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26 most extravagant vacations around the world

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A view from: [Lily Rogers](#)  
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# Blowing your tax return in luxe locales

Let's face it: tax season is rarely fun for anyone. However, if you're one of the lucky few who will see a return this year (especially if it's a hefty one), this list is for you. After toiling day in and day out, practicing frugal living, and learning tax code like a pro, your bank account has seen a bump, and you're ready for the extravagantly pampering break of a lifetime.

Luxury is in the eye of the beholder, but we know a good thing when we see it. That's why we've scoured our resources and travel expertise to find some of the swankiest, most relaxing, beautifully lavish places to take your mind off your money and your money off your mind. Here's our list (in no particular order) of the perfect spots to spend your tax return on travel, where money is no object and luxury knows no bounds.

### 1. [Udaipur, India](#)



This is a city steeped in visual splendor, from the backdrop of the Aravalli Range to idyllic lakefront settings, everywhere the eye lands, loveliness lies. Palaces and gardens, such as the 100-acre Gulab Bagh

with its celebrated rose beds, envelop visitors in aesthetic riches. You don't have to leave beauty at the door if you stay at The Oberoi Udaivilas on the banks of glittering Lake Pichola. Sun-sprinkled walkways connect domed buildings and the grounds, which feature a 20-acre wildlife sanctuary. Take a walk along Lake Pichola, and land at Ambrai Restaurant, where only the view rivals the food for most enjoyable experience. If misery loves company, bliss appreciates alone time. Go on a [private tour to Ranakpur Jain Temple](#) and experience the joy of guided sightseeing like a VIP.

## 2. [Mahe Island, Seychelles](#)

Light, breezy, verdant, and plush not only describe Mahe Island, but the resorts that dot its shores. Kempinski Seychelles Resort, for instance, boasts stylishly relaxed décor and big windows that open onto views of green gardens and the crystal sea. Unwinding is the watchword at the spa, where guests are encouraged to take time in the relaxation garden after treatments. There are several on-site bars and restaurants, but if you venture out for a bite, try Opera Restaurant 3 miles north for flavorful fish cooked in local spices. Attempt to score an invite to their members-only Laguna Lounge for entertainment and cocktails that will leave you with behind-the-velvet-rope vibes.

## 3. [Aspen, Colorado](#)



Not all luxury must be of the waterfront variety, and Aspen offers ample proof. Though Hotel Jerome features a fabulous pool, its indoor charms set a spectacular scene that gives the stunning mountain landscape a run for its money. Speaking of “run,” those at Aspen Mountain are legendary and appeal to world-class skiers and celebrities alike. For some apres-ski decadence, go for cocktails and caviar (or the caviar cocktail) at the Monarch, and toast to figuring out how to spend a tax refund with aplomb. Make friends with a member, or join Caribou Club yourself, where you should certainly splurge on some Dom Pérignon. Heaven on Earth Spa can sort you out if you hit the slopes (or the sips) too hard, with curated spa packages that rejuvenate tired skin and achy muscles.

#### 4. [Saariselkä, Finland](#)

Priceless experiences can be of-the-moment or the result of careful planning. Hopefully you will find both in Finnish Lapland. Put snowmobiling and animal tours with Lapland Safaris on your itinerary, and there is no telling what you’ll see or feel out in the open snowy land.



You can prepare for magical moments at Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort in whatever form they take. From glimpsing the northern lights from a reindeer-drawn sleigh or the comfort of a private glass-domed igloo to skiing the slopes at Saariselka, you will surely experience extraordinary things. For instance, we bet you've never eaten dinner and steamed in a sauna or soaking tub all in one place, but at Laanilan Kievari this dream you never knew you had could come true.

## 5. [Cancun, Mexico](#)



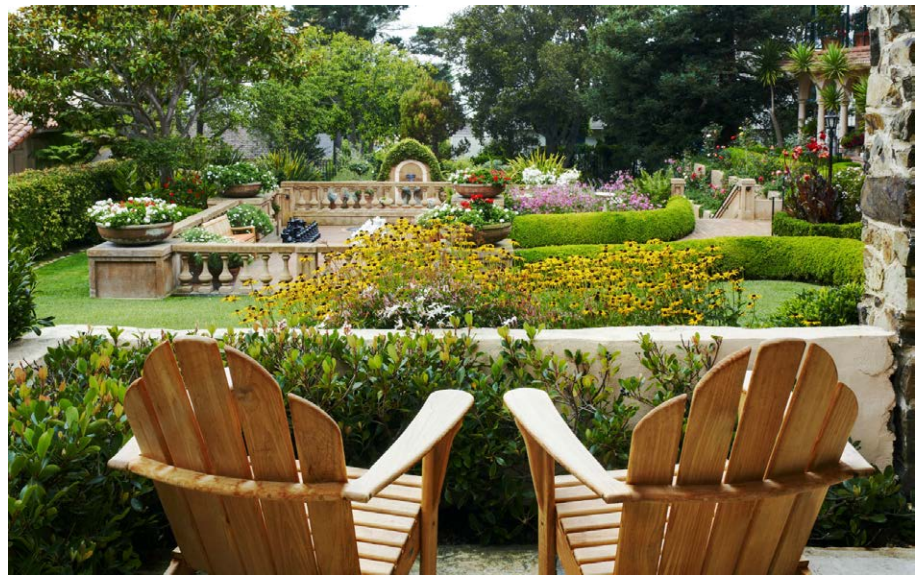
If you choose to book a vacation with your tax return this year, you can't do better than [Cancun](#). Luxury is part of the landscape in this part of the world, where soft sand beaches meet the silky Caribbean Sea. Of course, you should indulge in afternoon naps, poolside cocktails, and lazy dips in the warm sea waters, and Hyatt Zilara Cancun can accommodate all manner of relaxation. Stave off cabin fever with activities outside of the hotel grounds, if you can manage to pull yourself away. Don't worry; you won't compromise your newfound tranquility in order to see the sights. Private tours such as the [Chichen Itza Full-Day Tour](#) deliver you from hotel to

private venue entrance in a Mercedes-Benz. If that thought tuckers you out, try a private catamaran charter, where you can sip and soak up the sun as you float. Back on dry land, Du Mexique restaurant cures any craving for delicious dining in a divine setting.

#### 6. [Vancouver Island, British Columbia](#)

There are endless ways to explore Vancouver Island, especially its abundant wilderness. However, if camping and hiking seem like unlikely ways to use tax return money in the lap of luxury, we're about to change your mind. Clayoquot Wilderness Resort provides high-end camping like you've never seen. Massage, yoga, straight razor shaves, and fine dining are only pieces of the sumptuous pie. Luxury tents with private decks and personal outdoor showers are outfitted with downy linens and comfy amenities like robes, slippers, and towels. The Healing Grounds Spa hosts a waterfront deck with cedar hot tubs and lounge chairs. When it's absolutely necessary to leave, civilization may seem completely uncivilized. Tiptoe your way back to reality in Tofino. The charming town will help ease the blow with delicious restaurants such as Wolf in the Fog, and a last, miraculous treatment at Sacred Stone Spa.

#### 7. [Carmel-by-the-Sea, California](#)



Laidback California charm meets the pleasures of the good life in Carmel-by-the-Sea. What better introduction to the area than through the Grand Dame of Carmel, La Playa Carmel? Once the palatial home and salon of a local artist, the historical hotel oozes classic California comfort, with its beachside location near scenic wineries and hiking trails. After a champagne brunch and quick dip in the pool, visit the shops in Carmel Plaza and treat yourself to some Tiffany & Co. Make your way to Kush Day Spa for a quick facial, or book a spa package for an afternoon of pampering. Before you call it a night, let la Balena transport your tongue to Tuscany with handmade fresh pasta and classic fish and meat dishes.

#### 8. [Tuscany, Italy](#)

Or...you could see Tuscany in person. Eat, pray, love your way through this extraordinary landscape, which is both ancient and fresh all at once. Castiglion del Bosco is one of the oldest estates in the region, and offers modern amenities in invitingly warm suites. Lazily gaze across the Tuscan hills as you dine and swirl wine on the terrace of Ristorante Campo del Drago. Achieve Zen-like levels of serenity at the on-site spa as you indulge in the sauna, steam bath, relaxation lounge, and

private garden. Take a cooking class, rent a bicycle, join a wine tasting tour, and fall in love with how wonderful life can be.

#### 9. [St. Moritz, Switzerland](#)



If you like your luxury with sparkle and ice, walking in the winter wonderland of St. Moritz will suit you to a T. Come to town during White Turf, the annual skijoring competition that draws the crème of elite sport enthusiasts. It's not too many athletic events that deem the winner "king," but this is not an ordinary event. Horse-racing, art, gourmet bites, and flowing champagne have made this an A-list winter destination for decades. Reserve a room at Badrutt's Palace Hotel, where the indoor pool has a floor-to-ceiling 180-degree view of Engadin mountain scenes, and you'll find a hot water bottle tucked into your sheets at night. Before retiring, however, wine and dine at Dal Mulin and order a nightcap at the cozy local favorite Polo Bar. With its convenient proximity to your hotel (ahem, it's on the premises), you don't have to worry if the bartender has a stiff pour.



## 10. [Greenwich, Connecticut](#)

With four beaches, historical charm, and a tendency to attract the affluent, Greenwich knows a thing or two about living the high life. Delamar Greenwich Harbor hotel will get you settled into a lush suite with harbor views. Order breakfast, book a spa treatment, and let everyday worries become a thing of the past. Plan a day on the green at Tamarack Country Club, or take a tour of the Bush-Holley House for some local history. Become a patron of the visual arts at Flinn Gallery, then relax with a pint at the Ginger Man or a craft cocktail at The National before dinner at Thomas Henkelmann.

## 11. [Bora Bora, French Polynesia](#)



When you picture the perfect vacation, the iconic image of thatched-roof huts over turquoise waters probably comes to mind. Whether you know it or not, you're dreaming of Bora Bora. It's home to hotels such as the InterContinental Bora Bora Resort and Thalasso Spa, which fits the bill exactly. You can practically jump from bed into the balmy waters, and you can take a double dip in the deck pools that some rooms offer. Continue

your on-water excursions with a [private sunset cruise](#) that features champagne and dinner on your own secluded islet. Spend an afternoon at the Bora Bora Yacht Club, where you can feast on fine cuisine in a pristine setting.

## 12. [Park City, Utah](#)

Whether you come to ski or explore, Park City will treat you with kid gloves. After an unforgettable day skiing the slopes or hiking trails, you'll relish some R&R at Stein Eriksen Lodge. The five-star spa offers treatments such as the Ski Boot Relief with a salt and honey scrub; soothing stone massage; and the Aspen Oasis, a warm body wrap and Vichy rain bath. For a meal to write home about, visit J&G Grill, where you will be treated to beautiful views and a mind-melting tasting menu. Fox School of Wine hosts events, such as Fine Art, Whiskey, and Wine, where guests are invited to indulge in all three. Make sure to stroll down Historic Main Street, where shopping and dining options are prime.

## 13. [Chiang Rai, Thailand](#)



Tucked far in the north of the country, Chiang Rai offers

a true getaway from the daily grind. Remote, lush, and unique, this place is made for those who want a singular experience. Stay at the Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle, where you can meet elephants, explore leafy jungles, and survey the land from the deck hot tub of your elevated luxury tent. Indulge in a massage in an open-air treatment room or schedule a private yoga class at the spa. Visit various tents throughout the property for meals with new friends and fellow guests, or head to the wine cellar for private party dining. If the surrounding flora has you desiring another kind of green, head to nearby Waterford Valley Golf Club for a day on the links.

14. [Irvington, Virginia](#)

Waterfront charm and small-town hominess make Irvington an inviting escape. Sailing, golfing, wine tasting, and picnicking in the park are all par for the course in this historical village. Though small, it packs a big punch when it comes to the finer things in life. Stay at The Tides Inn, where deep soaking tubs, a secluded marina, refined dining, and a therapeutic spa are all on hand to melt your worries away. Walk into town for some shopping. Find new adornment for yourself or your home at Objects, Art and More, or pick up a gift or dinner wear at The Dandelion. Now that you've got the duds, head back to your digs for dinner at the on-site Chesapeake Restaurant for the best meal in Irvington.

15. [Duck, North Carolina](#)



One might not expect an inviting atmosphere from a town with a name that suggests you get out of the way, but Duck has hospitality on lock. Not only are the locals friendly, there are countless activities to enjoy, and first-class places to stay. We suggest Sanderling Resort for its fine beach views, attention to caretaking, and world-class spa. Adventurers can take to the skies or the sea with Kitty Hawk Kites, offering hang gliding, kite boarding, dolphin tours, and even mermaid swimming lessons, which outfit you in your own mermaid tail. Try OBX Biplanes nearby for a step back in time, or leave time behind with a sunset beach ride with Outer Banks Horseback. For refined Southern cooking with a sustainable seafood bent, The Blue Point is the place. Order the mountain trout in almond-sherry brown butter and pair it with Caposaldo pinot grigio.

#### 16. [Positano, Italy](#)

For great Italian wine, go to the source. Order a bottle at Michelin-starred La Sponda restaurant at Le Sirenuse hotel. Start at the Champagne Bar & Grill for a glass of bubbly and oysters and prep for dinner with breathtaking views from the candlelit veranda. Il San Pietro di



Positano is another hotel with spectacular vistas, mixing modern and classical aesthetics to eye-catching and pleasing effect. See and be seen at Spiaggia Grande, Positano's main beach. If the water is calling your name, rent a kayak and explore the Amalfi Coast at your own pace.

#### 17. [Cong, Mayo County, Ireland](#)



They don't call it the Emerald Isle for nothing. Not only is Ireland rich and verdant, it's also a great place to spend some serious green. But Ashford Castle in Cong County will enchant you so thoroughly, you won't even blink when the bill comes. Why will the place have you swearing it one of the best ways to use your tax refund? Let's see, maybe it's the three on-site restaurants, golf course, cinema, luxury motor-yachts, celebrated spa, manicured gardens, or school of falconry. Tired yet? Retire to your lake-view room, adorned with chandeliers, fresh flowers, plush robes, mineral water, and monogrammed Egyptian cotton sheets. Need we go on?

#### 18. [Copenhagen, Denmark](#)

Yes, its people are referred to as the happiest on earth, and Denmark delivers the goods when it comes to ways

to enjoy life to its fullest. Copenhagen alone boasts a huge number of Michelin-star restaurants, which signals that this place knows what's good. Favorites include Kiin Kiin and AOC Aaro & Co., where diners are treated to innovative cuisine with flair and style. Get settled at d'Angleterre, where the rooms are airy, comfortable, and oh so inviting. The on-site spa houses the only indoor swimming pool in the city, as well as tranquil treatment rooms and lounges, where the worries of the day fade right away. Take a [private walking tour](#) to get acquainted with beautiful architecture and cultural ambience; you'll see city gems such as the Rundetårn tower and Christiansborg Palace.

#### 19. [Hong Kong, China](#)



You could spend a lifetime and not see and do everything this city has to offer, so why not slow the pace and rest in the lap of luxury while you're here? Start with the legendary afternoon tea at the The Peninsula, where you'll also book a room if you know what's really good for you. Take your best shot at seeing the whole city with a [helicopter tour](#), during which you'll also glimpse the floating village in Aberdeen Harbour.

Eating and drinking well in Hong Kong is a top priority, and Quinary will quench your thirst with award-winning cocktails, while Bo Innovation will blow your culinary mind.

20. [Santa Barbara, California](#)

Red-tile roofs top white stucco buildings, and sparkling blue waters rush to meet golden sand in Santa Barbara, where sophisticated culture and laidback beach town are not mutually exclusive terms. Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore, for example, pairs European chic with California cool, and with palm frond views from French-doored terraces, the hotel exemplifies Santa Barbara aesthetic. If you prefer mountain scenes to beachside sights, San Ysidro Ranch is your ideal spot and will transport you a world away. Taste the best wines of the region and beyond at Les Marchands Wine Bar & Merchant, and cap the perfect night with Yoichi's multi-course tasting menu.

21. [Gironde, France](#)



Grapes are famous in this region, and they infuse more than the wine. Spa Vinothérapie Les Sources De

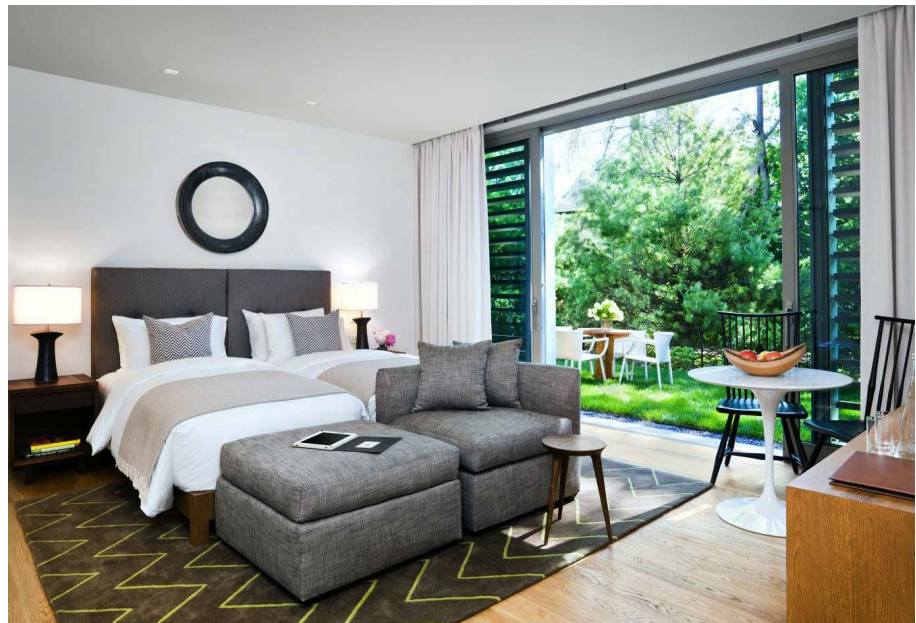
Caudalie uses vine and grape extracts in its beauty and therapy products for their green and healing properties. Elements of grapevine stalks are believed to have anti-aging benefits, and a trip to this region will certainly make you feel ten years younger. The atmosphere at Hôtel Les Sources de Caudalie is as relaxed and inviting as the rolling hills of the countryside, with elegant-chateau-meets-family-farm vibes. Explore the benefits of grapes in a different form when you visit Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte winery to taste vintages that will leave you anything but world-weary.

## 22. [Kyoto, Japan](#)

Japan practically invented serenity, and when it slows down, it does it beautifully. Nothing seems to be done by accident here, and Kyoto brings attention to detail and refinement to the next level. See how good taste is a rite of passage in this city with a [private tour](#). With Kinkaku-ji temple and the Heian Jingu Shrine on the itinerary, your day will feature beauty from across time. For the most scenic spa day of your life, book a Miyabi foot bath at Arashiyu spa, where sake extract is added to a warm bath of colorful flowers in a bamboo tub, and a 35-minute foot massage closes the experience. The sights don't diminish at Suiran, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Kyoto, where sleek simplicity and luxe details rule the scene.

## 23. [The Hamptons, New York](#)





The Hamptons have a reputation for attracting the gilded crowd, from the days of Gatsby to modern times. Reach for the green light at Topping Rose House, where the house and grounds tinkle of old money and crystal pedigrees. Treat yourself to lunch at Tutto il Giorno, and order a glass of white to match your local fish baked in parchment paper with roasted tomato vinaigrette. Get a makeover to rival Jimmy Gatz at Salon Xavier Coiffure & Day Spa and then show off the new you at Southampton Social Club. Rent a cabana for early evening drinks, then savor grilled New Zealand lamb chops with Dijon au jus and crispy leeks. You'll be happy to return to a comfortable bed, where you'll sleep as though you danced the night away.

#### 24. [Turks and Caicos](#)

What better place to go big than a string of small islands? Turks and Caicos top many sizable travel wish lists, and for good reason. The beaches are calm and uncrowded, the waters are clear and warm, and the accommodation, like the COMO Parrot Cay, is second to none. Hotel service is catered to each guest, so don't be afraid to ask for what your heart desires, from flower-

filled baths and Indonesian massages to wellness consultations and 24-hour butler service. If your eyes are never bigger than you're your appetite, devour all seven delectable gourmet courses at Coyaba Restaurant, where you can dine under the stars on a garden verandah. Make the most of the islands both above and below water on eco-adventures with Oasis Divers. You may meet some locals and fellow visitors, like a giant sea turtle or North Atlantic humpback whale.

## 25. [Lenox, Massachusetts](#)



If performing arts tickle your fancy, make Lenox a priority next time you indulge. Home to Tanglewood, the summer residence of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the village offers big city talent in intimate settings. The venue hosts the Festival of Contemporary Music, and James Taylor and John Williams have been known to drop in. Live music is a way of life, but Shakespeare & Company plays its part in community culture, featuring productions throughout the season. The Blantyre is a pitch-perfect place to stay, as it blends old-world charm with modern amenities. For further glimpses into the

rose-colored past, visit Ventfort Hall Mansion and Gilded Age Museum, and The Mount, where Edith Wharton expressed her peerless style and sense of beauty. For a meal worthy of a sonnet, go to Alta Restaurant & Wine Bar, where pan seared scallops in warm bacon vinaigrette will have you singing beautiful music.

## 26. [Kailua-Kona, Hawaii](#)

Falling asleep to the sound of the waves, eating off beachfront tables, and lounging by an ocean-side infinity pool are just a few of the ways you can take pampering to the next level in Kailua-Kona. The Four Seasons Resort Hualalai has an on-site florist, who will adorn your room with personalized arrangements, and a culinary team to whip up a tailor-made breakfast in bed. And that is merely the beginning. A private charter helicopter will take you on a visual journey, over waterfalls, black-sand beaches, and lava flows to a secluded beach, where mimosas are served and relaxing is the only agenda item. Your evening plans should be just as epic, so a table at Ulu Ocean Grill is the spot for al fresco dining to die for.

## Which corners of the world strike your fancy for a luxury getaway?

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Lily is a Southern California-based writer, editor, and traveler. She aspires to never be too far away from her next adventure, whether it be exploring the deserts of