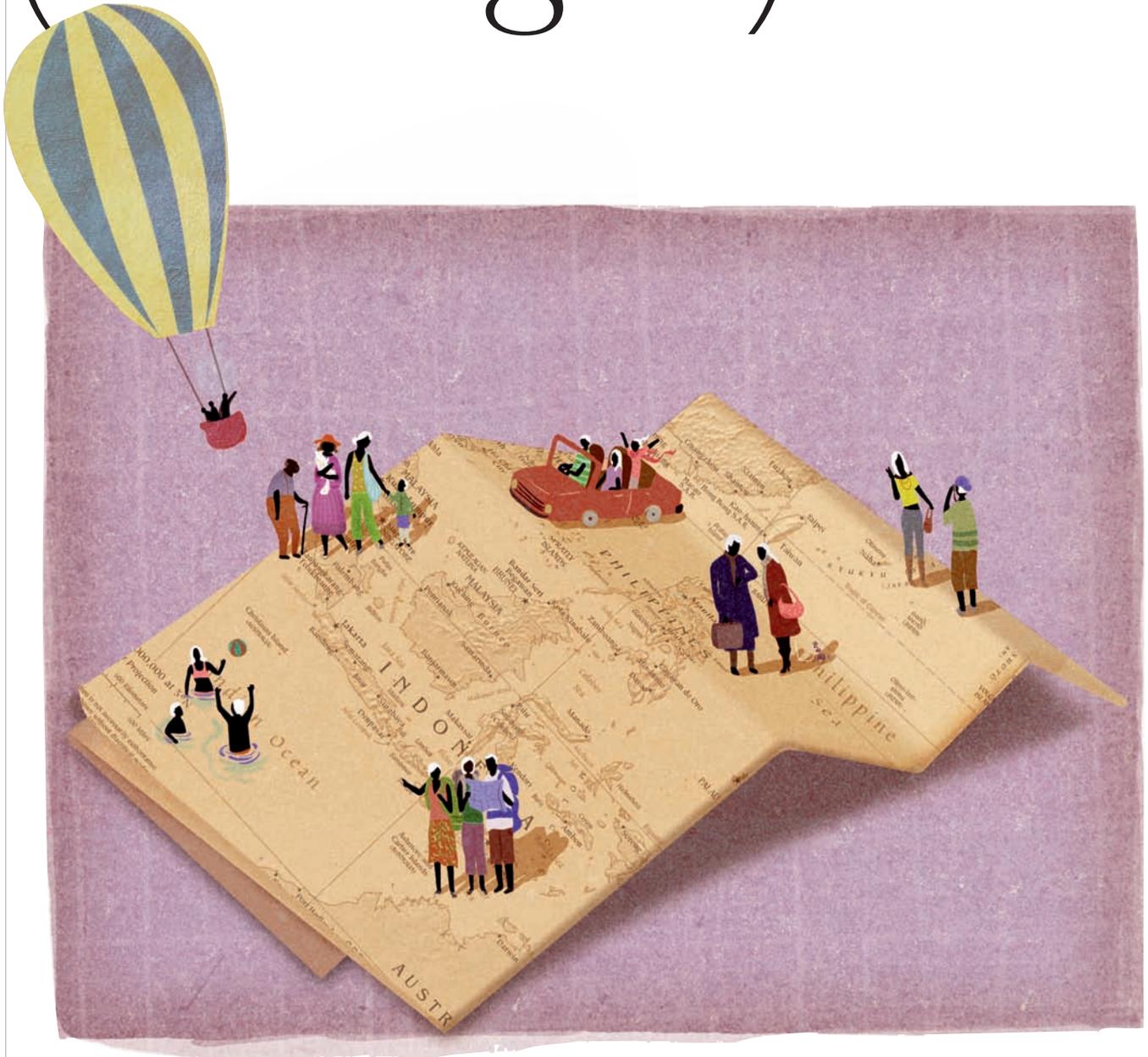


# (Strategies) 07.10



## TRAVEL BY NUMBERS

Let's face it: group trips can be a headache, especially for travelers who value their independence. But they can also bring huge rewards. Here, T+L offers up ways to make group travel easier to plan, less painful to execute and even, dare we say, fun.

*By LILI TAN Illustrated by WASINEE CHANTAKORN*



Villa Bukit Naga, in Ubud, Bali.

■ RENT A VILLA

Private, luxe accommodation suddenly becomes affordable when you're sharing costs with a crowd. On Bali, skip the Kuta cowboys and head inland toward cultural capital Ubud, where nearby **Villa Bukit Naga** (*Banjar Selat, Desa Samplangan, Gianyar, Bali, Indonesia*; 62-361/941-118; [villabukitnaga.com](http://villabukitnaga.com); villas from US\$1,100 per night) sleeps 13 and boasts three houses with two infinity pools overlooking a sacred valley. For a nominal fee, a car and driver will take you into town to gallery-hop, while 15 sweet staffers will organize balé-side yoga sessions with renowned instructor Sri Jane, or whip up authentic Balinese or macrobiotic cuisine. For somewhere über-extravagant, make a beeline for Samui's **YL Residence No. 17** (*117 Moo 2 Tambon Maret, Ko Samui, Thailand*; 66-84/356-2388; [ybresidence.com](http://ybresidence.com); whole residence from US\$4,000 per night). The expansive, 10-bedroom villa property spans five hectares and employs 20 full-time staff, including butlers, bartenders

# GOT COMPANY?

Whether you're traveling with friends or a whole other family, combining people usually means conflicting personalities. So what happens when someone strays from the herd, a couple gets into a fight or people just can't stop themselves from behaving badly? To help you plan—and make it through—we've come up with the following ideas to please parties from two to 10.

## TRAVEL WITH... 10 FRIENDS

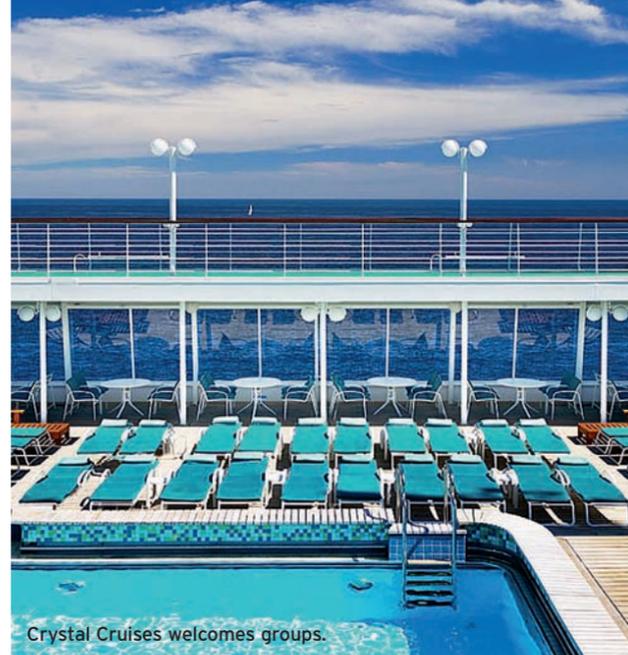
There are plenty of ways to travel with a group of friends without splitting up, getting lost or hurting someone's feelings. Remember, larger numbers mean better prices and more people to share accommodation costs. The key? Choose the activity before picking the crew. In other words, if you're heading to a music festival or a well-

being retreat, you'll automatically attract people with the same interests and holiday objectives. So while you may not be traveling with your BFFs, there will at least be less bickering over where to go and what to do, and more time to get to know peripheral friends. Read on for surefire ways to make everyone content.



YL Residence No. 17, on Ko Samui.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF VILLA BUKIT NAGA; COURTESY OF YL RESIDENCE NO. 17



and three chefs—including Reuben Kimber from Somerset's historic Babington House—as well as an on-site masseuse and yoga teacher.

■ CRUISE TOGETHER

While voyages at sea are usually thought of as family affairs, cruises allow for big groups of friends to venture out on day trips, break apart for onboard activities and then come together for mega meals. Plus, being on a ship means no one gets lost—at least, not for too long. **Crystal Cruises** ([crystalcruises.com](http://crystalcruises.com); two-week cruise from US\$8,665 per person), from Sydney to Bali, and Singapore to Mumbai, offers up Experience of Discovery theme cruises, including fashion-gearred excursions with personal consultations from sought-after designers and stylists, wellness-focused vacations with yoga and other fitness itineraries, and golf-centric cruises guided by PGA pros. With cruise company **Costa** ([costacruisesasia.com](http://costacruisesasia.com)), expect affordable island hopping in places like the Philippines and Indonesia.

■ ROCK OUT

This month, grab your fellow music lovers and head north. Two of the biggest rock festivals in Asia take place in July. First, hit up South Korea's fifth annual **Pentaport Rock Festival** (*July 23–25; Incheon Dream Park, Incheon, South Korea*; [pentaportrock.com](http://pentaportrock.com); one-day passes KRW50,000). At press time, the 2010 lineup was still to be confirmed, but previous years featured top-caliber acts like the Deftones in 2009, the Chemical Brothers and OK Go in 2007, and the Strokes and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs in 2006. The following week, head to the **Fuji Rock Festival** (*July 30–August 1; Naeba Ski Resort, Japan*; [fujirockfestival.com](http://fujirockfestival.com); one-day passes ¥16,800), the largest outdoor rock event in Japan. Though last year's crowd-surfing campers were disappointed when headliners the Killers canceled their Asia leg, festival-goers are bound to be satisfied by this year's 200-plus lineup of Japanese and international musicians, including groups such as the Scissor Sisters, Hot Chip and LCD Soundsystem. »

### EMERGENCY GUIDE

● **PASSPORT ISSUES** If someone forgets to get a visa, or their travel document has less than six months before it expires, first call your travel agent, in case they can rush an order. Booked the trip yourself? Contact your closest embassy or consulate; **Embassiesabroad.com** lets you search by country and location.

● **LOST DOCUMENTS** In case someone loses their travel documents, make sure everyone has two copies of their passport and driver's license or other ID. Designate one responsible person to keep a copy of everybody's, and ask each person to keep a copy separate from their passport. If you're traveling with two families or couples, swap a set of copies with the other party for safekeeping. Travelers without them will need to go through the hassle of proving their citizenship, which can take a few days.

● **ILLNESS** Even if everyone is insured, coverage may not apply outside your home country. Luckily, travel insurance is usually cheap and requires less hassle than with your regular insurance company. Compare prices at **Travelinsurancereview.net**, or jot down the location of the **International SOS hospital** ([internationalsos.com](http://internationalsos.com)) closest to your destination. The representatives there can help with most expatriate health-care scenarios, including air-lifting you home.

● **PICK-POCKETING** Keep a copy of both sides of your credit and debit cards along with your passport copy. So if you find your wallet has been stolen, you can call immediately to cancel them. File a police report – even if the cops don't recover your goods, it will be easier to claim insurance later. The nice thing about traveling with a group? Ample friends around to spot you until your replacement cards arrive.

● **FLIGHT DRAMA** Group discounts can have their pitfalls: when your ticket is attached to another person's, some airlines like Cathay Pacific require you to travel together. So if one person pulls out because of a last-minute work request or illness, it's likely you'll have to buy a whole new ticket. Find out if your agent can plead your case; if not, they can at least help book a flight that gets in roughly at the same time as your friends. As for lost cost, if your companion is traveling for business, their company should reimburse your original ticket, plus the cost of your new flight.

● **BEHIND BARS** Drugs are the main reason people get arrested abroad, but drunken or disorderly behavior can get you locked up too. No matter which country you're in, be respectful, especially if you don't speak the local language, and remember to say you're sorry – a lot. Authorities will be more receptive to your requests, whether you're asking them to contact your embassy to arrange a local attorney, or inform the rest of your group about your predicament.

● **MISSING PERSONS** Before your trip, ask everyone to make sure they have mobile-roaming capabilities, or else pick up a local SIM card on arrival and have everyone save your new number. Before a crazy night out, grab business cards from your hotel so that everyone has one handy, in case people get separated or don't show up at a designated meeting spot. If your buddy doesn't turn up eventually, make sure she's not with anyone else before calling the embassy, which can check hospitals and contact local authorities in case you need to file a missing-person's report.

COURTESY OF CRYSTAL CRUISES

## TRAVEL WITH... TWO FAMILIES

### BEST WEBSITE

#### ...TO GAIN CONSENSUS TRIPPY

The latest from Google allows friends from near and far to collaborate and plan their next reunion in real time. Everyone needs Google Wave to use it, but adding the extension is easy if you already have a Gmail account.

The application utilizes content from award-winning travel guide *Lonely Planet* to easily find places to stay, eat and sightsee wherever you're planning to go. Each person can add their must-do's and must-sees to an itinerary, as well as vote and comment on everyone else's choices. After everyone has their say, just print or share the results via e-mail. A mobile web and Android app will follow in the near future for on-location use.

sites.google.com/site/trippysite/home

#### ...TO SCORE DEALS VALUPEDIA

When traveling to Hong Kong, check out Valupedia for great group deals on Cathay Pacific travel packages, Liberty travel insurance and trendy hotels in the city. They have everything from spa discounts to exclusives with local jewelry brands,

with plans to expand into the mainland China market soon.

valupedia.com

#### ...TO FIND SOMETHING DIFFERENT HOLIDAY PAD

This specially curated travel blog has a special tag for groups. The site's editors comb the Internet and print publications, as well as review reader submissions, and then compile the best ones. They promise usual, unusual and especially unique ideas for vacations at beach huts to tree houses to underwater hotels.

holidaypad.net

worldexpedition.com

#### ...TO DO SOME GOOD WORLD EXPEDITIONS

For trekking and adventure-travel holidays, World Expeditions has been assisting groups in planning their all-inclusive journeys since 1975. The company now has up to 500 creative and distinct itineraries, including cycling, walking and

cultural journeys, and is famous for its responsible-tourism initiatives that have helped improve the living conditions of some of the world's most far-flung communities.



The InterContinental Bali has a kid's club.

Inviting another family on a trip can help quell spats, take the pressure off an overkill of "family time" and provide extra entertainment for the kids—which means more relaxation time for adults. Choose a place that's self-contained, large enough for children to run around but small enough that parents don't fret over their offspring's whereabouts. But first, get everyone together before booking to see how both families interact and foresee any possible issues.

#### ■ PICK A THEME

A theme park, that is. On Lantau, **Disneyland Hong Kong** ([park.hongkongdisneyland.com](http://park.hongkongdisneyland.com); HK\$350 for adults, HK\$250 for children) offers a compact, easy-to-manage taste of the Magic Kingdom. For a cheaper alternative on Hong Kong's south side, hop on a cable car at the recently revamped **Ocean Park** (852/3923-2323; [oceanpark.com.hk](http://oceanpark.com.hk); admission from HK\$125). In Singapore, with the kids diverted by the movie-themed rides and attractions at



At Cassia Cottage, in Vietnam.

**Universal Studios Singapore** (65/6577-8899; [rwsentosa.com](http://rwsentosa.com); one-day passes S\$66), the adults can relax at six different hotels run by the newly opened Resorts World Sentosa. For starters, enjoy lavish rooms with an edge (and a famous souvenir shop, of course) at the **Hard Rock Hotel**, escape for a treatment at **Spa Villas** or, if you're lucky enough to receive an invite, live it up at the luxurious, Michael Graves–designed **Crockfords Tower**.

#### ■ GO WILD

Educational and fun, **Sepilok Jungle Resort** (Jln. Rambutan, Sepilok Mile 14, Sandakan, Sabah, Malaysia; 60-89/533031; [sepilokjungleresort.com](http://sepilokjungleresort.com); rooms from RM28 per person) sits in a protected forest and helps

teenage orangutans rescued from circuses and palm-tree plantations to survive in the wild. To see baby orangutans, go to the **Shangri-La Rasa Ria Resort** (Pantai Dalit Beach, Tuaran, Sabah, Malaysia; 60-88/79-2888; [shangri-la.com](http://shangri-la.com); doubles from RM520), where a nature reserve is incorporated into the resort compound. The Shangri-La also boasts a quiet beach and **Dalit Bay Golf Club & Spa**, which has an 18-hole course. For more diverse creature contact, fly into Phnom Penh, Cambodia and head south to the **Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue** (855/1287-5413; [forestry.gov.kh](http://forestry.gov.kh)). More than 1,000 rescued animals—including elephants, clouded leopards and sun bears—reside in this 2,500-hectare park.

#### ■ GO GREEN

From all-inclusive resorts to boutique hotels, places are starting to cater to youngsters' higher consciousness. The InterContinental Bali's **Planet Trekkers** (62-361/701-888; [intercontinental.com](http://intercontinental.com); rooms from US\$210) is a mini-resort that offers children a confined area to play in, while teaching them to be socially responsible travelers via green activities. Your kids may not initially appreciate the absence of televisions at the **Cassia Cottage Hotel & Inn** (Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam; 84-4/3928-4973; [cassiacottage.com](http://cassiacottage.com); doubles from US\$65), but this family-run, plantation-style villa has distractions like a private beachfront and gardens to keep the young ones busy. »



**Family Friendly** From top: Fun with Mickey at Disneyland Hong Kong; at the Shangri-La Rasa Ria Resort, in Kota Kinabalu.



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF INTERCONTINENTAL BALI; COURTESY OF CASSIA COTTAGE

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF DISNEYLAND HONG KONG; COURTESY OF SHANGRI-LA RASA RIA RESORT



## TRAVEL WITH... TWO COUPLES

The movie *Couples Retreat*—starring Vince Vaughn and Kristen Davis—may have made multi-couple traveling look unappealing, but don't worry, there won't be any 6 A.M. relationship-building sessions on these getaways. It helps if both couples enjoy similar activities and want to spend roughly the same amount of money. Worrying about finances or spending substantially different amounts can make things awkward, so make sure everyone's on the same page.

**Pair Pleasures** Clockwise from top: Outdoors at 4 Rivers; high up on the Macau Tower; a dish by chef Chris Salans at Mozaic.



### RECIPES FOR ROMANCE

Teaching everything from authentic Balinese to *sous-vide* dishes, classes at **Mozaic** (Jl. Raya Sanggingan, Ubud, Bali; 62-361/975-768; mozaic-bali.com; from Rp750,000 per person) incorporate fresh Asian ingredients with traditional French techniques. Both couples can learn to chop and balance flavors in a state-of-the-art Miele kitchen while picking up tips from world-renowned chef Chris Salans, who earned Mozaic the only *Grande Table du Monde* accolade in Southeast Asia. For the secrets of Thai cuisine, head to Chiang Mai and take a 20-minute cab ride to **Kaohom Thai Culinary Cooking School** (180/1 Mae Rim Rd., Moo 1, Chiang Mai; 66-53/862-967; classes from Bt1,300), set in the idyllic countryside. For longer culinary experiences, try one- to three-day packages at the

**Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School** (11/29 Moo 1, Chiang Mai Floraville, Doi Saket, Chiang Mai; 66-53/399-036; thaicookeryschool.com; classes from Bt990), the first cooking school in this northern city.

### GO GLAMPING

Luxury camping is the perfect compromise for adventurous couples who still crave comfort and amenities. Sleep in a fancy tent at night and go on wildlife adventures by day with **Leopard Safaris** (leopardsafaris.com; from US\$325 per person), which offers mobile camping safaris in three of Sri Lanka's national parks—Yalla, Uda Walawe, and the Wilpattu and Knuckles mountain range. Or head to the world's first floating tent resort, on Cambodia's Tatai River. **4 Rivers** (Koh Andet Island, Tatai Village, Koh Kong, Cambodia; 855/2321-7374; ecolodges.asia; tents from US\$87) sits entirely on water and is surrounded by thriving jungle. Accessible only by boat, the resort boasts 12 luxurious standalone tents, a bar, a restaurant and a library, all connected by floating walkways.



### MILE-HIGH CLUB

There are two things couples can do in the air: jump or get married (OK, some might say they're the same thing). Take a break from gambling among Chinese mainlanders, hold your significant other's hand and sky jump from the 223-meter-high observation deck of the famous **Macau Tower** (853/2893-3339; macautower.com.mo; sky jumps from M\$988, maximum combined weight 120 kg). Then retreat to a secluded, all-inclusive stay like the **Westin Resort, Macau** (1918 Estrada de Hac Sa, Coloane, Macau; 853/2887-1111; starwoodhotels.com; doubles from HK\$1,400) for pool time or 18 holes of golf next door at the **Macau Golf & Country Club** (853/2887-1188; macaugoldandcountryclub.com; golf rates from HK\$1,550).

In 2009, gay-friendly Nepal's supreme court approved same-sex marriages, and a LGBT tourism agency called **Pink Mountain** (pinkyatara.com) is helping visitors take the next step in the country. For starters, couples can enjoy a marriage ceremony at Mount Everest's base camp, 5,360 meters above sea level. +

## FRACTIONAL OWNERSHIP

Ready to take group travel to the next level? Fractional ownership allows friends to split ownership of a property. If you find a place or destination you all love and keep going back to, this asset-sharing concept lets people buy in at a lower price and offers the benefits of owning a vacation home, minus the upkeep costs (maintenance is split between property holders). Buying a fraction of the property entitles owners to a designated number of days' stay, so your group can split the place for bonding time or have it on an individual basis as well.

While this has been going on for years in the yacht and private-aircraft sectors and in housing markets in the Americas, the concept for properties is picking up speed in Asia. According to a recent report by C9 Hotelworks, a

globally recognized asset-management and hospitality consultancy, fractional ownership is the "sleeping giant" of Phuket's property industry, with shared-ownership sales on the island hitting two billion baht in 2008 and totaling more than 22,000 customers. "The emergence of fractional ownership ... is becoming a notable component of the real-estate sector," says managing director Bill Barnett. "[We expect] shared ownership to increase market share during the next 12 to 24 months."

However, fractional ownership "is not the same thing as a timeshare," says Brendan McClean, business-development manager for **LaTour Hotels & Resorts** (latourhotelsandresorts.com), which plans to introduce the concept to Southeast Asia

with boutique properties across the region. "Timeshare implies only having a week at a resort or getting dragged in by your grandmother for a presentation. Fractional ownership is a much more upmarket product and allots for much more time at the home—a few weeks to three months each year."

While Asia's fractional industry is still immature, McClean sees plenty of opportunity for growth. "Southeast Asia has a lot of repeat visitation. In Thailand, it's 60 percent, and Australians have an affinity for Bali," he notes.

Another attraction is flexibility. "Gone are the days where you know what you're doing a year out," McClean says. "Fractional ownership has a sophisticated reservation software and rotation calendar—there's no ringing up



and finding out that someone else gets the place for Christmas." So if your particular unit isn't free, say, there's the option of taking another apartment with the same layout and décor, which your belongings can be moved into.

The upshot of all this? If you do decide to go the fractional route, you'll have a place to host your friends as well as enough weeks in the year to enjoy the vacation home on your own.

WASINEE CHANTAKORN

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF 4 RIVERS; COURTESY OF MACAU TOWER; COURTESY OF MOZAIIC

## Family Holiday is Better when Shared



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