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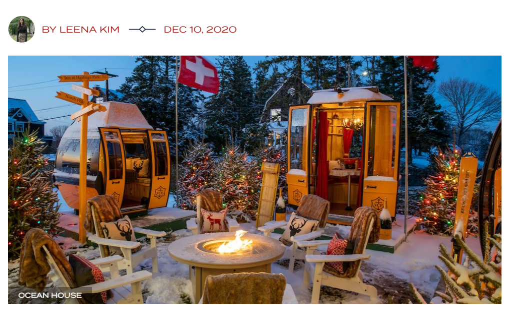
The 8 Best Places to Spend New Year's Eve

Skip the big gathering this year and instead opt for a safe getaway with just your closest loved ones.

BY LEENA KIM — DEC 10, 2020


OCEAN HOUSE

It's been a year like none other and there is likely no one out there who will be sad to bid adieu to 2020. Under normal circumstances, the last few weeks of the year would be dedicated to a bustling social calendar of holiday parties, last-minute shopping sprees, outings to *The Nutcracker*, and multigenerational trips to far-flung beaches in Thailand and snowy slopes on the Alps. Obviously, this year will be different. An even scarier second wave of Covid-19 has swept the country, hospitalization rates are exceeding those from the darkest days of the pandemic, and a fresh round of lockdowns loom (if they haven't been instituted already, as they have in California). A grand New Year's Eve fête is out of the question, no doubt, as are gatherings of any sort. But if you and the members of your quarantine pod are itching to get out of town for a quiet, private, and safe NYE escape, we've rounded up a few options below. (And as with any kind of travel you do during the pandemic, check each state's restrictions—taking note of pre-arrival quarantine rules, business closures, and the like—as they are constantly changing.)

1

Texas Hill Country

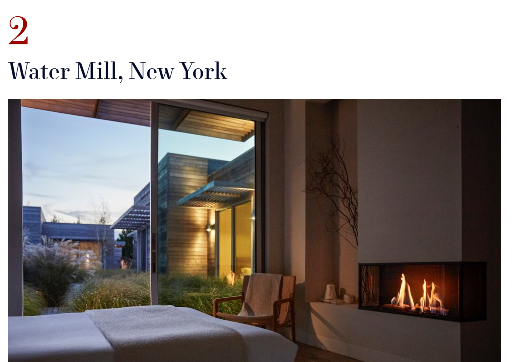
THE JL BAR RANCH & RESORT

With just 32 accommodations and 13,000 acres of land, JL Bar Ranch, Resort & Spa in Sonora, Texas, is the perfect winter escape for end-of-year R&R and social distancing. For an even more remote and private stay, book the luxurious Archer's Nest Villa, a six-bedroom ranch house with a gourmet kitchen, BBQ pavilion, swimming pool, and home theater. Along with the many activities offered at the resort, from hiking and horseback riding to skeet shooting and archery, JL Bar Ranch is also equipped with a private airport. Prefer to drive? It's a 2-hour ride from San Antonio, a 3-hour trip from Austin, and 5 hours from Dallas.

READ REVIEWS *JL Bar Ranch, Resort & Spa*

2

Water Mill, New York


FREDRIKA SJARNE FOR SHOU SUGI BAN HOUSE

Escape to the Hamptons for a most serene way to ring in 2021 at Shou Sugi Ban House, the 13-key wellness retreat (a first of its kind in the region) that opened with much fanfare last year. Swap the usual NYE debauchery for sunset nature walks, a culinary program helmed by Noma cofounder Mads Refslund, and cozying up by the fireplace (there is one in each room). And, of course, there is the spa—because let's face it, what you'll really need after the year we've had is a vigorous deep tissue massage.

READ REVIEWS *Shou Sugi Ban House*

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3

Watch Hill, Rhode Island

OCEAN HOUSE

You won't be able to make that ski trip to Zermatt this year but Ocean House—Rhode Island's grandest dame hotel—has come up with a cure for any Swiss Alps FOMO. Its Veuve Clicquot Fondue Village, now in its third year, is a culinary experience in which Alpine après ski staples like crêpes, hot cocoa, and raclette are served in vintage gondolas that have been redesigned as cozy private dining nooks with chandeliers, warm Alpine details, and winter-perfect textiles. Even the glassware and china are imported from Switzerland and Austria for a fully authentic experience that'll make you feel like you did make it to Europe this winter after all.

READ REVIEWS *Ocean House*

4

St. Bart's

WALTER BIBIKOW / GETTY IMAGES

The one percenter yacht parties might be on hiatus this year but the billionaires' wintertime playground is one of the safer Caribbean islands to visit this season (the CDC's Travel Health Notice has it designated as a Level 2 country, with moderately high levels of Covid-19—the highest level is 4). To be as safe (and keep others safe) as possible, opt for one of the new four-bedroom villas at the Hotel Christopher. With its commanding views of the sea, a private pool, and fully equipped kitchen, you'll never have to leave.

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5

Sedona, Arizona

ALEKSANDRA PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES

We could all certainly use some good vibes going into the new year and Sedona, with its majestic red rocks and powerful vortex energy, is the perfect place for that spiritual reset. Book a room at the romantic L'Auberge de Sedona, where all accommodations are charming standalone cottages. You'll fill your days with tons of hiking, of course, and perhaps squeeze in a road trip or two to relatively nearby attractions, such as the Grand Canyon, Horseshoe Bend, Antelope Canyon, and Lake Powell. The hotel has a slate of activities to round out the #goodvibesonly vacation, including stargazing, forest bathing, and sound healing.

READ REVIEWS *L'Auberge de Sedona*

6

Anguilla

ATLANTIDE PHOTOTRAVEL / GETTY IMAGES

The CDC Travel Advisory for Anguilla is currently at a Level 1, making it another attractive option for Caribbean travel. The island has also gone a step further in ensuring everyone's safety—especially that of its residents—by requiring visitors to remain in their "vacation bubbles" throughout their stay. The concept includes a list of certified restaurants and activities—golf, boat rides, and island excursions, for example—that travelers can experience outside of their pre-approved accommodations. Make the Belmond Cap Juluca home base. All of the rooms are located right on the beach, meaning you'll have your very own slice of pristine sand and sea.

READ REVIEWS *Belmond Cap Juluca*

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7

Denver, Colorado

MATT KISIDAY FOR LIFE HOUSE, LOWER HIGHLANDS

The founder of Life House, Nantucket, a jewel of a boutique hotel that opened on the island over the summer, has swiftly followed up with another property, this time in Denver. Like its New England sister, Life House, Lower Highlands is an intimate, charming, and thoughtfully decorated hotel in the center of town—think Victorian Industrialism meets the Wild Wild West. For New Year's Eve, Life House has partnered with the 90,000-acre Ranchlands Chico Basin Ranch to offer guests a picnic on the prairie with food sourced from the hotel's restaurant, Wildflower. Then back at the hotel, an in-room dinner will be served, along with a private jazz concert.

READ REVIEWS *Life House, Lower Highlands*

8

Saratoga, Wyoming

COURTESY OF BRUSH CREEK RANCH

About three and half hours from Denver is the The Lodge & Spa at Brush Creek Ranch, a sprawling 30,000 acre ranch made for socially distanced, back-to-nature fun. Brush Creek also recently purchased a 620-acre private ski resort, Green Mountain, so you can add skiing to the property's long list of activities, which includes horseback riding, snowmobiling, ice skating, ice fishing, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, and sleigh rides.

READ REVIEWS *The Lodge & Spa at Brush Creek Ranch*

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Leena Kim is an assistant editor at Town & Country, where she writes about travel, weddings, arts, and culture.

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