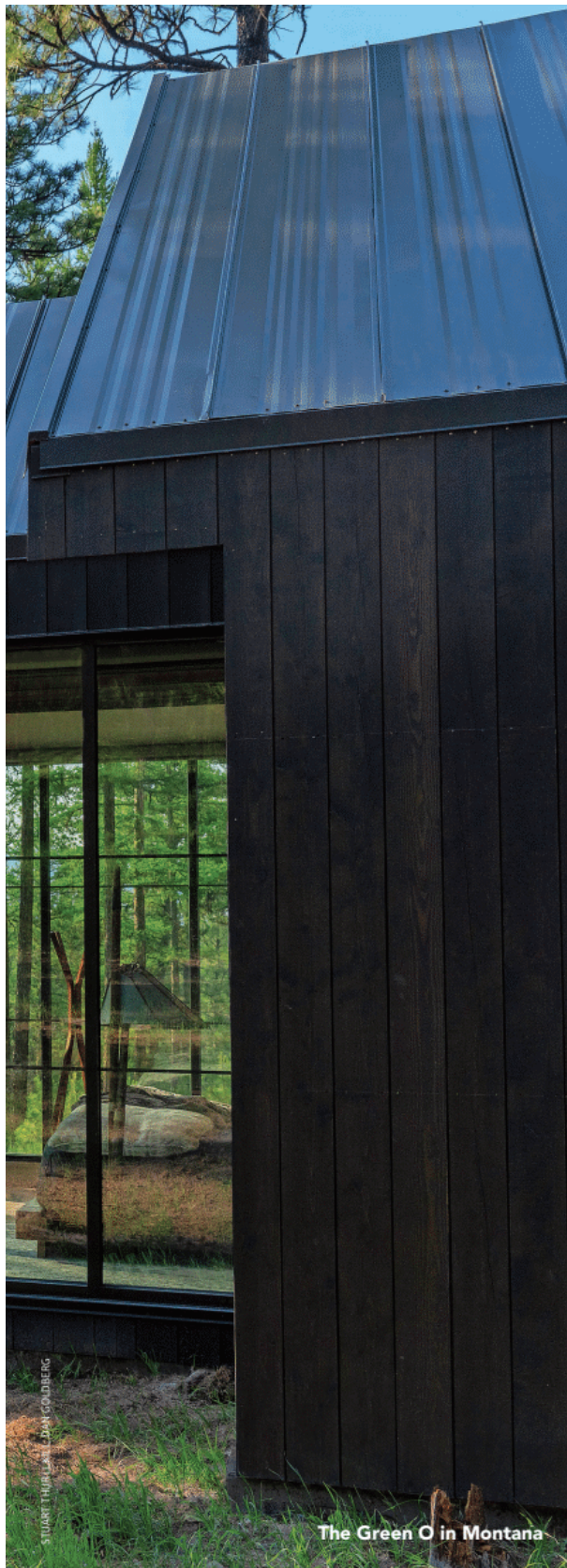
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The Green O in Montana



The Green O chef Brandon Cunningham

Over-the-top accommodations elevate the all-inclusive resort reputation

BY JENNIFER BRADLEY FRANKLIN

IN MY EARLY 20s, a friend and I thought we were fancy, jetting off to an all-inclusive resort in the Dominican Republic. Like many travelers, we appreciated the convenience of the model and thought, "It's simple. We'll know exactly what we're paying upfront."

While we had a great time soaking up the sun and celebrating two decades of friendship, the hotel was a study in mass-produced food, basic rooms and indifferent service. Fortunately, all-inclusives come in all shapes and sizes, and the next generation of resorts in the category is a cut above, catering to those who enjoy the ease of not having to carry a wallet but still appreciate individualized service and thoughtful luxury. Here are some that are setting a new standard:



The Green O Social Haus

The Green O Greenough, Mont.

The wide-open spaces of Montana might not be the first place that comes to mind when you think of an all-inclusive vacation. However, **The Green O**, a resort-within-a-resort on the 37,000-acre Paws Up property in the pristine Blackfoot Valley, is in a class by itself.

While Paws Up is known for being family-friendly, the adults-only Green O is tucked into a gated area in the woods where 12 standalone

villas are surrounded by evergreen trees. Four Scandinavian-inspired designs — from the towering **Tree Haus** to the **Light Haus** with floor-to-ceiling windows — come with a fireplace and cozy living area, outdoor porch, hot tub and a kitchen stocked with snacks (don't sleep on the chef-made ice cream sandwiches you'll find in the freezer). Guests have access to all of the amenities and activities (horseback riding, fishing, archery, hiking, snowmobiling in the winter and more) at Paws Up, so you can

be as busy or as lazy as you like.

While you can eat anywhere as part of your stay, you'll want to take meals at **Social Haus**, where the team of chefs and mixologists elevate every bite and sip to an art form. The team prepares a one-of-a-kind six- to nine-course meal each night, each flawlessly presented. Thoughtful touches are woven throughout, including this standout: The team learns your preferred coffee order and brings a thermos, along with pastries, to your front door as a morning treat.



Grand Velas Riviera Maya



Jumby Bay Island

Jumby Bay Island Antigua

After arriving on this private, 300-acre Caribbean island, just a short boat ride from the Antigua airport, the most stressful thing you'll need to consider is what to do first. Settle into your suite or villa — many come with sea views, plunge pools and outdoor showers — and prepare to be delighted.

With more than 4 miles of sugary shoreline, no one would judge you for simply wanting to relax in the sun. Alternatively, take complimentary bikes to explore the island, borrow snorkeling gear to see what's just below the gentle turquoise waves or book a nature walk with one of the expert gardeners to see the island's flora and fauna, from tropical fruit to sheep and tortoises.

Sip handcrafted cocktails and chilled glasses of Moët & Chandon, the house champagne, and dine at four restaurants where chefs whip up breakfast bowls, fish tacos and gourmet pizzas during the day.

At night, savor fine dining at **The Estate House**, where dishes such as lobster tartare, steak au poivre and yellowfin tuna with sesame-crusted foie gras are served in style.

Grand Velas Riviera Maya Playa Del Carmen, Mexico

At this Mexican-owned boutique hotel brand's AAA Five Diamond-rated resort, all 539 suites come with 24/7 service and a dedicated butler-concierge to handle everything from reservations to excursions.

Set on more than 80 acres of protected land, there's something for every member of the family, with three pools, water sports, two fitness centers and a center for kids and teens to play the days away. There's even a "baby concierge" who can arrange for floats, a crib, traditional Mexican toys and organic foods for the tiniest travelers.

While spa services are not part of the inclusive price, splurging for an hour or two of relaxation is a must. If nothing else, the 89,000-square-foot spa, with its eight-part guided water journey of steam rooms, ice rooms, hot and cold showers and a jetted infinity pool, is worth exploring. Eight on-property restaurants — including five gourmet, fine dining options — are primed to keep guests fueled for however they choose to spend their days.

Bungalows Key Largo

Key Largo, Fla.

For a tropical, adults-only vacation without the hassle of pulling out your passport, this resort on Florida's northernmost Key is just the ticket.

A uniformed porter will whisk you away to one of 135 standalone bungalows. Each mini-residence comes with a petite front porch with Adirondack chairs, a pair of cruising bicycles and an outdoor garden with a shower and vast soaking tub. While there's 1,000 feet of rocky shoreline, multiple pools on the property are favorite hangout spots for soaking up the famously sunny weather. Kayaks, standup paddle boards, group yoga classes and Peloton workouts in the open-air tiki hut are all included, but springing for a sunset trip on the resort's 55-foot catamaran, Lady B., is a worthy upgrade.

Make advance reservations at **Bogie and Bacall's** (the name inspired by the stars of the 1948 film *Key Largo*), the resort's undisputed favorite restaurant. Start with craft cocktails at the **Hemingway Bar** before a multicourse fine dining affair that evokes visions of old Hollywood.

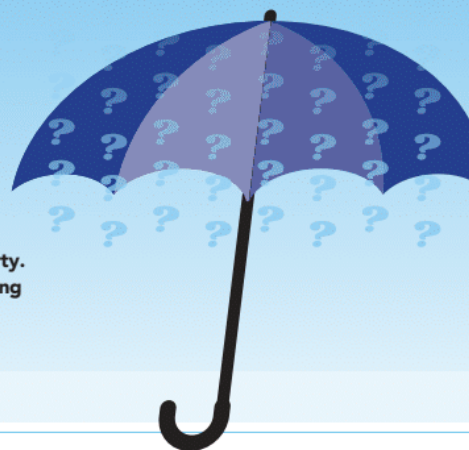


Lady B. at Bungalows Key Largo



Know Before You Go

"ALL-INCLUSIVE" is an umbrella term that encompasses various models. It can have different meanings, depending on the property. Here are some questions to ask before booking so there won't be any surprises:





Boathouse room
at The Point

► **How is gratuity handled?** Some properties, such as The Green O, have a no-tipping policy ("all staff members are well-compensated and highly valued by the management and owners," a pre-arrival note states). Others, such as Bungalows Key Largo, provide a gratuity check to sign after every service, meal or drink.

► **What activities are included?** Among the joys of vacationing are the experiences you have with your companions. Make sure you know what comes with your inclusive package so you can plan to add anything you're dying to do. At Jumby Bay, windsurfing, kayaking tours and even a two-hour snorkeling trip to neighboring Bird Island are part of the room rate, but enrolling in the more intensive Jumby Bay Sailing Academy requires an additional fee.



The Point

Upper Saranac Lake, N.Y.

This standard-bearer of old-money luxury isn't new: This luxurious property was originally built as an Adirondack lakeside getaway for William Avery Rockefeller II in the early 1930s. In 1983, it became the first Relais & Châteaux hotel in North America, and it now offers 11 uniquely designed guest rooms and suites spread across the 75-acre estate.

Don't let the historic log structures fool you: This is not roughing it. The buildings are filled with original art and fine antiques; meals are elegant, multicourse affairs with wine pairings (two nights per week) where guests wear black-tie attire as an homage to bygone eras' tradition of dressing for dinner. Even well-behaved pets are welcomed at no additional charge. It's like a high-end camp for adults.

In the spring and summer, guests might spend their days boating, fishing, wakeboarding, swimming and hiking. In the cool weather seasons, ice skating, cross-country skiing, playing pool or relaxing around a bonfire are popular pastimes. Thoughtful extras (included, of course) from caviar tastings on a historic boat to foraging tours with the chef are all designed to enhance the experience.