



"The White Lotus" Heads to Thailand; Travel Execs Can't Wait

By Susan J. Young
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The White Lotus

Set-Jetting

Thailand

Luxury Hotels



Among the Season 3 filming sites for HBO's series, "The White Lotus," was the Anantara Lawana Koh Samui Resort. Eight new episodes are set in Thailand. (Photo by Anantara Hotels & Resorts)

It's nearly here! As a "must-watch" anthology for many North American viewers, the Emmy-Award-winning series "The White Lotus" will return to HBO and Max with the first of eight new Season 3 episodes on Sunday, February 16. Tune in at 9 p.m. ET, with new episodes airing each successive Sunday at that time. Best of all, say travel industry leaders, the series' sharp social satire and fictional vacation action will unfold at an exclusive, luxurious "White Lotus" resort in Thailand—and that could signal a potential boom for Southeast Asia travel bookings.

This past week, HBO publicly released a list of some of Season 3's hospitality filming sites. It's a stellar list of luxury properties, among them the ultra-luxury Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui, the sumptuous Anantara Lawana Koh Samui Resort, the tropical beach hideaway Rosewood Phuket, the luxurious Anantara Mai Khao Phuket and the ultra-luxury Mandarin Oriental Bangkok. Plus, some interior sets were built and filmed at Acts Studio in Bangkok and elsewhere. Here's the [link to HBO's initial list of filming sites](https://press.wbd.com/us/media-release/white-lotus-s3-shooting-locations) (<https://press.wbd.com/us/media-release/white-lotus-s3-shooting-locations>), with a bit more detail about what scenes were shot at each locale. For instance, the dreamy Wellness Sanctuary and Spa at the Anantara Mai Khao Phuket was one filming site.

From a die-hard fan's perspective, "I watched both seasons and can't wait for the third season starting this month," Theresa Scalzitti, chief operating officer, Cruise Planners, tells *Luxury Travel Advisor*. As Season 3 unfolds, she and other viewers can certainly count on the continuance of the show's addictive, soap opera-like comedy-drama action. But the new season will sizzle with new story lines, plot twists and, of course, fun, mischief, romance, adventures and intrigue.



adds: "The star-studded ensemble cast adds to the excitement."

A More "Exotic" Setting

Airing in 2021, Season 1's six episodes were filmed on Maui in Hawaii. Since the pandemic was still around, many Americans hadn't yet begun to head overseas again. So, Maui proved comforting, welcoming and yet "exotic" enough for a series set within U.S. borders. Then, as the pandemic waned, Americans began to exhibit ferocious pent-up demand to travel internationally. So, Season 2, airing starting in October 2022, offered seven episodes, all filmed in Sicily. Viewers were treated to luxurious resort scenes and excursions around that Mediterranean isle.

From another fan's perspective, "I love the White Lotus series, with its creative and rich story lines, talented ensemble cast, and how those are combined with the exotic destinations where people are vacationing," says Drew Daly, senior vice president and general manager, Dream Vacations and CruiseOne. "It definitely inspires people to travel and see the world." He adds that his brands' advisors made a number of group bookings specifically "because people wanted to see the spots in Sicily where Season 2 was filmed."

Now, Season 3 will ratchet up the series' "exoticism" to an even higher level. Scenes were filmed at various Thailand locations, both urban and rural. In addition to viewing luxurious, pampering resort scenes, those who tune in every Sunday night to "The White Lotus" will see bustling Bangkok, the Phuket Yacht Haven Marina, Ko Lawa Yai near Phang Nga Bay in Phuket, Ya Nui Beach in Phuket and Mu Ko Ang Thong National Marine Park in Koh Samui, to name a few.

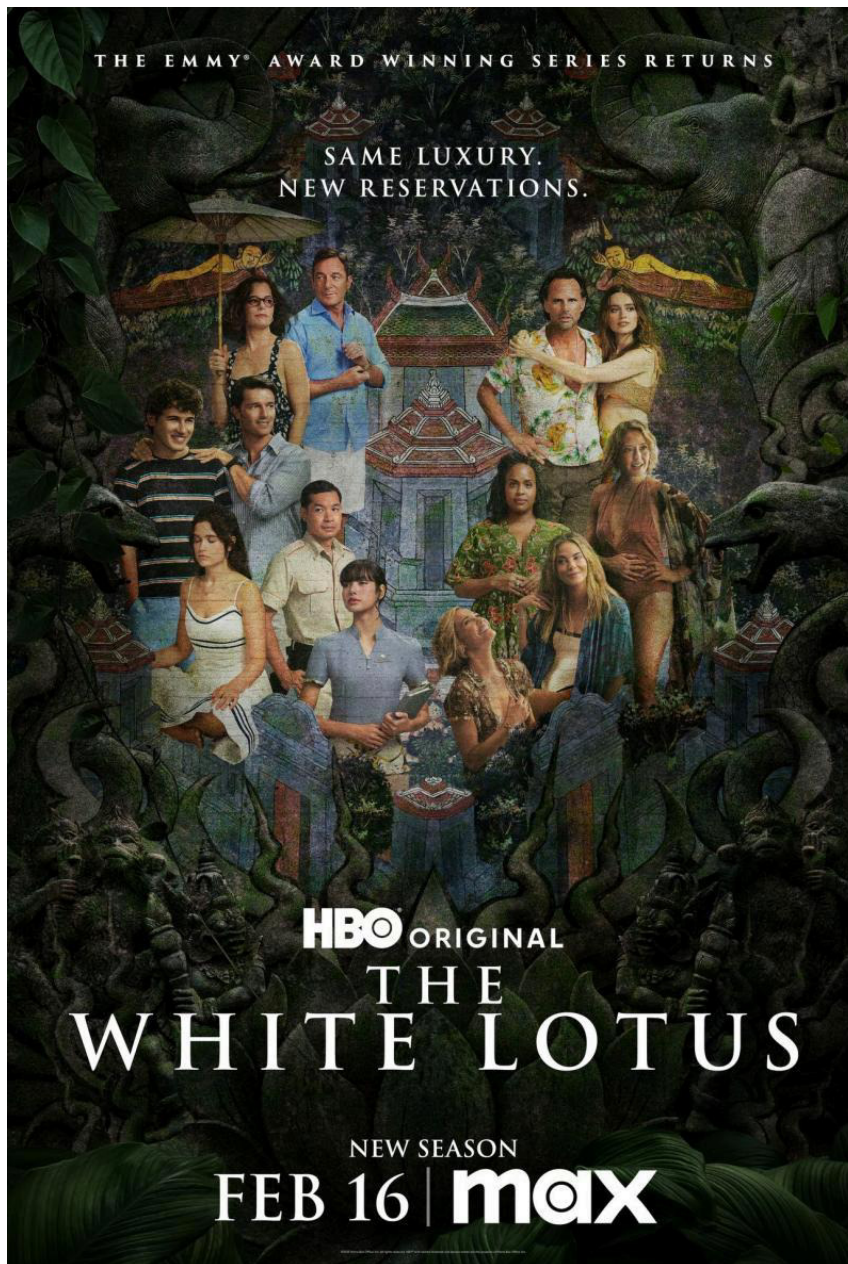
"I'm looking forward to Season 3 for multiple reasons; one of them being Thailand's vibrant cities and beautiful beaches—which I'm going to be personally visiting for the first time next month," Scalzitti tells us. But she acknowledges that the "interesting characters, the stories and the drama" are also big draws for her.

Thai Filming Locations

Created by Mike White for HBO, each season of "The White Lotus" introduces viewers to a gorgeous locale, hints that at least one person won't get out alive and then flashes back—over a series of episodes and plot twists—to earlier periods. On-screen interactions between the characters range from fun and friendly to humorous and flirtatious, from shady or a bit tawdry to mysterious, and in some cases, downright dangerous.

"The White Lotus" plot twists definitely mimic human nature and real-world behavior in many ways. At times, viewers are also "led" into truly believable plot directions that may be intentionally flawed—leaving people to say during a later episode, "Oops, well that wasn't what I thought." The result is an intriguing, unpredictable viewer journey.

The show has also developed a reputation for bizarre endings. "After the shocking endings during the past seasons, I can't wait to see how this story unfolds," Scalzitti quips. In some ways, perhaps think of "The White Lotus" as an updated, 21st-century version of what TV viewers might have watched in the 1980s with the "Dallas" TV series. The big question back then was, "Who shot J.R.?" But there are big differences in today's popular anthology. The on-screen characters aren't simply friends, spouses/partners, family members, co-workers or business colleagues; yes, they're all that, but they're also global travelers. Most notably, the setting isn't just one spot in the U.S., it's a global stage.



The original illustration provided by HBO for the debut of the new Season 3 of "The White Lotus" on February 16, 2025. (Photo by HBO)

Growing Thailand Interest

As for Thailand as a travel destination, "Asia has always captivated travelers with its rich cultures, breathtaking landscapes and world-class hospitality," notes Scalzitti. She cites Bangkok's vibrant energy, the serene beaches of Ko Samui and diverse eco-beauty as just a few of the reasons why Thailand is a top bucket-list destination. She says that for 2025 travel, Cruise Planners is already experiencing a surge in consumer interest for booking Asia trips: "So, I'm very optimistic that the series will inspire viewers to explore Thailand and Asia for themselves."

This past week, the New York office of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) launched "The White Lotus" microsite (thewhitelotus.thailandinsider.com (<https://thewhitelotus.thailandinsider.com/>)). Advisors and consumers visiting the site can make an immersive virtual journey through the destinations and experiences at Koh Samui, Phuket and Bangkok.

Among the other experiences that TAT will profile on the microsite during Season 3 will be elements of these "5 Must Dos," including:

- Must Beat (Muay Thai), which showcases four distinctive styles of ancient Thai boxing, both as a cultural tradition and an invigorating cardio workout.
- Must Eat (Thai Cuisine), spotlighting Thai dishes and culinary heritage
- Must Seek (Thai Culture), which delves into Thailand's spiritual traditions, superstitions, folklore, faith-based journeys and cultural beliefs.
- Must Buy (Thai Fabrics), focusing on collaboration with world-renowned designers to show how Thai textiles transform into high-fashion pieces.
- Must See (Thai Shows), spotlighting the performing arts - both traditional and modern.

In addition to the official tourism promotion, individual travel suppliers are also now tapping into "The White Lotus" fan base as a way to increase their business. For instance, Anantara Hotels & Resorts—with several of its resorts prominently filmed for the series—has just introduced a new, sumptuous "Lotus Awakening" package (<https://www.anantara.com/en/bophut-koh-samui/offers/lotus-awakening-escape>).

destinations. Travelers sign up as a Cathay member (it's free) and use code WL25US at checkout. That airline promotion is valid now through May 30, 2025.



The dreamy spa at the Anantara Mai Khao Phuket was one of the filming sites for Season 3 of "The White Lotus." (Photo by Cameron Sperance)

Southeast Asia Immersion

Tom Baker, president, CruiseCenter.com, a member of the Signature Travel Network, says he'll advise his agency's clients that the best way to robustly immerse themselves in Southeast Asian culture is to combine a Mekong River cruise with land touring or an add-on package. That way, they can explore deeply within the interior of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos or Thailand, which he feels is imperative to understand the region's culture, heritage, cuisine and lifestyle.

While the exact amount of how much new tourism the series' Season 3 will bring to Thailand is unknown, here's a salivating factoid for travel advisors who opt to pitch trips to Southeast Asia. Virtuoso previously identified what it termed, "The White Lotus" effect. After Season 2 aired, that luxury consortia's advisors collectively posted a whopping 424 percent spike in sales to Sicily. Separately, year-over-year, in 2025, Virtuoso's Sicily sales are still up 135 percent year-over-year.

On the ocean cruise side, "The White Lotus" has a way of putting destinations in the spotlight," says Rob Coleman, senior vice president, trade partnerships, Seabourn. "With Season 3 set in Thailand, it will no doubt spark even more interest in travel to the region. For cruise travel, this kind of exposure could inspire more people to consider exploring Thailand by sea. We're already seeing strong demand for Asia, and our Thailand and Vietnam voyages, in particular, have long been a guest favorite."

Luxury Travel Advisor experienced one such Seabourn voyage post-pandemic along Thailand's coast. One signature brand element that we and other guests loved was "Caviar in the Surf," a complimentary wade-into-the-ocean experience for guests that unfolded along a serene private Thai beach. Simply put, "many travelers are looking for unique, immersive ways to experience the region, and a cruise also allows them to visit multiple destinations while enjoying a seamless and comfortable journey," Coleman adds.

Season 3: More Tidbits



Filming for the HBO Original series, "The White Lotus," unfolded at multiple luxury properties and scenic destinations within Thailand. (Photo by HBO - HBO Original - The White Lotus)

As for the lineup of actors who will perform in Season 3's episodes of "The White Lotus," here's a [helpful link to a cast summary from Entertainment Weekly](https://www.ew.com/the-white-lotus-season-3-cast-everything-to-know-8782070) (<https://www.ew.com/the-white-lotus-season-3-cast-everything-to-know-8782070>); it outlines who's who, who's new, who's returning and so on. The world premiere of "The White Lotus" much-anticipated Season 3 also occurred earlier this week in Los Angeles, and here's one of HBO's official trailers (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwQRkOK5KC4&list=PLO79iP69FaZNWOhOpzvm79AarzVveiZv&index=1>) to get you properly prepped for the new season as well.

But what if you haven't watched Season 1 or Season 2? Episodes are certainly available to view on streaming services. But for travel advisors seeking a quick, "cheat-sheet" approach to starting the third season, you might check out these excellent YouTube videos that provide less-time-consuming summaries of [Season 1](https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=youtu+be+season+1+white+lotus+summary&q=n&sp=-1&dq=0&pp=youtu+be+season+1+white+lotus+summary&sc=0-37&sk=&cvid=6C345359AE73483AB1530E2F27ABEB7C&ghsh=0&ghacc=0&ghpl=&ajaxnorecss=1&sid=035497D71E8C612039AF82451F03607D&jsonbid=0&aj:1%261q%3d0%26pq%3dyou%2520tube%2520season%25201%2520white%2520lotus%2520summary%26sc%3d0-37%26sk%3d%26cvid%3d6C345359AE73483AB1530E2F27ABEB7C%26ghsh%3d0%26ghacc%3d0%26ghpl%3d%26ajaxnorecss%3d1%26sid%3d035497D71E8C612039AF82451F03607D%26jsonbid%3d035497D71E8C612039AF82451F03607D) (<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=youtu+be+season+1+white+lotus+summary&q=n&sp=-1&dq=0&pp=youtu+be+season+1+white+lotus+summary&sc=0-37&sk=&cvid=6C345359AE73483AB1530E2F27ABEB7C&ghsh=0&ghacc=0&ghpl=&ajaxnorecss=1&sid=035497D71E8C612039AF82451F03607D&jsonbid=0&aj:1%261q%3d0%26pq%3dyou%2520tube%2520season%25201%2520white%2520lotus%2520summary%26sc%3d0-37%26sk%3d%26cvid%3d6C345359AE73483AB1530E2F27ABEB7C%26ghsh%3d0%26ghacc%3d0%26ghpl%3d%26ajaxnorecss%3d1%26sid%3d035497D71E8C612039AF82451F03607D%26jsonbid%3d035497D71E8C612039AF82451F03607D>) and [Season 2](https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=youtu+be+season+2+white+lotus+video+youtu+be+summary&cvid=de58ee4a57274339939fa282c93e5155&gs_lcrp=EgRIZGdlKgYIABBFgDkyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQABhA) (https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=youtu+be+season+2+white+lotus+video+youtu+be+summary&cvid=de58ee4a57274339939fa282c93e5155&gs_lcrp=EgRIZGdlKgYIABBFgDkyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQABhA)

While the series action is enticing on a personal level for many travel industry executives and advisors, they also tell us that they view the return of "The White Lotus" as a potential business opportunity. "With Thailand as the Season 3's backdrop, for sure, viewers are going to want to visit this destination," agrees Daly. So, he's already giving his franchise owners and their agency associates this advice: "When the show airs, it's a great time for travel advisors to put together trips to promote to the fanbase."

So, get ready for Sunday night, at 9 p.m. Eastern Time on HBO and Max. Another season of "The White Lotus" is about to begin!

Related Articles

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