

CARRIER

# MAGAZINE

INSPIRATION | KNOWLEDGE | STYLE

*Knowledge*

## The year of India

A COUNTRY OF COLOURFUL CONTRASTS

*Inspiration*

## North & South

EPIC SCENERY AND ADVENTURE IN NEW ZEALAND

*Plus* | MADE FOR TWO:  
ROMANTIC GETAWAYS

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# Welcome

Here at Carrier we make it our mission to share our expert knowledge, inspire your travels and ensure that our guests holiday in style.

Introducing the Carrier Magazine - Issue 03. Bursting with insight from the world of luxury travel, whether it is watching elephants drinking from the banks of the Chobe River whilst floating by on a boutique and unique houseboat; sampling epicurean delights next to the glistening Indian Ocean or taking over a tropical island paradise for your own private use in the Caribbean. The following pages are filled with ideas for adventures and exploration in the year ahead – we hope that this will be your go-to read to fuel your imagination for your travel in 2017, and beyond.

Within each of the three chapters you will find cutting-edge news and a tantalising mix of creative stories. **Inspiration. Knowledge. Style.** Three words that epitomise everything that we do here at Carrier. They are our ethos. We recognise that holidays are precious few and transformative. They matter. Enjoy the luxury of knowledge. Read on and discover the world as we know it.



Reasons to *Smile...*

## Europe Summer 2017

*...exclusive savings on final rooms*

We've done the hard work for you and rounded up a selection of our best hotels and resorts throughout Europe that still have availability for the peak summer months. What's more, we have negotiated exclusive offers and savings just for Carrier guests.

To speak to one of our specialists about our exclusive summer offers, please see contact details on the inside back cover.

**CARRIER**

# In this issue

Inspiration, knowledge and style are the pillars we feel underpin the world of luxury travel. These key cornerstones span a spectrum of Carrier destinations – we share our highlights across the pages.



## 10 / Canada

Discover all there is to know about the second-biggest country in the world. Celebrating its 150th anniversary, this year is a special one for Canada.



## 23 / Maldives

From floating food markets to an over-night stay aboard a traditional dhow, we explore the most unique experiences that celebrate the power of water.

**16 / Mexico**  
Get lost in romantic conversation at the lantern-lit Agua bar or indulge in a private couples treatment at the new-look ESPA spa at One&Only Palmilla.



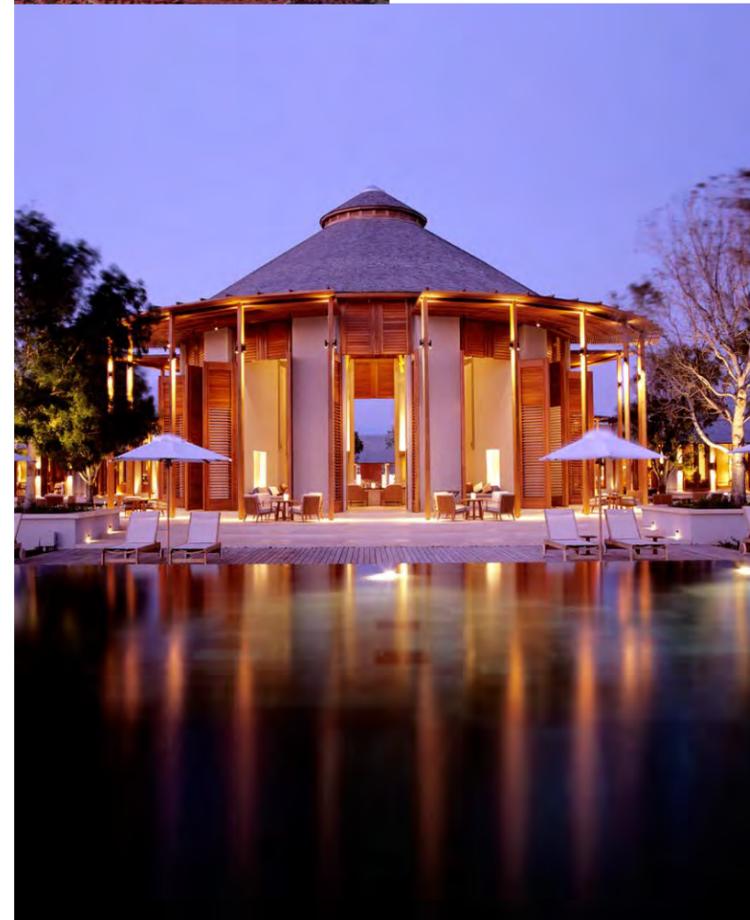
## 37 / Barbados

We strip back all-time favourite destination, Barbados, to discover the unmissable events and experiences taking place this year.



## 64 / Kenya

Get the balance right between adventure and relaxation when staying at Angama Mara; watch the sun come up from inside a hot air balloon, before enjoying a champagne breakfast.



### More inside...

**Gourmet Globetrotting** Release your inner gourmand and explore the fascinating culinary creations from around the world, from chocolate festivals to blindfolded dinners, castaway picnics to Michelin star cuisine. *See page 47*

**Unveiled** We uncover all that's new and exciting in the world of luxury travel, highlighting the hotel openings that are causing the most stir. *See page 52*

**Worth the Extra Hop** Remote and unspoiled, we show you exactly why it's worth the extra journey time to get to these jaw-dropping locations. *See page 34*

# Travel notes

## Seize the bay

Blazing a trail for contemporary-chic hotels in the Lesser Antilles, **Carlisle Bay** is one of the most talked about properties. The hotel not only offers spectacular accommodation (the newly created Bay Suites are oceanfront, spacious, understated and ideal for couples), but has unforgettable experiences to go with it. Caribbean yachting holidays are among Antigua's main draws and this year they welcome a brand new, super sleek, 36 foot yacht, along with the launch of private charter excursions. Discover Great Bird Island with an all-day boat trip, or set sail to Cades Reef, with your snorkels at the ready and explore one of Antigua's most beautiful coral reefs. For the thrill-seekers, water skiing and wake-boarding trips will be sure to get your adrenaline pumping.



## Spring healing

With just 15 individual suites and 18 luxurious pool villas, **Elounda Gulf Villas & Suites** is an exclusive retreat on Crete's unspoilt coastline. As this boutique hotel re-opens for the spring and summer season, guests can now be pampered with all new body and face rituals and treatments using Anne Semonin spa products introduced in the Elixir Spa or in the privacy of your Spa Pool Villa.



**Hôtel Barrière Les Neiges** opened in the heart of Courchevel in December and ticks all the boxes: ski-in ski-out location, modern alpine design, dedicated kid's club, a sumptuous spa and a ski room managed by experts. See page 57.

*New ski hotel becomes a member of the Leading Hotels of the World*

## Gourmet glee in Greece

At all-inclusive hotel **Ikos Olivia** in Halkidiki the food takes the spotlight. There are à la carte restaurants managed by Michelin-starred chefs, fine wine pairings by sommeliers and the chance to sample authentic food at local eateries (no need to take your wallet as this is at no extra cost).



## Grown-up playground

Sophistication and style is a given at **Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach**, elevated further by the re-opening of one of Dubai's most glamorous rooftop bars: **Mercury Lounge**. This sea-meets-city location offers one-of-a-kind views of the glowing Dubai skyline – the Burj Khalifa on one side, and the Arabian Gulf on the other. Blending influences from across the Mediterranean, sip on colourful cocktails and feast on the tastiest mix of sharing platters and exquisite entrees.

## Warm up to winter

**Virgin Atlantic** launches the only direct flight between London Heathrow and Barbados in December this year. With direct flights to the island already available from London Gatwick and Manchester, the additional twice weekly departures mean a better chance of not missing out on Christmas in the Caribbean. Further new routes launching this year include Heathrow to Seattle and Manchester to San Francisco, Boston and New York.



## New generation

As **Emirates** continues to invest in making its fleet more modern and environmentally friendly, we see a new generation of its flagship Airbus A380 launching from July 2017. In addition to the well-known Private Suites and Shower Spas in First Class, there will be upgraded Business Class seats and a sleeker designed onboard lounge. The expanding network means you can now fly on the Emirates A380 to over 40 different destinations around the world.

## Suite sensations

The spacious new Island Luxury Suites at **Blue Palace Resort & Spa**, Crete overlook the sparkling waters of the Aegean Sea and across to Spinalonga Island, a national monument. If you can drag yourself away from your private pool, head to the Haven – a private section of the beach exclusively reserved and complete with your own gazebo and beach basket of complimentary goodies.



*With the largest ski area in America, **Park City** in Utah is an unforgettable ski and snow getaway, and now even more accessible thanks to direct Delta flights from London to Salt Lake City.*



**CARRIER**  
carrier.co.uk/magazine

 If you're excited about @BBC's #BluePlanet2, explore the underwater worlds for yourself with our Marine Biology Collection <http://bit.ly/2mboXXt>

**Inspiration**  
#09/28

**10 SPOTLIGHT ON CANADA**  
Canada celebrates 150 years – discover snowy ski slopes, cosmopolitan cities, to majestic mountains and fir tree forests

**20 NORTH & SOUTH**  
We take a look at New Zealand's two iconic islands, both characterised by their epic scenery and sense of adventure.

**16 MADE FOR TWO**  
Our hand-picked selection of romantic getaways – whether you want to experience wave riding or moonlight massages.

**22 CITY WITH A SOUL**  
A melting pot of cultures, New Orleans is dazzling with soulful celebrations, culinary delights and enigmatic history.



**FLOATING FANTASIES**  
Escape to an overwater spa, witness marine life in an immersive tour or relax in a saltwater pool – these aquatic delights are sure to soothe your senses.

**23**

# Inspiration

Begin a journey of exploration as we delve into daydream worthy destinations, key travel trends and expert insight – sure to spark the imagination.

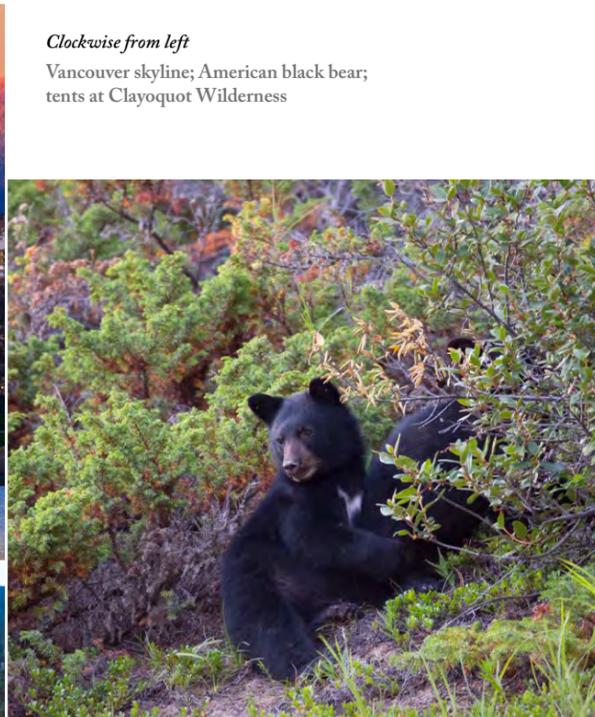


# Spotlight on Canada

2017 is Canada's year. Celebrating its 150th anniversary, there has never been a better time to let this incredible country under your skin.

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*Clockwise from left*

Vancouver skyline; American black bear; tents at Clayoquot Wilderness

The world's second-biggest country, spread across six time zones, Canada has a blow-your-mind vastness and mind-boggling diversity. There's not just an enormity of landmass, there's an enormity of landscape: sky-high mountains, glinting glaciers, ancient forests of pine, cedar and spruce, remote beaches, gin-clear lakes, undulating prairies, eerily silent fjords and crashing surf – in a word, Canada's scenery is epic. This is one of the world's great wildernesses, where nature is at its most forceful, a place that provides once-in-a-lifetime adventures. The wildlife viewing is memory bank material: polar bears, grizzlies, whales and moose, bald eagles, elk and dolphins in their podfules. From the Canadian Rockies and countless national parks (all free for 2017) to remote islands home to dreamy eco lodges; from the jaw-dropping Niagara Falls to the windswept eastern coast and some of the world's best ski resorts, we step inside this beguiling land to bring you a snapshot of destination Canada.

## GO WEST

Canada is made for road tripping and where best to start than vibrant Vancouver? A ten hour flight from the UK, this west coast city is a regular

on 'the world's best places to live' lists. If you're not about to emigrate anytime soon, it's also up there on best places to visit. Mountains meet sea meet skyscrapers meet nature: Vancouver has a little bit of everything. Throw in nine beaches, a buzzing cultural scene and a reputation as Canada's flourishing foodie destination, you'd be mad not to hang out here for a couple of days. Vancouver is also gateway to Vancouver Island, a mini Canada in the Pacific Ocean, rugged with a perspective-changing nature. Explore remote beaches backed by forests of moss-covered maple trees; listen to the surf crashing; breathe in the salty air and if you're visiting during March, witness the migration of thousands of grey whales heading north. Inland you'll stumble across crystal-clear streams that tumble into waterfalls and mountains rising up above sapphire lakes. Quiet and unhurried, this island is quite simply, good for the soul. Over the years, brilliant eco lodges have understatedly appeared, with some of the best wildlife viewing on their doorsteps. Book into either *Clayoquot Wilderness Resort* or *Knight Inlet Lodge* for once-in-a-lifetime adventures. Clayoquot is 45 minutes by floatplane from Vancouver and has nabbed a jaw-dropping spot where the Bedwell

## Celebrating 150 years

This year the Canadian calendar is jam-packed with cool events. Here's a handful of 2017 highlights.

*Calgary Stampede Rodeo* is dubbed 'the greatest outdoor show on earth' and it won't disappoint. A brilliant family affair it's on from 07 to 16 July.

*Montreal Jazz Festival* is one of the best in the world. There are more than 500 shows (many free). Catch some tunes between 28 June and 08 July.

Don some oversized sunnies and go celeb spotting at *Toronto's* star-studded *Film Festival* (07 to 17 September).

Shakespeare and general theatre lovers should head to Toronto for the *Stratford Festival*. The season runs between April and October.

Cape Breton Island comes alive with events and activities during *Celtic Colours* (06 to 14 October); a brilliant time to visit Nova Scotia.

River spills out into a majestic fjord. Just 20 tents with wooden floors, wood burning stoves and viewing decks rock a rustic-chic vibe. Solo travellers, couples and families all love this tented eco safari that wholeheartedly embraces the great outdoors. Set out on a wilderness adventure and go fishing, horse riding and mountain biking, or witness the post-card perfect views from the comfort of a kayak. Explore the deserted islands on Clayoquot Sound and see eagles soar. Get acquainted with the rest of Clayoquot's rural residents by watching the sea lions bask and perhaps if you're lucky, spot a black bear and its cub. Knight Inlet Lodge has also lucked out on location, a floating haven of outback experiences and wildlife spotting. Only accessible by floatplane, it's considered one of the best places in the world to see grizzly bears in action. In peak season it's not uncommon for up to 40 bears to be within 10 kilometres of the hotel, so there are photo opportunities worth a thousand souvenirs. Whale watching from the lodge is another popular pursuit worth ticking off your bucket list, as well as sea kayaking, inlet cruising and hiking the rainforests. If that's not wild enough, a brilliant add-on to any western Canadian journey is an Alaskan cruise. There are a host of options including *Silversea's* remote itineraries taking you far into the Inside Passage. 2017 also sees *Seabourn* return to Alaska after a 15-year break. Seabourn Soujourn is offering 11, 12 and 14 day all-inclusive itineraries from Vancouver, through the Queen Charlotte Sound, Misty Fjords and Behm Narrows: simply awe-inspiring.



*Above & right*

Spotting whales; Moraine Lake surrounded by the Rocky Mountains



## ROCKY ROAD

The Canadian Rockies need little introduction. Spanning British Columbia and Alberta, their four national parks (Banff, Yoho, Kootenay and Jasper) offer up gasp-inducing scenery. This is destination road trip: pick up a car, put on the tunes, turn them up and put your foot on the gas. Explore the high alpine meadows, jade lakes and weird and wonderful rock formations. Climb mountains, paddle rivers and gawp at glaciers. At the heart of Banff National Park is the turquoise-tinted, almost ethereal Lake Louise. Known as the 'Jewel of the Rockies' it stands in an amphitheatre of rugged mountains, reflected on its surface. Bedding down at *Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise* is a no brainer. Ultra-luxe in every way, it is also brilliantly situated for hiking. Alpine-style teahouses surround Lake Louise, perfect for refueling trekkers with scones and steaming mugs of tea and hot chocolate. There's a brilliant trek starting just behind the Fairmont that climbs 3.5 kilometres up to the secluded Lake Agnes Tea House. The path winds through thick forest and opens out into spectacular vistas of snow-capped peaks. Take a breather at the shimmering Mirror Lake before making the final ascent. The views are worth the effort. For the less energetic you can hop on a gondola up Mount Whitehorn to gaze over mountains, lakes and forests or for total wow factor explore by helicopter and reach places few others ever get to. Drive on to Jasper National Park (bigger and less crowded than Banff), it offers superb hiking, riding, rock climbing and rafting

The drive takes you through the Icefields Parkway (be sure to stop at Athabasca Glacier) before heading on to the glacial terrain of the eastern Rockies. Maligne Lake and Canyon is a must, including a boat trip to Spirit Island for one of the best views in the Rockies. Bed down at the gorgeous **Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge**, a 700 acre year-round mountain resort, it's situated on the shores of Lac Beauvert and houses guests in homely cedar chalets and log cabins. The Moose's Nook Chophouse is also a must for steak and seafood. If you're not ready to unleash your inner Thelma and Louise, there is another way to travel the Rocky Mountains: by **Rocky Mountaineer**. Hailed as 'the most spectacular train trip in the world' this two-day journey allows you to experience the drama and beauty from your luxury carriage. Travelling between Vancouver and Jasper, Lake Louise, Banff or Calgary, cameras will be on overdrive as you view glacier-clad mountains, prairies and lakes from the outdoor viewing platform or your glass-domed carriage.

## HIT THE SLOPES

Come winter, Canada turns into a snowy wonderland with some of the world's best skiing. Whistler is North America's largest and one of the most popular ski resorts. Host of the Winter Olympics in 2010, we're talking serious slope action. There is 8,000 acres of skiing spread across two mountains (Whistler and Blackcomb) and the season is long, running from late November to May. Wide, lengthy runs wend through snow-clad forests, plus the resort has announced a multi-million dollar investment that includes expanding the beginner-friendly terrain, high-speed lifts, night skiing as well as

## Bright lights, big cities

Canada might be one of the world's greatest wildernesses but it also has a thriving urban scene.

Trendy **Toronto's** diverse neighbourhoods give it an NYC vibe. Large and diverse, from Chinatown to Greektown, there's a real urban buzz alongside a hefty dose of hockey mania.

France's home away from home, **Montréal** is a chic cultural hub filled with quirky restaurants, cool bars, vintage shops and a full festival calendar.

Mountains meet sea in **Vancouver**, a cosmopolitan city and gateway to the Canadian Rockies.



Another French favourite is **Québec City** (above) with its labyrinthine streets and Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac, the famous hotel that dominates the skyline.

And don't forget small friendly **Ottawa**, it is the capital city after all.

new restaurants and bars. There are already a host of current off-piste adventures including Canada's longest zip-line, the Olympic bobsleigh track, heli-skiing, snowmobile rides through cedar forests and horse-drawn sleigh rides over snow-covered fields. Whistler itself is traffic-free and gorgeous, sparkling with thousands of colourful lights. The après ski scene is second-to-none with champagne lounges, a vodka ice bar and the weekly fire and ice show (a skiing and firework spectacular). As one would expect of such an upscale resort, there are dreamy five-star hotels in which to rest tired legs and be pampered from top-to-toe. Three stand out from the luxe crowd: the all-suite **Westin Resort & Spa** with its vast rooms and killer views; the fire-pit strewn **Fairmont Chateau Whistler** at the base of Blackcomb mountain is an unforgettable ski-in, ski-out experience complete with 'snow hosts'; whilst the super-grand **Four Seasons Resort and Residences Whistler** has a heated outdoor pool and heavenly spa. For chalet-lovers, there is definitely no shortage with gorgeous hidey-holes for groups of five to 19. There are ski-in, ski-out chalets, properties with outdoor terraces, bars and hot tubs. **Big Timber Chalet** is one of Whistler's largest and newest. Things to get you excited: it starts with its forested setting and continues with access to the private Kadenwood gondola, games room and six beautifully designed bedrooms. Other western Canadian ski spots are buzzing Banff and serene Lake Louise, but for those who yearn for a shorter flight, the charming small-scale resort of Tremblant will hit the spot. Under eight hours to Montréal, Tremblant is a candy-coloured magical resort, perfect for families. This ski through village has a traffic free centre where cobblestone streets open up into



Left to right  
CN Tower, Toronto; Niagara Falls;  
Nova Scotia harbour



lively squares that brim with bistros, bars and boutiques. The skiing is compact, with slopes for every ability including excellent nursery slopes, whilst the tree-lined runs on the Soleil side of the mountain will challenge expert skiers. There are also a host of alternative pursuits such as dog-sledding, ice climbing, zip wiring, ice fishing, sleigh rides and ice skating. Two standout hotels cocoon guests in snowy luxury: the ski-in, ski-out **Fairmont Tremblant** with its majestic lake and mountain views and the recently revamped **Le Westin Resort & Spa**, just a minute's walk from the lifts. And remember, wherever you head, book before 31 August 2017 to secure the best deals.

## EASTERN PROMISE

The east of Canada is awash with amazing cities: Toronto, Ottawa, Québec City and Montréal to name but a handful. It also has wild wow factor in bucket loads starting with the spectacular Niagara Falls. Niagara has to be on the 'to do' list. Straddling the US/Canadian border, it has the highest flow rate of any waterfall in the world. Jump on board the Maid of the Mist for a fully immersive experience. Further north is whale-ridden Nova Scotia (New Scotland). This is Atlantic Canada, strewn with quaint fishing villages, a crashing surf scene (brave a lesson at Lawrencetown Beach) and rugged coastline waiting to be explored. On Nova Scotia's northern tip you'll find Cape Breton Island and the famed Cabot Trail. The road twists and climbs over coastal mountains, and at

every bend there's another awesome discovery: ocean views, dramatic cliffs, whales just offshore or a moose going about its daily business. Celtic communities dot the area, (highland jigs are not uncommon) and there are little fishing towns, lone lighthouses, clapboard houses, atmospheric local pubs and divine seafood restaurants where you can feast on platters of lobster and smoked salmon. In autumn, the island bursts with colour, vivid shades of crimson and gold setting the coast ablaze. After windswept Nova Scotia, hop over to Prince Edward Island to soak up some rays on its miles of pink-sand beaches, fish for mackerel or play golf on one of its many impressive Links courses. Foodies will also love this place as farm-to-fork is less a trend, more a way of life. Travellers wanting to cover more 'ground' should look into cruise options. **Regent Seven Seas** has a fantastic Autumn Foliage itinerary starting in Montréal before heading to Québec City, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and then down to Portland, New York, Baltimore and ending in Florida.

Whether exploring by road, rail, water or air, from north to south, east to west (and everywhere in between), Canada guarantees a journey like no other.

## Food for thought

Canada is fast-becoming a top foodie destination.

The cities serve up everything including brilliant **fusion food**. Hit one of the Asian night markets for a sensory overload.

Feast on **wild salmon** and **fresh scallops** in British Columbia.

Travelling the east coast, you're in la la **lobster** land.

Don't leave without indulging your sweet tooth. **Maple syrup** on pancakes with ice cream is melt-in-the-mouth territory. It's the national emblem after all.

The French influence in Montréal means a Parisian-esque café scene with oodles of **croissants** and mugs of **café au lait**.

Originally manufactured by Trappist monks, anyone in Québec must try **Oka** cheese. Semi-soft and creamy, it's a Canadian staple.

Canada also has more **doughnut** shops per capita than anywhere else in the world. It would be rude not to indulge.



Left to right  
Skiing in Whistler; heli-skiing;  
candy-coloured Tremblant resort

# MADE FOR TWO

We pick some of the world's best places to hide out à deux. From adult-only hidey-holes to epic escapes and island outposts, here's to globetrotting with romance in mind.



## Stress-free Spacation

One of *MAIA Luxury Resort & Spa's* straplines is 'beyond relaxation'. And they're not lying. We're talking proper knot-busting, muscle-soothing, tension-blitzing bliss on the wild southwest coast of Mahé. This Seychellois refuge is made up of just 30 beautiful villas, all hidden away in the most magical tropical gardens packed with fronds and flowers: coconut and mango trees, cinnamon, lemongrass, hibiscus and orchids to name but a few. The dreamy cocoon-like abodes feature vast daybeds, pools, sunken bathtubs for two, 180 degree views and your own butler complete with sixth sense (they are reportedly employed



on emotional intelligence). We reckon if anywhere can sink you into a state of soporific serenity, MAIA can.

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT** Spa, spa and spa! Just three private thatched open-air pavilions, separated by natural rock formations

form ultimate pampering paradise, surrounded by rustling rainforest and birdsong. There is also free morning yoga and qi gong; the treatments and products are by Omorovicza and the 20 dancing finger massage is died-and-gone-to-heaven material.

**BREAK OUT FOR...** A spot of snorkelling at the reef off Anse Louis beach: it's a pantone-coloured coral hive of activity.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR** It has to be the setting: the white and turquoise cliché is off the Richter scale.

## Adult-only R&R

It's adults all the way at *Domes Noruz Chania*, *Autograph Collection*, a boutique Cretan newbie on the outskirts of Chania. It opened last year and hit the couples travel scene with aplomb. Hanging out horizontal comes easy with huge beds, beanbags on the beach, private yoga lessons and the snooze-inducing Soma Spa with its divine menu of Elemis treatments (check out the couples top-to-toe rejuvenation). But not only does Domes do R&R to the nth degree, it's also super-cool. The exterior borders on futuristic; the 83 suites are sublime pods complete with Smeg mini bars; Zeen Restaurant is all about glocal (global meets local) and famed fitness guru Nikos Pusikis has been flown in

from Thessaloniki to have you looking good and feeling great. Leaving the kids at home has never felt so right.

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT** An exciting calendar of events featuring stand-up comedy and DJs at Raw, guest speakers and weekly mixology nights for cocktail o'clock.

**BREAK OUT FOR...** Trekking the 16 kilometre UNESCO protected Samaria Gorge where rugged mountains meet lush nature and an ever-changing light.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR** Alluring strolls hand-in-hand exploring Chania's old town, which offers a unique blend of Ottoman, Venetian and Greek architecture and culture.



## Grown-up Cyprus

Another hideaway leading the way in adult-only offerings is the gorgeous *Constantinou Bros Asimina Suites Hotel*, a gentle amble from Paphos Town. The suites (there are no mere rooms) are all super-spacious and stylish with floor-to-ceiling

windows to max out on the sea views. The sunbeds have squish factor, the Elixir Spa (complete with couples suite) works its stress-busting magic and the service is second-to-none. Foodies will be in their element but if dining on delicious seafood at the waterfront Kymata Taverna isn't romantic enough, book into dinner on the pier for a one-off meal under the stars.

## All-round Romance



The revamped *One&Only Palmilla* doesn't put a foot wrong when it comes to romance. This desert beach escape shines through the Los Cabos hotel scene with its Mexican luxe casitas. Couples are spoiled for choice when it comes to food, spa and adventure. This is a resort reborn: the new look ESPA spa is never-want-to-leave territory with 13 private treatment villas; and the OBO Salon by Jonathan & George, Pedi:Mani:Cure Studio by Bastien Gonzalez and Barber & Blade are all exclusive to One&Only. There are also art classes, whale watching (December to March) and the lantern-lit Agua Bar for evening chill-out time.

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT** Food glorious food. The way to a man's heart is via steak at Jean-Georges Vongerichten's SEARED or delicious field-to-table Mexican dishes at Agua by Larbi. Chef Larbi also does a much-recommended culinary tour.

**BREAK OUT FOR...** Hanging ten with local surfers. Embrace your inner dude and sign up for an excursion to Costa Azul or go wave riding further afield at East Cape.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR** Legendary diver Jacques Cousteau described the Sea of Cortez as the 'Galapagos of North America'. Sail this breathtaking sea on the hotel's 90 foot sleek yacht.

## Couples Castaways

Serenity pervades *Six Senses Con Dao*, an untamed gem off the southeast coast of Vietnam where breathtaking beauty is cloaked in quietude. If life's a beach, we know where we'd like to be.

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT**  
The Vietnamese food is exquisite. Miss Lan uses family recipes from bygone generations. Try Pho Bho, a rice noodle soup, with beef fillet, shallots and herbs.

**BREAK OUT FOR...**  
Hire a motorbike and head off with map and phone (your butler will be on speed-dial). Con Son is fascinating, scattered with historic sights and remote villages. Also be sure not to leave without snorkelling or diving the psychedelic waters.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR**  
It has to be the mile-long beach flanked by mountains.

Amid the turquoise waters and limestone karsts of Thailand's Phang Nga is *Six Senses Yao Noi* (pictured left). It whispers romance at every corner and there's a rustic luxury that befits the setting. The villas are like oversized treehouses (albeit with private pools).

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT**  
The Six Senses Spa with its forested hill setting, jaw-dropping views and miracle-working treatments that include moonlight massages.

**BREAK OUT FOR...**  
Hopping in a boat, kayaking or cycling to local villages.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR**  
Arriving at your destination by private speedboat enhances Koh Yao Noi's utter seclusion and tropical island dream.



## Wilderness Wow Factor



There aren't enough superlatives to describe Southern Utah's *Amangiri*. This is like nowhere else on earth, a place surrounded by deep canyons, towering rocks and a raw landscape of stark beauty. There's a power to the solitude, a romance to the immensity and an emotive magnitude that is perspective changing. Built of natural stone, Amangiri blends in to become part of the landscape.

The pool wraps around natural rock formations and the rooms are simple yet stunning with oodles of glass to max out on the views. This is epic America infused with Aman authenticity.

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT**  
The in-house guides that take you horse riding across the sweeping desert, mountain biking, canyoning and rock climbing.

**BREAK OUT FOR...**  
Absolutely everything. The Grand Canyon is just two and a half hours away; kayak on Lake Powell, float down the Colorado River between 300-metre high sandstone walls or explore Monument Valley and Zion National Park.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR**  
An early morning hot air balloon flight is a must. Launching from Amangiri, it floats above epic scenery where you can watch an ever-changing light dance



across the different rock formations. As night falls, the hot stone dining experience out in the desert comes a romantic second.

## Bowled Over by Bali



Relaunching after a massive revamp, *Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay* is more seductive than ever. We love the Balinese villas with their private courtyard gardens complete with infinity plunge pools and vast daybeds. It's tempting to lock the door and throw away the key, but don't.

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT**  
The stress-busting new wellness programmes include spa treatments by the sea and more yoga than you thought possible: there's everything from Flying yoga, Power yoga, to Night Fire yoga.

**BREAK OUT FOR...**  
The Four Seasons array of Bali-based adventures that include nipping over to Java in a helicopter for some serious surfing. Sounds exotic and crazy? It is.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR**  
Enjoy the beach club vibe at Sundara or stroll along the sands to little local restaurants to sample some of the island's best seafood.

## Eco Loving



Barefoot luxury doesn't get much better than at *Viceroy Riviera Maya*, a ridiculously romantic retreat on the blinding white Playa del Carmen sand. This eco escape embraces nature with 41 palapa-thatched villas decked out in natural wood, rattan and billowing muslin, all linked by paths that wind through primitive Mayan forest home to playful spider monkeys. Loll the day away in your handmade crochet hammock (every villa has one) or if you feel the need to crank it up a notch or two, try tequila tasting or stand-up paddle boarding. This is a little slice of jungle paradise and it's just for adults: sorry kids, you're not invited.

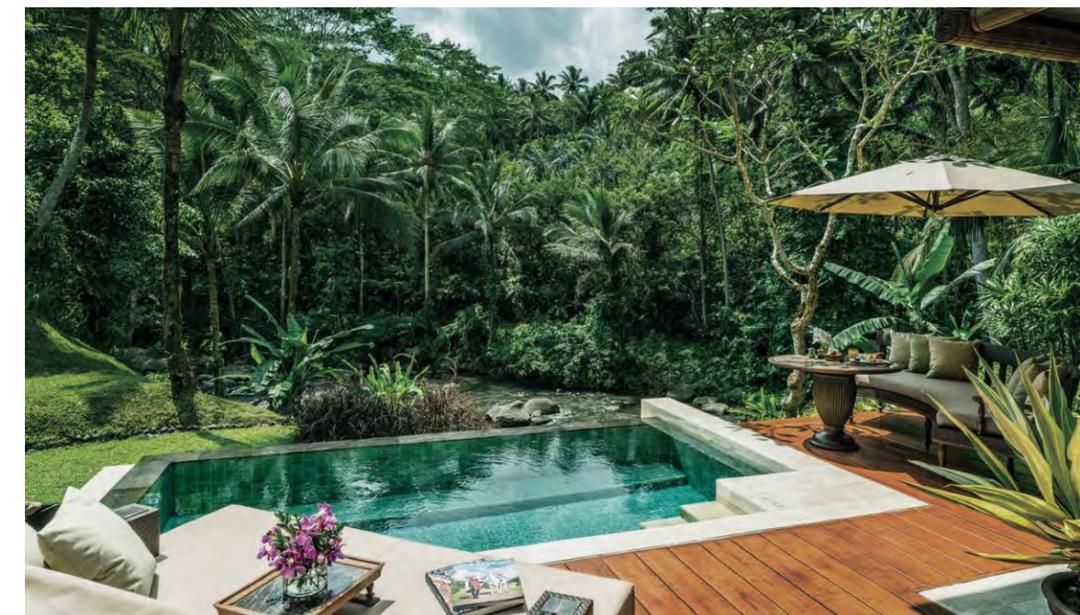
Once at Jimbaran it would be rude not to do the Four Seasons double and check into *Four Seasons Resort Bali at Sayan*. The recent upgrade sees another aesthetic success story but even if it had been left alone, this mountain retreat by the Ayung River would be utterly magical. Reached by a wooden bridge over coconut groves, you cross to another world.

**HOTEL HIGHLIGHT**  
The spa and yoga rituals set deep in the jungle are so good for the soul. Suspended in a silk hammock, try the new sacred 'air-nap'.



**BREAK OUT FOR...**  
Off-the-beaten-track adventures into the wilderness. Guided cycling tours into central Bali include the four-hour Kintamani tour starting at Mount Batur's volcanic crater and winding down for 30 kilometres through villages, past temples and rice paddies. Another day ditch the wheels for a paddle and white water raft down the Ayung River.

**ROMANCE X FACTOR**  
Being cocooned in this jungle idyll by enchanting gardens; enjoy a star gazing romantic dinner by the rooftop lotus pond set in the treetops.



# NORTH & SOUTH

For a road trip into the great outdoors, New Zealand's wilderness is vast and varied. From snow-capped mountains, glacial lakes and spectacular waterfalls to glistening bays, silent fjords, lush wineries and some seriously great places to stay along the way, we bring you the ultimate North and South Island itinerary. The question is: which one will win you over?



## UP NORTH

Bay of Islands is one of the world's ultimate maritime playgrounds. Turquoise waters surround 144 islands; there are vast swathes of untouched beach, big game fishing, kayaking and a host of sailing opportunities (spending overnight onboard a luxury catamaran comes highly recommended). It's also home to *Eagles Nest*, a 75 acre estate on its own private ridgeline. There are just five drop-dead gorgeous

Mediterranean-esque villas including Rahimoana with its sliding glass wall, 25 metre infinity pool, private beach and spellbinding views of the island-flecked ocean. After days spent exploring, we can't think of a bolthole we'd rather be.

Wend your way down to Taupo, a must-stop in the heart of North Island. On a bend of the mighty Waikato River is the foodie/fishing focused *Huka Lodge*. Park-like grounds

surround this riverside sanctuary, and a short walk beyond its gates is Huka Falls. Once a simple angler's lodge, it is now swish but homely, with roaring fires, a cosy library and some of the best food you'll find in the north. Break out of the bubble, wader yourself up and plunge through rivers fly-fishing; take an adrenalin-fuelled white water rafting trip down the Waikato; you can jet boat, sky dive or indulge in style on a champagne helicopter excursion over

the volcanic heartland. Carry on south to Wairarapa wine region. Overlooking the wild surf of Palliser Bay is *Wharekauhau Country Estate*, a coastal ranch surrounded by 5,000 acres of a working sheep farm. Embrace nature and hike through ancient forests past

*Clockwise from top*  
Eagles Nest; surfers; traditional Moari costume; Raglan Beach

crystal-clear streams; take a four-wheel drive farm tour, horse ride along the coast or try quad biking. Explore black sand beaches, walk to Cape Palliser Lighthouse and the nearby seal colony or go on a wine tour (there are 29 boutique wineries in striking distance so tasting comes with the territory). Back at the ranch, the cottages have crackling fires, squishy sofas and huge beds. Food is flat-out fabulous with a strong farm to table stance: fruits from the



orchard, vegetables from the garden, honey from local bees, wild fennel from the coast (it's not uncommon to see a chef out foraging). The dinner menu changes with the seasons but expect lots of beef and lamb.

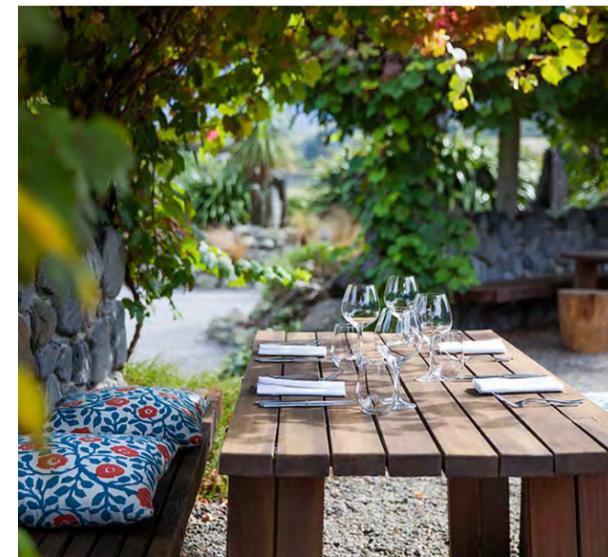


## DOWN SOUTH

Hop on a plane for the uber-quick flight from Wellington to Christchurch before picking up another set of wheels. No South Island trip would feel right without stopping off in Kaikoura, described by National Geographic as 'a maritime Serengeti'. It's home to sperm whales, dolphins, seals and albatross all year round, and if you're lucky the odd blue whale and Orca. Swimming with Kaikoura's dusky dolphins is real once-in-a-lifetime stuff. There are also fishing trips or get a local guide to take you crayfish diving. Just a few miles north on a deer breeding farm is *Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses*. There are just five treehouses, all unique and jaw-droppingly beautiful. Set ten metres above ground in the canopy of a native Kanuka grove, these wood-clad masterpieces are like bedrooms in the sky. Run by a husband and wife team, Fiona is a former Masterchef finalist so there's a foodie focus. Expect lots of venison and crayfish (kai means 'to eat' koura means 'crayfish') alongside their own olive oil. And for every guest that stays, the owners plant a native tree or shrub.

Next up is Queenstown and nowhere does outdoor

adventure like this small town, a great place to get some proper adrenalin-pumping fun. Go cross-country cycling, hang glide or hurtle through the air on a sky dive. Take a deep breath and go bungee jumping, zip-lining or canyon swinging and, if you're visiting in winter, hit the ski slopes. Whatever the season, Queenstown buzzes with outdoorsy energy. A hop from the action is *Eichardt's Private Hotel*, its lakefront address something of a landmark. Once the haunt of local gold miners, it is now a boutique property. Its historic bar is fabulously famous: the atmosphere is brilliant and the wines world-class.



The trip's finale comes in the form of *Minaret Station*, a luxury lodge in the heart of the Southern Alps, only accessible by helicopter. Owned by four brothers who live and breathe these mountains, this is authentic New Zealand. So remote, everything comes in and out by helicopter, Minaret Station is as true to wilderness as you can get. There are no roads, just gargantuan mountains and some of the purest air you'll ever breathe. Adventures come on foot, skis, two wheels, on water or in the sky. Fly-fish the remotest rivers, mountain bike deep into the wilds or go heli-skiing. Fly over fjords, landing on

secluded beaches; soar above lakes, glaciers, mountains and waterfalls, touching down wherever, whenever. The four, premier alpine chalets complete with hot tubs and roaring open fires are your own hiding place that nobody else can reach. Enjoy...



*Clockwise from top*  
Palliser Bay lighthouse; Helicopter at a glacier in Queenstown; mountain hiking; Hapuku Lodge; Whirinaki Rainforest



## CITY WITH *a soul*

The French-founded city of *New Orleans* is a playground for your senses; the sound of lively jazz flows through vibrant streets; the renowned Preservation Hall – a cornerstone of the city's music and culture – hosts an acoustic jazz concert almost every night of the year and there are horse-drawn carriages to discover the cultural sights of the French Quarter. Food is big in this city; be sure not to leave without trying a traditional roast beef po'boy – the delicious 'poor boy' is the staple sandwich of New Orleans. The city is jam-packed with colourful festivals and extravagant events. In July is the much loved ESSENCE Festival, (headlining massive names such as

Diana Ross and John Legend) and then the annual Mardi Gras, an iconic affair usually falling in the month of February, is a celebration bursting with over-the-top costumes, loud traditional music and brightly decorated floats. If you don't fancy trailing through the streets, take in the ambience from the comfort of your private balcony when staying in the Grand Suite at *Soniat House*, set in the atmospheric neighbourhood of Vieux Carré. Equally elegant is the *Windsor Court Hotel*, with its recent US\$22 million restoration, the hotel boasts new décor in all rooms and suites as well as the addition of a sophisticated cocktail bar and lavish spa.

# FLOATING FANTASIES

From channelling your inner yin and yang with paddle-board yoga and experiencing an epicurean encounter on the open sea, to a safari aboard a drifting lodge and exploring a floating market in Vietnam. These are our favourite aquatic adventures that make the most of the water that surrounds us.



## SERENITY ON THE SEA

Boasting one of the world's largest living coral reefs, it is no surprise that the secluded island of Canouan is a magnet for the sailing enthusiasts and divers of the jet-set. Though you'd be forgiven for staying resort-side at *Pink Sands Club*, set on the pearlescent sands of Godahl Beach. One of the newest bolt-holes in the Caribbean and boasting cutting-edge technology (think hidden televisions located within mirrors), an infinity-edge pool with a three-tier deck and sumptuous suites, days are best spent doing very little. Whilst therapies designed to revitalise and sooth can be found hillside via a funicular at the glorious Pink Sands

Club Spa with views across the mesmerising ocean, top billing goes to the two overwater spa palapas. Abscond by boat to suites 'Lapis' and 'Sapphire' which feature special glass-bottom floors; watch the colourful marine life and reef fish flit below in the limpid, pale-blue lagoon as you rejuvenate with a sigh-inducing massage. Specially-tailored ESPA treatments are provided, guaranteed to take you away from the stresses of everyday life. What's more, guests can also enjoy a selection of light bites lovingly prepared by the chef, relaxation terraces and a swim up jetty; here you will find a true haven of privacy and tranquillity.

*Above & below*  
Ocean View Four Bedroom  
Lagoon Villa; Beachfront  
One Bedroom Penthouse





## WATER ON THE WATER

Lake Como still retains its flavour of 19th century elegance and is well-worth a visit. On the west side, with panoramic views of Bellagio and Varenna, sits family-owned historic *Grand Hotel Tremezzo* – formerly an Art Nouveau Palace. There's spa-spoiling with ESPA treatments at T Spa, lolling

on sun loungers at the pool amidst the rose gardens and the pièce de résistance? Across the road at the waterside terrace, the hotel has a stylish, award-winning floating pool on the lake. You'll probably want to spend every minute of your stay here, and we don't blame you. The water is heated for the most enjoyable

of swims, T Beach champagne bar is a stone's throw away, and the backdrop of the rolling Grigne Mountains has to be seen to be believed. Of course, there is much to tempt you away including watersports, hiking and boat trips on 'Lancia Ruy' – the hotel's private Venetian boat lovingly restored and providing a limo

service on the water. Closer to home, explore the beautiful botanic gardens and Canova sculptures of Villa Carlotta next door, before tucking into a delicious meal at T Pizza or fine cuisine created by renowned Italian Maestro, Gualtiero Marchesi at La Terrazza – one of the most beautiful settings on the lake.



## SOUL-SEARCHING ON A PADDLE-BOARD

With treetop spinning classes and a host of themed months from Jive June to September Solos on offer, leading all-inclusive resort, *BodyHoliday*, is known for being on the cutting-edge of health and wellness. Perched directly on Caribblue beach where the waters are quiet and the wind is calm (note: ideal for watersports), be inspired to master the art of stand-up paddle-boarding (SUP). Taking it up a notch, SUP yoga fuses one of the fastest growing sports, with the calming practice of yoga. As you move from chair pose to mountain pose on a board

(like a surf board but bigger), you'll have to engage your core for better balance as you focus on your breath with the gentle sound of water lapping at your toes. With experts available to assist with your technique, this is a full body workout guaranteed to renew your energy levels. And when your mind is soothed and you have worked up an appetite, our choice of eatery is Tao (especially since they changed the menu so that any dish can be a starter or a main). Savour fine-dining and sup on cocktails overlooking the glossy waters of the Caribbean Sea.



## A SENSE OF TASTE

Delving into the rich culinary culture of Antigua and Barbuda, all-time favourite *Jumby Bay, A Rosewood Resort* (an impressive private island just off the north east coast of Antigua) invites guests on an epicurean encounter on the open sea. Welcome to 'Sea-to-Table', an excursion that enables you to catch your own entrée of the day. It's a private charter for two to four people on the resort's sport fishing boat. The professional crew create a lunch fit for a king and serve up refreshing drinks whilst guests plunder the sea for the freshest and plumpest seafood – mahi mahi, wahoo, marlin, tuna and kingfish – have we caught your attention yet? In the evening, take your seat at a private chef's table in exquisite surroundings where the talented team will whip up your catch of the day, accompanied with vegetables from the new Jumby Bay farm for unparalleled freshness. Next, make a beeline for the new Antiguan Black Daquiri signature cocktail at the Estate House (which re-opened in November last year after a multi-million dollar restoration).

## INTO THE BLUE

The land of fire and ice, a trip to the fascinating country of Iceland can encompass black sand beaches, striking glaciers, wild ponies, the Gulfoss waterfall, Eyjafjallajökull volcano and, if you're lucky, a breathtaking display of the phenomenal Northern Lights. This island is one big adventure playground. However, no visit

is complete without a visit to the country's most popular spot on the Reyjanes Peninsula – the rich geothermal waters of the Blue Lagoon. For an incredibly therapeutic experience, wallow for hours in the mineral and salt-rich waters, known by many as healing waters (around 37 to 39°C). Cover yourself in

as much white silica mud as you like: bathrobes, towels and slippers can all be hired onsite. Stress doesn't stand a chance. When you are content with your beautification in the milky-blue waters, a short 45 minute journey filled with wondrous views will take you from the Blue Lagoon to the warm cossetting of historical

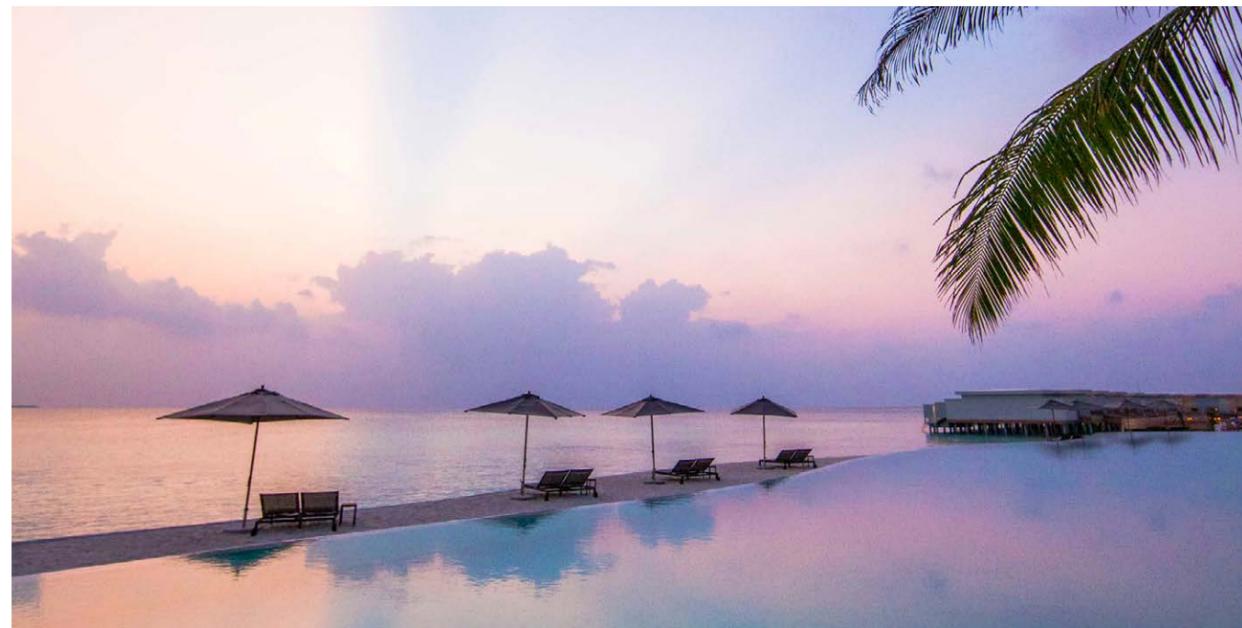
**Hotel Borg.** This attractive Art-Deco building is in the heart of the action overlooking Reykjavik's Austurvöllur square and the perfect base from which to explore. An outpost of Jamie's Italian, the household British restaurant chain headed up by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, is set to open at the hotel this spring.



## OCEAN DREAMING ON THE REEF

Surrender to a full body massage tailored to your needs using warm botanical oils delivered with an expert touch. But what makes this any different to other top hotel's 'signature' treatment? Set on the northernmost of the Whitsunday Islands in the heart of Australia's Great Barrier Reef, **One&Only Hayman Island** has created an aptly named 'Ocean Dreaming Massage', upping the ante for spa offerings and becoming mandatory on the list of every luxury spa aficionado. Subject to the tides and the swell, you can 'float' on a shell-adorned bed set atop the pristine azure sea for 90 minutes

surrounded by fish, the gentle waves helping to relax you even further into submission. Don't forget your swimsuit and remember, safety first: you'll be smothered in sunscreen before the cossetting begins. To fill the rest of your time, the potential for adventure at this property is simply unmatched. There's diving with resort professionals in Blue Pearl Bay, snorkelling, sailing, hiking or even taking a helicopter ride to the renowned Whitehaven Beach. And then there's the huge saltwater pool (the largest in the southern hemisphere) to dive in before heading to your oceanfront Beach Villa to watch the sun go down.



## MAKING WAVES ON THE BAA ATOLL

Exploring the vast warm waters surrounding **Amilla Fushi** affords you the opportunity to get up close and personal with mesmerising marine life – you can spy whale sharks, turtles and manta rays amidst the coral formations of the Baa Atoll in a UNESCO protected biosphere. Say goodbye to glass-bottomed boat tours and hello to an

immersive underwater world experience. Resident marine biologist Lauren Arthur, who is known for wearing a mermaid tail on guided snorkelling tours, leads trips to the world renowned Hanifaru Bay and the Blue Hole – the latter, a natural submerged wonder which is an absolute must-visit. Spend an unforgettable night floating on the moon-lit ocean;

keen sailors can charter Lady Thuraya, the hotel's private yacht to get a taste of the beauty of the Maldives above the water. Aquatic and marine 'Heroes' are also regularly invited to offer their expertise in a variety of fields from free diving to watersports, photography to conservation. This, alongside Miami-style beach huts and a youthful vibe,

is what enables Amilla Fushi to stand-out as something rather unique in the Maldives. By night, savour modern Japanese cuisine at Feeling Koi – it is overwater of course and for those who like to make an entrance you can seamlessly drift in by speedboat – and after, your personal katheeb (butler) drops you off at your overwater home.

## MARKETS ON THE MEKONG

Exploring local street life is one of the best ways to get under the skin of a destination. In Vietnam's western region, the river is where you'll really get a sense of everyday life. From your base in the urban sprawl of Ho Chi Minh (formerly Saigon), take a trip to rural Cai Be's unique floating market on the Tien River – the biggest wholesale market in the region (around 450 boats), formed in the Nguyen Dynasty in the 19th century. Your tastebuds can sample fresh river produce and vegetables as extraordinary sights prevail – watch vendors clamouring for business and buyers bargaining for goods.

Hop aboard a sampan in the company of a local guide to explore the craft villages, fisheries and orchards along the charming waterways and emerald rice fields of the Mekong Delta. Return to colonial property **Park Hyatt Saigon** to relax poolside after a day of sightseeing. Or, for an alternative perspective on local life, sip on a signature cocktail at the hotel's ultra-stylish 2 Lam Son martini bar. Still eager to learn more about the ingredients you've just encountered? Join a cooking class and prepare a Vietnamese dish with the chef. Top tip: set off early in the morning to catch the markets at their best.



## SLEEP ON CERULEAN WATERS

The Indian Ocean is where visitors can expect to be beguiled by an island idyll: powder-soft sands, a glorious sky that seems to melt into the sea and an outstanding house reef to snorkel away the days. Uber-cool *Huvafen Fushi* has all of that, and more. Stealing your attention, the overwater accommodation is

simply incredible – you'd be hard-pushed to find better elsewhere. Renowned for blazing a trail when it comes to architecture and design, it came as no surprise when PERAQUUM created James Bond-esque two-bedroom sunset-facing Ocean Pavilions – some of the largest in the world. Set on a long egg-

shaped pier off the island, they boast a fibre-optic lit infinity pool and an infinity-edge Kohler bath that fills from the ceiling. You'll be surrounded by designer furniture including pieces by Frank Gehry – the icon of iconic architecture; a library stocked with bestsellers and all your favourite gadgets (an inbuilt

Bose sound system plays from 12,000 pre-programmed tunes on the iPod). A personal Thakuru (butler) and in-built glass floor for watching the fish below complete the picture. Or, cast off and sleep beneath the stars onboard the resort's dhoni – which comes complete with chef and fully stocked wine cellar.



## ADVENTURE ON A RIVER SAFARI

Pods of hippos lazing around or elephants drinking from the banks of the Chobe River; the views from your accommodation are constantly changing. The 42 metre long houseboat, *Zambezi Queen*, is an exclusive floating boutique lodge that will transport guests along the river for unparalleled game viewing. There are just 14 suites, designed with the surroundings in mind – imagine light contemporary rooms with tasteful African décor. All the facilities that you would expect from a luxury hotel are present and correct: king-sized bed with floor-to-ceiling windows, delicious food and first-class service.

But because river cruising isn't just about watching the world go by, there's a range of daily excursions including game-viewing by tender boat, bream fishing and visits to nearby villages for a taste of the local life. On-land, game drives in Chobe National Park, northern Botswana, are a highlight; renowned for the highest elephant concentration on the continent (circa 120,000). In the evening, enjoy a G&T on the upper deck, dinner around a fire in an open-air boma and stargazing through the computerised telescope. Best time to visit: go during the dry season (April to October).



## Knowledge #29/50

📍 How do you select your perfect beach escape? Here's our top 10 all-time favourite destinations for a #beach #holiday <http://bit.ly/2k0GHsd>

# 30

**THE YEAR OF INDIA**  
Famed for its colourful contrasts, India offers discerning travellers a plethora of inspirational and immersive experiences.

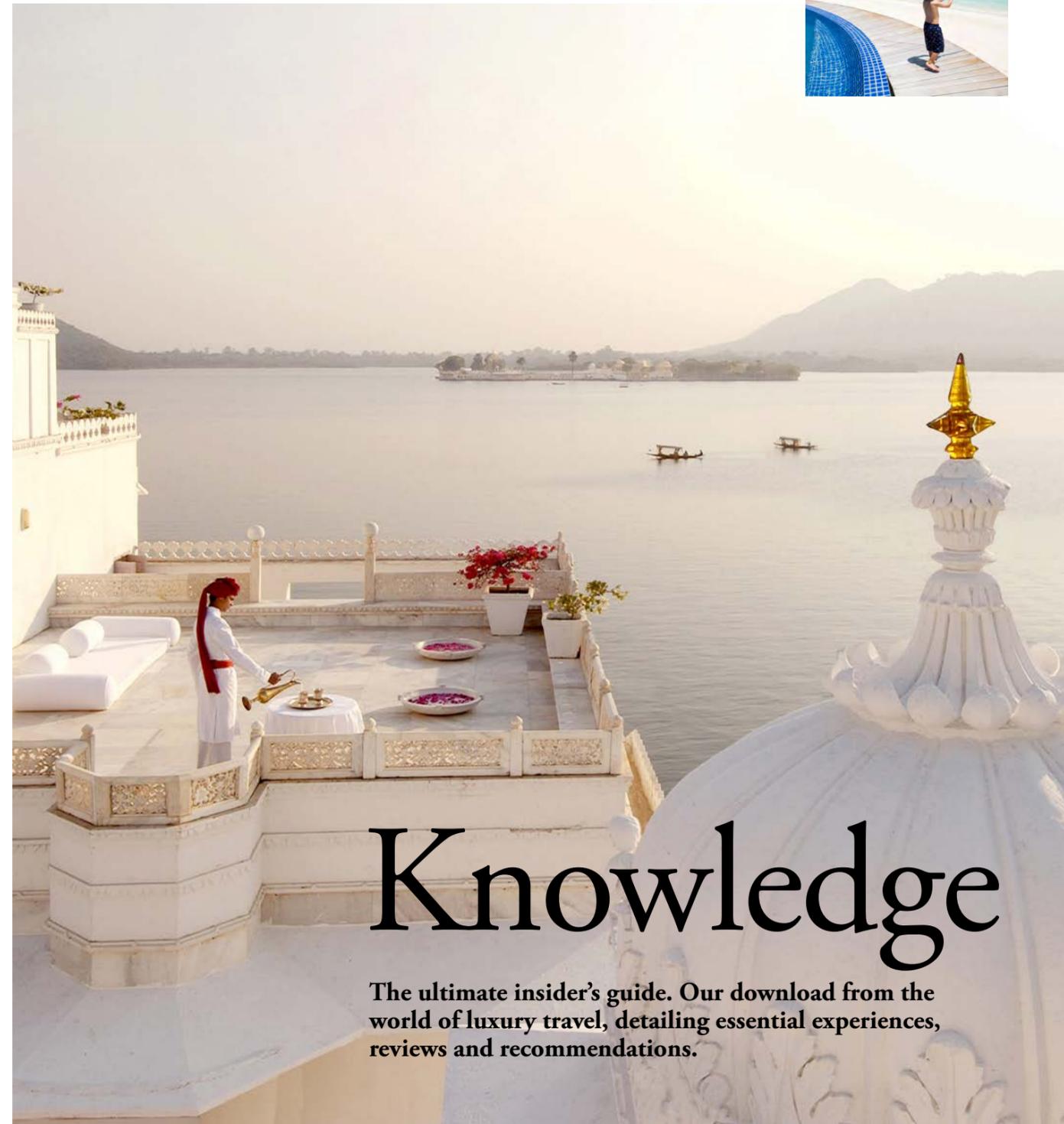
**34 WORTH THE EXTRA HOP**  
Private islands, secret coves and remote beaches – these properties make the journey worthwhile.

**42 CROWD PLEASERS**  
Suitable for couples, families and groups, these resorts have something for everyone.

**47 GOURMET GLOBETROTTING**  
Tantalise your taste buds with our round-up of foodie favourites from around the globe.

**37 BARBADOS**  
We look beyond the white sand beaches and swaying palm trees to discover the local culture and foodie favourites.

**45 BEYOND THE SEA**  
Ocean voyages, river cruises and yachting – set sail on a journey of discovery, exploring the world's most lavish locations.



# Knowledge

The ultimate insider's guide. Our download from the world of luxury travel, detailing essential experiences, reviews and recommendations.

# THE YEAR OF INDIA

A trip to India is an assault on the senses in all its technicolour glory, and one thing is for sure, a visit to this diverse country will leave an indelible and eternal mark on your soul. Utterly mesmerising, this country is bursting with contrasts: from its crazy cities packed with incredible architecture, hurtling rickshaws, bustling markets, lumbering cows, magnificent temples, mosques and palaces; to the quiet backwaters of Kerala, the tropical beaches of Goa, its expansive wildlife reserves and the serenity of yoga and Ayurveda, no other country has such a dual personality. And it is these extremities that make India so compelling.

This year is also a joint celebration: the India-UK Year of Culture, a festival that marks the 70th anniversary of Indian independence. There will be everything from music, art and film, to theatre, literature and performing arts. The British Library's Magna Carta 1225 edition will be travelling to India and Shakespeare's First Folio tour will also be heading subcontinent ways. There has never been a better time to embrace India in all its multi-faceted intrigue.

## Bright lights, big cities

India's cities are a natural starting point to most journeys. Whether you land in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata or Chennai, there will be a frenetic attack on the senses. Dodging rickshaws and cows, haggling in markets and feasting on street food, can quickly become part of the norm. If you open yourself up to India's urban energy, you'll understand much of what makes this beguiling country tick.

Due to its proximity to the Taj Mahal and Rajasthan, many travellers start in Delhi. This massive metropolis is defined by a unique blend of old and new. Take time to explore and you'll unearth some real treasures. Start with Qutab Minar, a soaring 73 metre tower built in 1193, at its foot is Quwwat-ul-Islam, the first mosque to be built in India. From here you can take a cycle tour of Mehrauli. Head to Old Delhi and the massive Red Fort; visit the ancient bazaars of Chandni Chowk; admire beautifully preserved Haveli homes, before heading out to Raj Ghat, a marble monument marking the spot where Mahatma Gandhi was cremated.

For off-the-beaten-track adventures, take a street photography tour of New Delhi and capture the culture, colours and pace of life as you mingle with locals. Keen foodies should look into cookery lessons, discover the secrets to Indian cuisine and

then sit back and enjoy the banquet. Combine going local with utter luxury, and for the latter, little in Delhi comes close to *The Leela Palace* with its custom-made everything. The rooms are huge (the Grand Deluxes are reportedly the largest in the city) and there's wow factor in abundance. Food is fabulous with lavish Indian at Jamavar, Japanese at Megu, Italian at Le Cirque (of New York fame) and a global culinary journey at The Qube. The best bit is the rooftop terrace with pool and otherworldly ESPA spa. For a super-cool vibe, check into *The Oberoi, Gurgaon*. Strikingly minimalist, its light-suffused design includes a white marbled lobby with mirrored pillars. This is luxe at its max: everyone has access to a butler, the outdoor pool is Olympic sized and chauffeur service comes courtesy of a fleet of BMWs.

From Delhi to Agra and the Taj Mahal. Nothing quite prepares you for viewing this wonder of the world firsthand. The Taj Mahal is amazing from every angle, but go at sunrise and you'll not only avoid the crowds, but also witness the light at its most magical, dancing over this incredibly detailed monument. Book into *The Oberoi Armavilas*, the only hotel with views from every room. The Taj Mahal is undoubtedly India's tourist emblem, but don't let your trip be a cultural one-hit-wonder. There are a host of other take-your-breath-away palaces, forts and monuments. Jaipur's graceful pink architecture has earned it the title of 'The Pink City' and is home to the intricate facade of Hawa Mahal, aka the Palace of the Winds.

**Chaos versus calm, embrace India and all its diversity on a never-to-be-forgotten trip to this colourful, contradictory land**



*Clockwise from above*  
Holi Festival; cycle rickshaw; market foods; henna art; garlands at Rajapur Market





**One city that is well worth the detour is the ‘Golden City’ of Jaisalmer. Once a sleepy desert outpost, it has transformed itself into a tourist hub. Surrounded by the sands of the Thar Desert, Jaisalmer is utterly enchanting**



*Clockwise from left*  
Indian cuisine; Taj Lake Palace; Bengal tiger; Taj Mahal; sacred cows on the beach in Goa

*Opposite page*  
Candle during Diwali; a houseboat; statue of Ganesh



There's also the Amber Fort, a beautiful combination of white marble and red stone. Spend time soaking up the sights and sounds of Jaipur, full of artisans and musicians, it has a great vibe. Go a little further afield into the countryside, finishing with a picnic at the magnificently restored Naila Fort. Enjoy royal treatment and base yourself at the vast **Taj Rambagh Palace**. Once the residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur, elegant doesn't come close: the suites are exquisite; dining at Suvarna Mahal transports you back in time and the Polo Bar (complete with trophies) is one of our favourite drinking holes.

One city that is well worth the detour is the 'Golden City' of Jaisalmer. Once a sleepy desert outpost, it has transformed itself into a tourist hub. Surrounded by the sands of the Thar Desert, Jaisalmer is utterly enchanting. The main pull is Jaisalmer Fort, rising above the desert like a gigantic sandcastle. One of the planet's few living forts (about one quarter of the old city's population live within its walls), it is packed with houses, bazaars, shops and Jain temples. It's also quiet (there's a no vehicle policy) and it provides amazing views of the old city and desert beyond. Just one hour east of Jaisalmer, deep in the Thar is **The Serai**, a tented ode to peace, space and luxury. Impossibly dreamy, its 21 suites offer an almost Victorian-style safari.

Another unique city is Udaipur, and it is one of India's most romantic. Dominated by Lake Pichola, Udaipur is steeped in history, boasting atmospheric lanes, impressive temples (Eklingji and Sahastra Bahu are musts) and wonderful palaces including the Grand City Palace on the banks of the lake and Monsoon Palace up in the hills. For the full Udaipur monty, there's only one place to stay: **Taj Lake Palace**. This glittering marble structure is built on an island but seemingly floats on Lake Pichola. It featured heavily in Octopussy and still oozes James Bond glamour.

**Calmer karma**  
The chaos of India finds its counterpoint in the tranquil backwaters, bohemian beaches and serene wildlife reserves. Leave the metropolitan hubbub behind to spot tigers and other native wildlife in Bandhavgarh National Park. This forested habitat is home to India's highest density of tigers and safari guests report regular sightings. From one wilderness to another, drift south to the calm canals and lagoons of Kerala for a trip aboard a houseboat. Cruising the backwaters is serenity personified. See day-to-day life unfurl on the riverbanks; watch fishermen cast their nets and children playing.

## FESTIVE FUN

**Ganesh Chaturthi** takes place in August/September and lasts for 10 days. It celebrates Ganesh's birthday, the elephant-headed god.

**Diwali** is a five-day festival in October/November, known as the 'festival of lights'. Houses and shops are lit up with candles and there are firework displays and feasts. It represents self-improvement and new beginnings.

**Holi** is held in March and is India's most colourful festival, celebrating the victory of good over evil. It is known as the 'festival of colour' and takes place over two days. The event is renowned for the throwing of coloured powders.



Houseboats come with king-sized beds and a cook who dishes up melt-in-the-mouth Kerala meals. For those yearning for beachside relaxation, there is the one and only Goa, with its stretches of sand, boho vibe, Portuguese influence, temples, churches and old houses. A mecca for artists and writers, going to Goa is all about putting the brakes on. And nowhere else is more stop the clock than **The Leela Goa**, tucked away in the quiet south. Flanked by beach and river, this luxury resort comes with its very own in-house Ayurveda doctor. Now that's what we call good for the soul.

The Leela Goa is just one of hundreds of Ayurvedic hideaways dotted around this vast country. Across India there are clinics, spas, resorts and retreats, all offering traditional signature and spirit reviving therapies. India is also the birthplace of yoga: combine these two healing practices and it'll work wonders on the mind, body and soul. Much of India might be a hectic whirlwind, a crazy chaotic cacophony, but its other side is utterly calm. From the backwaters of Kerala to yoga and Ayurveda, to the wild expanses of national parks, it's easier than you think to find perspective-changing peace.



## 24 HOURS IN MUMBAI

This coastal metropolis is home to more than 20 million people. Embrace Mumbai madness and pack in as much as you can. Tour **Bollywood** for exclusive access to film and television sets; head to the clamouring **Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus** of Slumdog Millionaire fame; visit CSMVS Museum for the lowdown on India's heritage and wander the markets. Escapism comes easy at the **Taj Mahal Palace**, the hotel group's flagship that opened in 1903. Overlooking the Gateway to India and Arabian Sea, it's an oasis of calm amid the craziness.



# WORTH THE EXTRA HOP

Some places are worth the long-haul flight, the extra boat ride or helicopter transfer. We've picked seven far-flung places that aren't accessible by direct flight, but worth every minute of travel time.

## PETER ISLAND, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

This is the largest private island in the BVI, 1,800 marooned acres fringed by five pearl-white beaches (pictured). There are few better away-from-it-all islands in the Caribbean. Hiking, biking or running trails are dotted with water stations; take a trip to RMS Rhone, one of the world's top dive sites; stay overnight on a yacht and don't leave without surrendering to a sea-stone massage at the sublime spa, munching on coconut-crusted French toast or indulging in a five-course wine dinner. It might be one of the longest established hotels in this part of the world, but Peter Island gives all its newbie neighbours a run for their money.

## FOUR SEASONS RESORT & RESIDENCES, ANGUILLA

Turquoise sea, rustling palms and never ending coral beaches, Anguilla is everything you want from the Caribbean. Being further away than other islands, it has a real sleepy feel that has pure escapism imprinted into its silky soft sand. Four Seasons Resort & Residences opened last year and immediately hit the luxury spot. Gorgeous guest rooms and vast villas have been designed by Kelly Wearstler and feature a load of earthy elements including driftwood lamps and gnarled wooden tables. The bluff setting overlooking Barnes Bay is also pretty fabulous, as is the huge spa, plethora of facilities and glam vibe.

## SONG SAA PRIVATE ISLAND, CAMBODIA

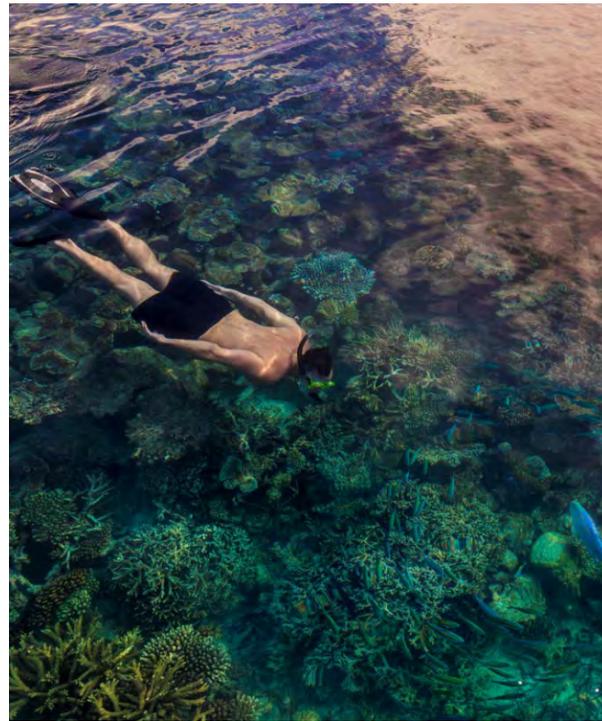
Ravishingly relaxing, this is how you do eco-luxe. Cambodia's first genuine five-star beach resort is scattered over a pair of islands in the secluded Koh Rong archipelago. Whisked by speedboat from Sihanoukville, this is a place where time does stand still. By day, snorkel amid rainbow-hued fish, kayak to secret coves and picnic on deserted islands. By night take the bioluminescence swim under the stars, sip cocktails at the laidback Driftwood Bar or feast on Khmer classics at Vista. What's more, Song Saa's eco and community credentials are sky high with resident marine biologists and the majority of staff, Cambodian.



## SIX SENSES ZIL PASYON, SEYCHELLES

Anyone who has been 'Six Sensed' will know that it's worth travelling to the ends of the earth for. Zil Pasyon is no different: and it might just be one of the most luxurious resorts in the Seychelles (bold talk we know). Sitting pretty in perpetual summer on the spectacular island of Félicité, it's accessible only by helicopter and boat; once here you have 600-plus wild acres and three insanely beautiful beaches to call home. Vast villas come with their own wine cellars and 24 hour Guest Experience Maker; the Six Senses Spa perched on granite boulders is made of knot-busting stuff; there's sensational seafood and a hammock-strung bar for rum punch lolling.

FOUR SEASONS RESORT MALDIVES AT LANDAA GIRAAVARU, **MALDIVES**  
A 40 minute seaplane from Malé transports you to the remote Baa Atoll and UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve for a healthy dose of Four Seasons-style seclusion. This is a place for R&R with all the frills. Inner peace is found at the Spa & Ayurvedic Retreat with its otherworldly treatments, AntiGravity yoga, panchakarma and chakra blessings. Also don't miss overwater restaurant Al Barakat. Decorated with hundreds of Arabian lanterns, it dishes up spicy Lebanese mezze and delicious North African grills. Plus, diving gold dust comes in the form of a two kilometre long lagoon.



CAPRI PALACE HOTEL & SPA, **ITALY**  
Mediterranean chic as only Capri knows how to do it: Capri Palace Hotel & Spa is worth the extra boat trip. In the centre of Anacapri with views over to Ischia, you're entering celebville. Don some oversized sunglasses and start star spotting. Highlights include incredible artwork (everywhere); the chic beach club by the Blue Grotto; the two Michelin-starred restaurant L'Olivo and Cape Beauty Farm and a medi spa that deals in much more than your standard

massage. All stone floors, vaulted ceilings and graceful columns, this is old-school la dolce vita.



ANDBEYOND CHOBE UNDER CANVAS, **BOTSWANA**  
In the far north of Botswana bordering the Chobe River, this is back-to-nature bush camping with mod cons. Chobe National Park is famed for its herds of elephants, buffalo and hippo. For a remote African adventure we can't fault this under-the-radar camp of just five tented suites. For a bird's eye view andBeyond also offers an exclusive 'Fly me around Botswana Safari' plus cruises down the Chobe River to spot elephants bathing, crocodiles sunning themselves and pods of hippo cooling off. The camp's guides and trackers are also some of the best in the business.



TRAVEL IN STYLE WITH **ETIHAD AIRWAYS**  
We recommend flying with Etihad to reach these far-flung but incredible must-see destinations. Their new aircraft fleet offers more space for passengers to stretch out and relax on the longer trips, as well as having the latest in-flight entertainment systems to keep you amused the entire journey. Spoil yourself by travelling in The Residence, the only three-room suite on a commercial airline.

# Barbados

## Calypso Charm

Sun-drenched sand, turquoise tinted sea and a plethora of ultra-luxury hotels are just some of the reasons Barbados is a perennial favourite with UK travellers.

Doing nothing comes easily on this relaxed Caribbean island where turtles nest, palms rustle and the sound of steel-pans fill the air. Yet explore a little further and you'll find an authenticity to the island, a place steeped in culture and tradition, a fabulous food scene, friendly laidback locals and, for 2017, a year dedicated to sport. Welcome to behind-the-beaches Barbados.



## Culture vulture

With its roots in England, Africa and the West Indies, Barbados has its own unique identity. The backdrop is totally tropical but delve deeper and you find beautiful plantation houses hidden within the sugar cane fields; botanic gardens that give Kew a run for its money; striking architecture; fascinating museums and a thriving arts scene. Some of the plantation houses whisk you back to a bygone era. St. Nicholas Abbey is a must. Just one of only three genuine Jacobean mansions in the western hemisphere,

this old plantation house has a cane grinding mill and a rum distillery (buy a bottle, it makes a great coming home present). Also worth a visit is the green-shuttered Sunbury Plantation House. Dating back to 1660 it is the height of elegance. Time your visit over lunch for melt-in-the-mouth Bajan feasts, or teatime for the quintessential afternoon tea. Botanical gardens abound: from Andromeda on the east coast where you might spot green monkeys to the quirky Huntles, a magical world that occupies a large sinkhole. Bridgetown itself is

a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its colonial architecture making it a worthy awardee. Wander the streets or take a tour; stop off at the Museum of Parliament for a fascinating insight into Barbados' road to self-government and drop into the Mount Gay Visitor Centre for rum tours and free tastings. Other highlights are Harrison's Cave in the central uplands where trams take you into huge underground caverns containing stalagmites, stalactites, streams, lakes and waterfalls.



## It's only natural

The white sand beaches are just the beginning of Barbados' natural playground. Even if it's just a day away from beach bliss, hire a car and head into the island's lush interior. Explore the twisting roads, drive by sugar cane fields, forests, village greens and colourful gardens ablaze with bougainvillea. From land to sea. Be sure to take the plunge into the island's watery world. On the west coast the snorkelling and diving is sensational with amazing visibility, reefs galore and shoal upon shoal of psychedelic fish, bobbing sea horses and gliding manta rays. Take a catamaran cruise down the coast, swim with turtles, drink rum punch and watch the sun cast its pink and orange glow over the calm Caribbean Sea. Other great watery adventures include kayaking, paddle boarding, fishing or hitting the east coast's surf scene.



## Food for thought

African, Indian and British influences have all played their part in creating the Bajan cuisine of today. Local foodie haunts and hotel restaurants combine to form a coast-to-coast gourmet extravaganza bursting with colour and flavour. Flying fish with cou cou is the national dish and you shouldn't leave without sampling the staple. Then there's jerk chicken, fish cakes, chicken curry roti, grilled prawns, salt bread to name but a few menu regulars. Even up-scale restaurants that have a Mediterranean slant, feature a good dose of Bajan flair. We've picked six of the best.

1.

For *seafood*, check into *Champers*. Set above crashing waves on the south coast, it is the place for fresh fish, plus the portions are super-generous.

2.

There's many a *table with a view* in Barbados, but *The Cliff*, perched above an idyllic floodlit cove pips others to the post.

3.

Try *Daphne's* for elegant dining, stylish and utterly *romantic* it is loved by all lucky enough to nab a table.

4.

Visit *Oistins* for *Friday fish fry night*. Locals and tourists mingle at a cluster of beachside shacks to celebrate Friday fun.

5.

The current *en vogue* establishment is *Cin Cin By the Sea*. Tuck into the jumbo crab cakes.

6.

For *water's edge* dining *The Fish Pot* in Little Good Harbour is a dreamy spot.

## Ready, set, go

Travellers visiting this sports-loving island can enjoy a local cricket match (Bajan-style with street food and steel bands), take in a polo match at one of four grounds, or channel your inner Rory Mclroy on one of the many beautiful courses. There's also go-karting, horse riding, cycling and watersports galore. What's more, 2017 has been tipped as the island's 'Year of Sports'. As well as these more active pursuits, here are a few highlights from the events calendar this year.

### 03 to 09 June:

Sailors ahoj, Barbados Yacht Club in Bridgetown is hosting the 2017 *Finn World Masters Championship*.

### 18 to 25 June:

Any budding Jane Packer should check out the *World Flower Show*, this year's spectacle is hosted in Bridgetown.

### July to August:

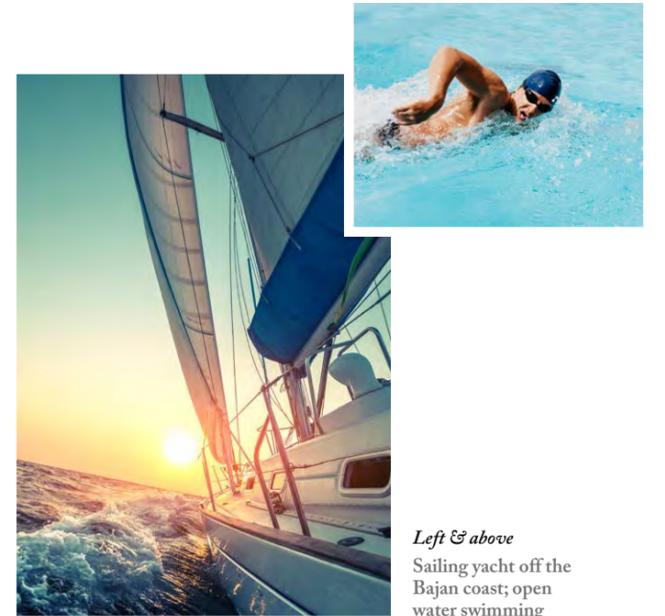
Expect an explosion of music, colour, artistry and aromas at the *Crop Over* festival, culminating in a street party on the final day.

### 01 to 05 November:

Enter into the Barbados *Open Water Swim Festival* for swimming and socializing.

### 17 to 20 November:

*Barbados Food & Rum Festival* is one for the gourmets. This weekend is sure to tantalize your taste buds.



Left & above  
Sailing yacht off the Bajan coast; open water swimming

## Hot property

For a small island, Barbados is big on luxury. Not short of five stars, we pick luxury standouts for 2017.



### Hotel hit:

Toes in the sand... only a hop, skip and a jump away from the platinum shores

## The Fairmont Royal Pavilion

A couple's sanctuary burrowed amidst lush greenery and colourful flora. Roll out of bed and onto the beach with minimal effort for a refreshing early morning swim – the Beachfront Junior Suites have direct access onto the

stretch of glistening sand that is regarded as one of the most beautiful and exclusive on the island. Indulge in complimentary canapés on your terrace or order a feast to enjoy in front of the unspoilt ocean view, delivered by your own personal butler. Following a renovation, the resort's exclusive stand-alone

villa (pictured above) is set within the gardens and a short distance from the beach. When, or if, you decide to leave your suite, both restaurants are ocean front and will indulge any gastronomes with their culinary offerings, plus there's paddleboard, windsurf, tennis and swimming with turtles to try too. To sample the island's

cuisine we recommend the renowned Lone Star; enjoy innovative dishes just a stroll along the beach from the hotel. Wander next door to one of our favourite beach bars, Ju Ju's, where you can kick off your shoes and enjoy a refreshing bottle of Banks, the island's local beer, whilst watching the sky turn golden in the sunset.

## The Sandpiper

Family-owned and run, we love *The Sandpiper*, with its loyal following and small, intimate vibe. This Bajan haven has the perfect beach locale, just a short amble from the restaurants, bars and shops of Holetown. Last year it scooped ‘Small Hotel of the Year’ at the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association Awards, not a surprise to those in the know. The service is spot-on with many staff like family,

including Harold Shepherd after whom Harold’s Bar is named. 2015 also saw a revamp with a second sleek pool added; the beach bar has had a facelift (although still serves the far-too-drinkable Harold’s Smile), and a new beach deck just a few feet away from the sea, opened for business. The Beach House can be rented as a three bedroom villa or as three individual suites. This is push-the-boat-out-territory

but worth the splash for its designer vibe, wrap around terrace and killer location. The newbie takes the room count to 50, maintaining the hotel’s small scale intimacy. If you can drag yourself up from your sunlounger, activities include paddle boarding, kayaking and snorkelling, tennis coaching and R&R down at Coral Reef’s spa. Foodies loosen your belts as Executive Chef

Christophe Poupardin dishes up daily fusion feasts, plus a Wednesday West Indian buffet when tables groan under sumptuous platters of flying fish, Caribbean shrimp, lobster salad and lamb curries. The restaurant (open on three sides) is highly romantic, surrounded by torch-lit tropical gardens. As night falls, smooth jazz and calypso vibes fill the air and stars twinkle into the sea.



### Hotel hit:

Its low-key attitude and laidback informality, a rarity on the west coast



### Hotel hit:

The Spa and its dedicated week-long wellness retreats

## Coral Reef Club

Along the beach is The Sandpiper’s sister hotel, the just as dreamy *Coral Reef Club*. Cocooned in 12 acres of glorious gardens filled with frangipani and bougainvillea, the O’Hara family has yet again worked their hospitality magic. The gentle pace is the same but perhaps more elegant country house hotel in the tropics. This old-school luxury has real charm. We love the Plantation Suites and Luxury Cottages decorated in tranquil hues and pale wood with sink-into beds and enormous bathrooms. Evenings are always convivial with drinks in the piano lounge and Thursday night barbecues sizzle with jumbo

prawns, steak and fresh fish on the grill. During winter there’s live entertainment every night and the O’Haras host a weekly cocktail night. But the limelight stealer is The Spa, with its foot ritual patios and private gardens, shaded cabanas and menu of stress-busting treatments. The Spa’s expertise belies its size (there are only four treatment rooms and one couples pavilion); the muscle melt massage comes highly recommended. Coral Reef is hosting two further wellness retreats this year featuring a healthy dose of yoga, Caribbean-style Zumba and holistic treatments. The retreats will be running in May and October.

## Cobblers Cove

Another hotel that has been kept in the family for two generations is the hugely popular *Cobblers Cove*. On a quiet narrow sandy beach near the little old-fashioned town of Speightstown, it is in the highly capable hands of Hugh Godsall, whose parents founded the hotel back in 1968. Once known as Camelot, this pink mansion is something of an island icon. It was first built in 1944 as a seaside getaway for a plantation owner and it retains oodles of character. This is the Caribbean with a twist of Britishness: there’s a large book-lined drawing room complete with wooden board games; afternoon tea is served daily and even the General Manager hails from Yorkshire. There are just 40 suites so Cobblers is small (and discreet) with a huge

number of devoted returnees. The repeat booking percentage speaks for itself. We love the suites with their large sitting rooms, wicker chairs and elegant furniture. If there was a ‘suite-off’ Camelot at the Great House would win hands down with its two-floor setting and private rooftop plunge pool. Famous for being Barbados’ only Relais & Châteaux property, epicurean experiences are a focus here – The Camelot Restaurant is formal but the food is worth every bit of quiet politeness. In between gourmet fare, the hotel’s tours are also some of the best on the island; there’s a brilliant heritage tour of plantation houses (some not open to the general public) and the fishing expedition led by Barker, Cobblers’ own fisherman is a must-do.

### Hotel hit:

The air of elegant nostalgia that pervades every corner



## Colony Club

Totally tropical in every way, the award-winning *Colony Club* is one of those tear-your-passport-up destinations. The palm-fringed beach is postcard-perfect; the sea glints under the Caribbean sun and everyone is treated like a VIP by the dedicated beach and pool ambassadors. Devotees love this property for its timeless sophistication, relaxed atmosphere and delicate sprinkling of modernity. Colony Club can also be action-packed (great for those with teenagers in tow). There’s a load of complimentary watersports (motorised and non), yoga, tennis, snorkel safaris, cooking demos and excursions galore. The suites are spot-on, decked out with lots of mahogany, marble, billowing white cotton and Ren bath products. Foodies also flock here for a number of reasons. The Bait



### Hotel hit:

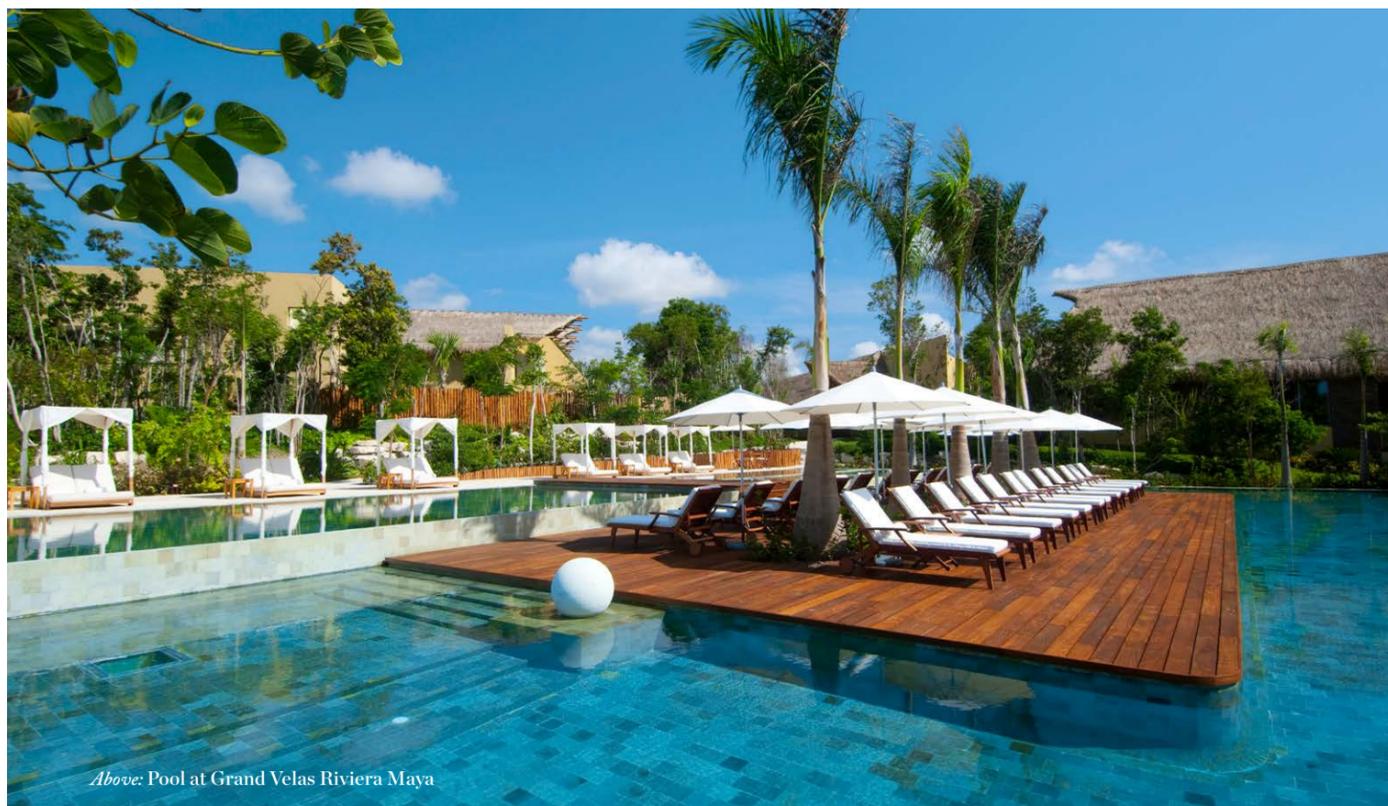
A proper good dose of fun activities in the sun

to Plate dinner excursion will have you fishing for your supper; your catch-of-the-day will then be filleted and served with a fiery sauce and fresh produce from the hotel’s organic vegetable and herb garden. The Laguna Restaurant and Lounge is a real hub, the menus are

inspired by the seasons and as well as complimentary breakfast there are loads of themed evenings including lobster night and lots of music – think jazz, steel-pans and sometimes a saxophonist. An extra bonus, guests are given a bottle of the hotel’s own rum punch on arrival.

# CROWD PLEASERS

It's often said that you can't please all of the people all of the time. We check out a handful of hotels that defy that notion. Here's to having it all.



Above: Pool at Grand Velas Riviera Maya

Ancient jungle, soft white sand and quiet mangroves set the scene for an all-inclusive, all encompassing stay at **Grand Velas Riviera Maya**. Accommodation is cleverly split into adult-only and family-friendly, with interconnecting rooms a guarantee. Choose from a forest setting where you might spot raccoons or poolside for a post-snooze dip. There are eight food options including imaginative molecular cuisine, innovative French and tasty Asian. For some adult-only indulgence, *Cocina de Autor* is a must-book: it's the first restaurant at an all-inclusive resort to receive Five AAA Diamonds. But the Grand Velas trump card is the sheer volume of activities. They range from snorkelling, diving and sailing to adrenalin-fuelled kite surfing and fly boarding. There are also guided kayaking tours and the chance to go on a sea trek adventure, whilst on land

there's zip-wiring, trampolining and a climbing wall. The Kid's Club puts on Mayan arts and crafts (little ones can learn how to make a piñata) and the teenage zone is well kitted out with air hockey, pool tables and ping-pong. And if this wasn't enough, during summer extra activities and camps are added to the already jam-packed daily agenda. Grown-ups after a bit of downtime have golf nearby and the oh-so-serene jungle spa, home to the blissful seven-stage Mayan Water Journey. If you're pondering an all-action trip to Mexico, nowhere else ticks quite so many boxes.

For short-haul fun in the sun there are some brilliant hotels within striking distance. One of our all-time favourites is **Bahía del Duque** in Tenerife. Slap bang on the white sands of Costa Adeje; complete with streets

and squares, the resort feels more like a beachfront town. Accommodation options are vast and varied and include VIP treatment at the Casas Ducales: butlers, afternoon tea, canapés and a courtesy bar in the living room. For larger groups there are 40 gorgeous private pool villas. Choosing which luxury abode is just the beginning of the decision-making dilemmas. Eight food options include French at La Brasserie, delicious Basque steak at SUA, seafood at the Beach Club and creative Canarian at Las Aguas. Everything is done in multiples: the spa is enormous and features countless cabanas, a load of thalassotherapy treatments alongside a must-have hot stone massage with lava rocks. There are land and water sports galore and the options for children are mind-boggling (in a good way). The Duqui Club employs a team of exceptional entertainers with boundless energy who organise everything from games by the pools and painting workshops to sports competitions, cooking and mini discos: you name it they do it. You could stay a month and never tire of the fun contained within Bahia's walls. There's even a stargazing observatory and to top it all off, you have access to a private yacht to explore the coast. This is how you do comprehensive.

Greece is also very much in on the all-round travel game. There are two hotel corkers in Messinia that offer the best of every world. Situated on a long stretch of golden sand by the glittering Ionian Sea are **The Westin Resort Costa Navarino** and **The Romanos, A Luxury Collection Resort**. Not only do they have one of the most beautiful parts of natural Greece on their doorstep, they are also in easy reach of many

historic sights. At the Westin, low-rise villas inspired by old Messinian homes blend in beautifully, whilst the rooms at The Romanos hide amid olive trees. But it is the shared facilities that have stamped this area on the travel map. There are two golf courses, a racquet academy, bike hire, guided eco walks and an absolute bucket load of watersports. There are two dedicated hubs for children: SandCastle and Cocoon that put on everything from junior archaeology classes and pirate adventures to kids' zumba and mini sports. There's also an on-site Aqua Park, bowling alley and the Navarino Speed Experience Park where wannabe Lewis Hamiltons can take to the racetrack. And at the heart, separating both properties is the Agora, a traditional Greek meeting place. Here guests find an outdoor cinema, an impressive Greek amphitheatre alongside cafés, bars and restaurants. For real cultural immersion try olive harvesting with Messinian farmers. And whilst on the oily subject, Oleotherapy at the dreamy Anazoe Spa comes highly recommended.



Clockwise from above: Pool at Bahía del Duque, Tenerife; coast of The Westin Resort Costa Navarino, Greece; lobby at The Romanos, A Luxury Collection Resort, Greece



From the Ionian to the Mediterranean, a have it all hotel round-up would not be complete without **Forte Village**, Sardinia's answer to just about everything. There are eight hotels, more restaurants than most small towns (we think the current count is 21); shops, ice cream stands, villas, pool after shimmering pool, tennis courts, football pitches, golf and a watersports scene that rivals anything else we've come across. This is another world entirely, a place where no stone has been left unturned. There is everything you can think of (alongside a lot you haven't). Highlights include the academies that sporty youngsters love. There's a Chelsea football academy for any budding Costas, rugby taught by English legends including Will Greenwood, Ben Kay and Austin Healey; there's tennis, netball, swimming, basketball and even Marvin's Magic and a DJ academy. Whatever the age, Forte Village is the stuff of childhood dreams. Teenagers will never be bored and come evening can dance the night away at U-Party (a strictly adult-free zone). Little ones are in pink glitter heaven at the Barbie activity centre, whilst adrenalin-seeking racers get their thrills at the go-kart experience. What's more, there's a surf school opening very soon. Nowhere else can rival Forte Village for sheer size, ambition and action.



And while the kids have the time of their lives, parents can flit between restaurants, bars, the Acquaforte Spa and sun loungers.

For a totally tropical holiday with all the trimmings, **PERAQUUM Niyama** in the Maldives hits every spot. Spread across two islands named Chill and Play (the latter is a newish family-friendly addition); unlike many Maldivian island resorts a lot of the action is aimed at families. A superb new children's club accepts under threes and puts on a stream of activities including pirate treasure hunts, sailing, jungle safaris and trips to the mini water park. There's also the opportunity to adopt coral and take regular snorkelling excursions with the resident marine biologist. FLOAT is the jumping off point for watersports including diving, jet skiing, kayaking, fishing or setting sail aboard a traditional dhoni; and there's a surf school coming soon. Get ready for game, set and match on the tennis courts, or for a break from the sun, there's gaming at ACTIVE, a hub kitted out with Wii, PS3, Xbox and more. But the world doesn't have to revolve around just the kids. PERAQUUM is an adult idyll with some standout features starting with the only-accessible-by-boat EDGE. This floating restaurant is just one of eight food options which now includes BLU for all-day dining by the pool and the magical NEST, six metres above ground in the Banyan trees where you can feast on Teppanyaki, Thai, Chinese and Indonesian. Chill out at SUBSIX underwater restaurant or enjoy total me-time at the LIME Spa. From 2 to 92, PERAQUUM Niyama is a totally tropical crowd pleaser.



From top to bottom: Football pitches and suite at Forte Village, Sardinia; main pool and beach at PERAQUUM Niyama, Maldives

# Beyond the Sea

The enduring appeal of a cruise is reflected in the vast amount of experiences and destinations available to passengers, travelling in comfort and style from one beguiling port to another. But where do you start? Ocean voyages, river cruising, yachting – each offer something very different. Here, we take a look at some of our top recommendations so that you can pick out the one that's right for you.



## RIVER CRUISING LANDMARKS & LANDSCAPES

The enchanting waterways on a luxury river cruise with **Scenic** are the epitome of serenity, with captivating cities and charming villages to explore at every bank. The latest Space-Ships to join the fleet are Jasper, Opal and Amber, boasting the largest cabins to cruise the rivers of Europe and not to mention the first heated vitality pool on Sun Deck and floor-to-ceiling windows in the balcony suites. Also new in 2017 for France river cruises is the Scenic Culinaire cookery emporium, an immersive experience complete with cheese and wine cellar. Each session starts with an on-shore 'Shop with the Chef', selecting fresh regional produce from local markets, followed by one-to-one tuition in creating French cuisine back on-board. From private

classical concerts in palatial settings, to magnificent feasts in medieval castles, special enriching experiences are also specifically designed just for Scenic guests. One for dazzling performances: see an exclusive production of the timeless movie, 'The Sound of Music' performed in the rolling hills of Salzburg. Further afield, there's the option to create your own itinerary and criss-cross your way through the vibrant waterways of South East Asia. Whether you want to explore ancient temples, visit quaint villages or learn about local life, your journey can be as diverse as you like. Voyage the Mekong and the Irrawaddy rivers aboard Scenic Spirit and Scenic Aura, where each suite comes with a private balcony for spellbinding views.



## OCEAN VOYAGE SPACE & GRACE

Ultra-contemporary and ultra-luxurious, **Seabourn Ovation** is the newest vessel in ocean cruising due to hail at ports throughout northern Europe and the Mediterranean between May and November next year. Sister to Seabourn Encore introduced in January this year, the 604-passenger ship features five restaurants, a spa and salon, two outdoor pools and a watersports marina.

## YACHTING A PERSONAL GETAWAY

Boarding a *SeaDream* luxury yacht is like stepping onto your own exclusive retreat. With exceptional attention to detail and a highly personalised service (95 crew to just 112 guests), the family-owned yacht club is renowned for making guests feel at home. The two identical vessels call upon the more intimate ports, harbours and yachting



playgrounds that larger ships can't reach, allowing guests to access some of the most secluded ports on the ocean. Explore the Mediterranean's infamous cities from May to October. Passengers can discover the historical harbours and timeless attractions of the region; Venice, Dubrovnik, Corsica and Santorini to name but a few. The Caribbean tours are best enjoyed from November to April – relish in a host of private beaches and exotic hideaways in The Grenadines, St Barths, Grenada and more. On board, relax under the stars on the Balinese dream beds or take part in a range of watersports from the back of the yacht, including snorkelling, jet skis, wakeboards and kayaks. There is also complimentary



yoga on deck each morning. The SeaDream Spa offers everything from facials and massages to hair and nail services – guests can also experience designated treatments in the open-air private massage area. After

dinner, visit the Piano Bar for a cocktail or watch a movie on the outdoor big screen. For the ultimate indulgence, the Winemaker's Dinner features the executive chef's degustation menu and specially selected wines.

## BEST OF ALL WORLDS CUSTOMISED CRUISES

An established ocean cruise specialist, *Crystal* has over 26 years of experience in creating internationally acclaimed voyages. The Crystal Symphony vessel can accommodate up to 922 guests and features a casino, fitness facility, spa and 360° teak promenade deck. The larger ship, Crystal Serenity can serve an astounding 1,070 guests, yet still maintains its position as one of the most spacious vessels at sea. But it would have been remiss of Crystal to stop there – the cruise line went on to develop its own yacht expeditions. Crystal Esprit is characterised by its unique size; the 62 passenger yacht transports guests to



destinations including the West Indies, Venice and Croatia. Experience six-star dining at The Yacht Club restaurant with a menu inspired by the flavours of the regions followed by nightly entertainment at the Cove. Due to the increased demand for more boutique-

sized vessels, last summer, Crystal went on to welcome its first river cruise. Crystal Mozart is the perfect marriage between the intimacy of river travel and the elegance of the Crystal experience. Following its success, four more river cruises have been created, offering a range of itineraries on Europe's smaller waterways. Launching this year and next, the fleet of five offer routes across the iconic Danube, Rhine, Main, and Moselle rivers, embarking from Vienna, Budapest and Basel and calling in historic locations in Germany, as well as Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and Switzerland. Independent exploration is encouraged with the help of complimentary Nordic walking poles, GPS whisper guides and electronically assisted bikes.



# Gourmet Globetrotting

*We check out what the world's dishing up for 2017*

### CARIBBEAN CORKERS

Sometimes the best food is the simplest. At *Amanyara* this is certainly the case. Tucked away on its own secluded swathe of sand, this Turks & Caicos idyll is all about life's simple pleasures. On the food front, there's an apt emphasis on fresh fish: red snapper, tuna and grouper all feature regularly on the catch of the day menu, dished up with fresh produce from the chef's gardens. Feast on simple grilled fish, Caribbean spiny lobster, conch salad or a platter of tropical fruit by the pool; try a lobster pizza, piping hot from the wood-fired oven followed by a

zingy key lime pie. There's a twist of Asian that nods to *Amanyara*'s oriental roots but there's no forgetting where in the world you are. Dine in the shade of a mahogany tree or under starlit skies in your very own secluded cove; this feet-in-the-sand dinner with the sound of breaking waves is utterly magical. Nightcaps come easy at the cool, conical roofed bar, a creative cocktail menu does a mean Mojito and the brilliant Basil Dazzle, a refreshing concoction of basil, vodka and lime on ice. What's more the bar doesn't close until the last guest leaves: again, simple but effective.



**MICHELIN MARVEL**  
Dubai is not short of culinary haunts but few come close to STAY (reportedly an acronym for Simple Table Alléno Yannick). This is a must-try in a city of multiple must-tries. Alléno found starry success (all three of them) at Le Meurice and has gone on to sprinkle his magic from Paris to Saint-Tropez, Taipei to Dubai. STAY is a gourmet destination in itself, cosseted by *One&Only The Palm*, a gorgeous boutique hotel on a distant frond. This is adult territory: romantic red tones, vaulted ceilings and black crystal chandeliers give it a grown-up VIP vibe. The food is as lavish as the setting and consistently excellent. Alléno is a culinary genius, putting a contemporary flourish on traditional dishes.

Indulge in black Angus beef tenderloin ‘Café de Paris’, beef bourguignon, try the whole spit-roasted john dory for two, the STAY lobster caesar salad, foie gras terrine or for the sweet-toothed, go mad at the Pastry Library. Whatever your tastebuds, dress up for dinner and enjoy what is a guaranteed gastronomic treat.



**FOODIE FESTIVALS**

For chocoholics, the Grenada Chocolate Festival in May is a must. Entering its fourth year, it celebrates the island’s organic and ethically produced cocoa. Learn how local chocolate artisans craft their ethical ‘tree to bar’ products; visit cocoa farms hidden in lush Caribbean rainforests; be a farmer for the day; learn how to make truffles, and most importantly, eat lots and lots of the dark stuff – it would be rude not to. Base yourself at foodie haunt, *Spice Island Beach Resort*. Firstly, it has nabbed a spot on the island’s best beach, and secondly, it embraces local flavours like nowhere else. Everything here is sprinkled with the spices that give the island its nickname. Brilliant breakfasts feature goodies like

nutmeg-flavoured muffins; ice cream comes in local flavours – rum, coconut and guava. The Sunday barbecue lunch at Sea and Surf Terrace Bar has a laidback vibe; there’s a Friday night Caribbean buffet where tables groan under the weight of local delicacies; and the ever-changing dinner menu at Oliver’s Restaurant (all seven courses if you’re feeling hungry) is melt-in-the-mouth Creole. Even the spa treatments harness the restorative power of the island’s herbs. What’s more, Spice Island Beach Resort is all-inclusive so you can eat as much as you want without spending an extra dollar.

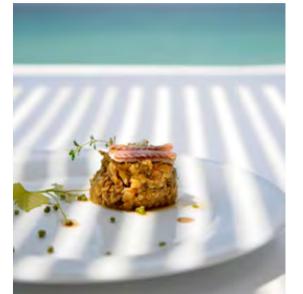
*More tasty treats...*

**No peeking**

Hotfoot it to no-shoe Maldivian paradise *Gili Lankanfushi* and give Top Table a go. You will be picked up by a buggy, blindfolded and taken to a secret spot on the island. Your blindfold is then left on during dinner, so that you can fully appreciate what you’re eating. There are a host of other innovative eating options too – including wine and chocolate or wine and cheese tastings in the cellar; dinner in the organic garden, a Hollywood or Bollywood themed foodie evening at the jungle cinema, a Japanese tasting menu at Swing by the Sea or the ultimate Robinson Crusoe dining experience on One Palm Island complete with solo tree, its own jetty and a sink-into-and-never-get-up cushioned seating area.

**Festival fare**

Sani Gourmet is one of Europe’s finest celebrations of global cooking. Taking place at *Porto Sani* it brings together some of the best chefs from Greece and around the world. This year its focus is on rising stars, young chefs who are making a name for themselves (including a first Michelin star). For a taste of the future, check into Sani Resort between 23 and 27 June and savour the guest chefs’ exceptional menus, enjoy workshops, presentations and wine tastings.



**Ice magic**

Iceland packs a lot into its compact frame. From otherworldly landscapes dotted with steaming geysers and geothermal pools to thundering waterfalls, black sand beaches and the Northern Lights, this is a natural born thriller. The food is also really rather good. Get a taste for Icelandic fare in Reykjavik: fresh seafood, mountain lamb, Icelandic tapas and sushi are all tabletop favourites. Then hop on a super jeep and drive deep into the Icelandic wilderness on a brilliant southwest itinerary. Ever thought about having lunch on a glacier? Well now’s your moment.



**Picnic pinnacle**

The True North Ship (part of *North Star Cruises*) brings you an Aussie adventure like no other. Purpose built to sail deep into the heart of Australia’s wilderness it can reach untouched areas inaccessible to larger vessels. The ship has an on-board helicopter that can whisk you off deep into Kimberley country for hiking, fishing, swimming and a five-star banquet next to Eagle Falls: epic exploring with a gourmet touch.



**RESTAURANT REVAMPS**

*Constance Lemuria Resort* is the foodies new resort of choice in the Seychelles. Having opened after a resort makeover, food was evidently high on the revamp agenda. Various restaurants have been renamed as well as new experiences added. What does remain is the delicious creative cuisine from Christian

Pedersen who infuses dishes with aromatic local flavours. The main hub is The Legend, transformed every evening into a live cooking restaurant where chefs take you on an interactive culinary journey to different parts of the globe. We love this new show cooking element as well as the addition of a weekly chocolate extravaganza.

To feast on seafood, head to The Nest. It teeters on a rocky peninsula between the two Anse Kerlan beaches and the private decking behind it is a brilliant spot for a romantic dinner à deux. Barefoot Takamaka remains as dreamy and tropical as ever with its feet-in-the-sand lunch, metres from the turquoise waters. Refuel on tasty salads,

gourmet sandwiches and sushi with a Seychellois twist. Other additions include Diva for modern French and a new wine tasting experience in the cellar; alternatively head out to one of three amazing beaches for gourmet picnics under a bamboo gazebo.



# ST NICOLAS *bay*

Charismatic Crete. A destination made for escapists, beach lovers and adventurers alike. This island is mountainous, and with this comes lush valleys teeming with gorges, rivers, lakes and caves – one of which is said to be the birthplace of Zeus, Greek God of the sky. Set on a peninsula overlooking picturesque Mirabello Bay and the old cosmopolitan fishing village of Agios Nikolaos, base yourself at **St. Nicolas Bay Resort Hotel & Villas** for access to a colourful mix of bijou boutiques, quaint cafés, traditional tavernas and beachside bars. Seek out the private, blue-flag beach in a sheltered cove perfect for watersports, or charter the 34 foot

yacht and explore the neighbouring islets. This summer, you can be one of the first to stay in the newly refurbished suites with their own terraces or balconies (some come with private pools) and sweeping coastal views. No trip is complete without a little self-indulgence so sample local wines and learn the fine art of cocktail making with the experts at Bonatsa Jetty Bar. Top tip: ask for the Aphrodite's Bath experience at Poseidon Spa; it's an energising seawater treatment in a cave by the glistening sea. Lastly, for nods to modern culture, head to Argonaftis – a space created by the owners who are keen patrons of the arts – and lose yourself in Greek paintings, sculptures and handicrafts at this permanent private art collection and Cretan museum.

Carrier arranges the #firstlook review of @FourSeasons #Maldives Private Island at #Voavah with @TeleLuxTravel <http://bit.ly/2hAAKkm>

Style  
#51/66

**52 UNVEILED**  
A closer look at the most anticipated new openings and stylish refurbishments from the world of luxury travel.

**58 ULTIMATE INDULGENCE**  
A private island, exclusive mountain lodge, new Mallorcan villas and African camps – we explore Virgin Limited Edition's luxury retreats.

**60 DREAMING IN DUBROVNIK**  
Adriatic Luxury Hotels offer a trio of mesmerising properties in captivating Croatia.

**61 HOLISTIC HEALING**  
Whether you want to find inner peace, relax in a treetop spa or experience yoga in an open-air pavilion, we bring a selection of hotels to cleanse the mind, body and soul.



**THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS**  
We present our curated selection of properties that offer adrenalin-fuelled activities in the most luxurious of settings.

# 64

# Style

Pairing luxury and style comes naturally – we draw on the places, spaces and sojourns with a real flair for design distinction.



# Unveiled

Always at the forefront of luxury travel news, we bring you exciting game changers, new openings and revamps from around the globe – to ensure you are kept well informed.

Mexico excites the fly-and-flop crowd with its first luxury all-inclusive resort on the Baja Peninsula, *Grand Velas Los Cabos* opened in December 2016. Between Cabo San Lucas and San José del Cabo, guests here are promised a stay of total relaxation. Facilities are as you'd hope: 304 ocean view suites proffer a private terrace whilst some

have their own plunge pool, there are no less than three infinity-pools, watersports galore from whale watching to sailing, and of course, a spa for some well-deserved cossetting. There are five gourmet restaurants – our favourite is *Cocina de Autor* and its ten course tasting menu, created by two-star Michelin head chef, Sidney Schutte.

Further glorious powder-soft sands abound on desert island idylls in the Indian Ocean. Located on private Nosy Ankoa island, off the north-east of Madagascar lies *Miavana*, and the vision of architect-designers Silvio Rech and Lesley Carstens – responsible for North Island, Seychelles. Due to open to guests in April 2017, this ultra-luxe lodge boasts villas with uninterrupted sea views, a french garden, well-stocked wine cellar and a chamber of curiosities. But as this is a true nature lover's paradise, it's the wildlife activities that really set it apart. Don a snorkel for turtle-watching amidst the vibrant coral reef, try your hand at fly-fishing or take to the skies on a helicopter adventure. What's more, there's trekking on the mainland for glimpses of the world-famous lemurs.

With Kuda Huraa on the North Male Atoll and Landaa Giraavaru on the Baa Atoll, Four Seasons have always been ahead of the curve when it comes to private islands in the Maldives. Their latest brainchild, *Four Seasons Private Island Maldives at Voavah*, is the world's first exclusive-use UNESCO hideaway. Similar to Richard Branson's Necker Island, you (and up to 21 other guests) take the island in its entirety. Guests will have their own complement of staff from a dedicated divemaster to an on-call Rossano Ferretti hair consultant. Across five acres, there's a two-bedroom beach villa, a two-bedroom villa set over water and two mezzanine suites. The two-storey beach house is the social hub, a sheltered garden peppered with hammocks leads to The Ocean of Consciousness Spa whilst Summer, a 62 foot long PADI equipped yacht waits to take you to Hanifaru Bay for underwater explorations with one of the researchers from the Manta Trust. This private island even has its own private island.

And that's not all for Four Seasons, last December the much-loved Nam Hai in Hoi An – an exceptionally well preserved port on the coast of the South China Sea – became a Four Seasons resort. Amidst Vietnam's cultural heartland, *Four Seasons Resort The Nam Hai*, offers refreshed accommodation including eight new family villas, a new cooking school and an enhanced spa and activity programme, all served up with the first-class service they are renowned for.

## Intricately reimagined by celebrated British designer Thomas Heatherwick, paying homage to the agricultural roots of South Africa

Culture vultures will also revel in the new addition to Cape Town's art scene this September with the opening of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA) on the lively V&A Waterfront, set to rival MoMA and the Tate Modern. Occupying a former grain silo originally built in 1921, it is also home to member of The Royal Portfolio collection, *The Silo*, which opened last month. This boutique property has been intricately reimagined by celebrated British designer Thomas Heatherwick, paying homage to the agricultural roots of South Africa with bubble-like windows that offer views of the harbour or mountains by day and glimmer like glowing lanterns by night. There are 28 rooms (including a penthouse suite) – all individually designed by Liz Biden herself (think button-down chesterfields and handmade chandeliers), a Willaston Bar that serves craft cocktails and a rooftop pool overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

There are changes in the safari world too. The introduction of three new Qatar flights provides easier access to the wonders of Botswana. A superb base is *Duba Expedition Camp*, set on a wooden island in the Duba Concession of the Okavango Delta – a recent addition to the Carrier portfolio. Designed by National Geographic filmmakers Beverly and Dereck Joubert, the surroundings and interiors evoke an authentic, romantic style of safaris from the 1920s. The camp is remote with just six en-suite airy-tents. The main-tent is open-sided for the most breathtaking of vistas. Birds abound, the area is reputed as a bird watcher's paradise.



*Clockwise from above*

The Beach at Miavana, Madagascar; Beach at The Nam Hai, Vietnam; Deluxe Superior Bathroom at The Silo, South Africa; Swimming Pool at Grand Velas Los Cabos, Mexico; Exterior at Duba Expedition Camp, Botswana





For over a decade, the deluxe Madinat Jumeirah resort has played a significant part in developing Dubai's unique heritage and encouraging the city's substantial growth, with three revered hotels in its family tree. Last December, the highly-anticipated **Jumeirah Al Naseem** hotel joined the collection, bringing with it a fresh, more relaxed style inspired by the tranquil beauty of sand dunes and blue skies. Overlooking Burj Al Arab Jumeirah, guests can unwind on the endless stretch of private coastline with exotic gardens and pearlescent waters as a backdrop. Rooms offer the idyllic setting for couples, featuring contemporary décor and a tranquil ambience. And for those travelling with little ones, the Family Suites feature a separate room and bathroom for up to two children. Offering all of the outstanding facilities you would expect from a luxury hotel in Dubai and more, this exquisite new opening welcomes Il Borro Tuscan Bistro Dubai amongst its nine restaurants – the Ferragamo family's first restaurant venture away from their famed Tuscan estate in Italy.

Yet it's probably our European portfolio that sees some of 2017's biggest reveals. **Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort** – the first Anantara group property in Europe – opens in April 2017. This Portuguese retreat overlooks the fairways of the Arnold Palmer-designed Oceânico Victoria golf course (that plays host to the PGA Portugal Masters tournament) so is sure to attract keen golfers. But there's more to this resort than practising your swing: suites enjoy a full-butler service, live show-cooking takes centre stage at Sensorial next to one of three outdoor pools, spa rituals base themselves on centuries-old therapies in Europe's first and beautifully



designed Anantara Spa and children are more than looked after with a dedicated beach shuttle and extensive activities at the Worldwide Kids Club (they've been experts in fun, learning and culture for over 30 years). For unparalleled seafood in the Algarve, head to Ria restaurant – a tribute to the Ria Formosa Natural Park only 20 minutes from the resort.

Primed to open a couple of months later is **Sani Dunes**, the latest addition to the popular Sani Resort family, located in an ecological reserve on the edge of the Cassandra Peninsula in Halkidiki – one of Greece's best kept secrets. With views of the Aegean Sea, Sani Dunes will be right on the beachfront next to Sani Marina. This sophisticated offering will welcome couples

*Opposite page from top*  
Anantara Vilamoura main pool; Jumeirah Al Naseem Presidential Suite

*Right from top*  
Sani Dunes Beach Front Junior Suite; private garden, lounge

and grown up families – those with children over 12 years old. Low rise Mediterranean-style suites complete with floor-to-ceiling windows, handcrafted furniture and the mod cons you'd expect – all set on the water's edge. If teenagers aren't content with the heated outdoor pool and infinity-edge indoor pool, there's a multitude of activities and even a dedicated adult-free lounge. Whilst it'll be difficult to move from the king-size beds on the private beach, make time to retreat to the spa where you can relax in a couple's suite with private steam bath or take a dip in the Jacuzzi; treatments are by Anne Semonin.

Serving up a little of everything for skiers in Courchevel, **Hotel Barriere Les Neiges** was welcomed as a member of Leading Hotels of the World in December 2016 (its opening month). Engulfed within three valleys, this authentic hotel is located at the foot of the famous Bellecôte slope. Adorned with luxurious décor, cosy fabrics and most featuring a balcony or terrace, the 22 rooms and 20 suites are precisely the scene you'll love to return to from a day on the slopes. After working up an appetite, an evening in any of the three restaurants will more than suffice with an exquisite Argentinian menu on offer from BFire and French cuisine ready for tasting at Fouquet's. Guests will be treated to boot warming every morning before hopping onto the mountains straight from the hotel door, thanks to the convenience of ski-in, ski-out access. And there are also clubs to keep children and teens entertained.

## Ones to watch

Desroches Island resort re-opens in October as **Four Seasons Resort Seychelles at Desroches**. It's the collection's second resort in the Seychelles and one of their more intimate properties offering just 11 private residence villas and 40 beach suites.

Expected to open mid-June is 12-bedroom **Bisate Lodge**, owned by Wilderness Safaris. With a strong community and conservation focus, it sits in an enviable location adjacent to Rwanda's renowned Volcanoes National Park, home to the mountain gorilla.

**One&Only Portonovi** is the collection's first European resort, scheduled to open in 2018 on the protected Boka Kotorska bay – firmly putting Montenegro in the spotlight. Highlights include a member's only Yacht Club and Espace Chenot Health Wellness Spa.

A cliff-top all-suite haven, the **Seven Pines Resort Ibiza** probably claims the most anticipated hotel opening of the year in Europe. Whilst it's not far from Ibiza's hotspots, from autumn, guests can experience blissful serenity on a beachfront between the renowned Cala Conta and secluded Cala Codolar.



# Ultimate Indulgence

*Luxury properties are definitely Sir Richard Branson's forte. We take a glimpse into his world.*

**Necker Island**, Branson's private paradise in the British Virgin Islands remains one of the world's ultimate destinations. Lush greenery is fringed by white sand set against brilliant blue sky and sea: a 74-acre dot of Caribbean gorgeousness. The island accommodates up to 28 guests and is more often

than not hired exclusively, although for selected dates from the end of June through to October, it opens its doors to individuals for its Celebration Weeks. There are eight private villas scattered around the grounds, but The Great House remains the hub. There are 10 exquisite

bedrooms, sprawling terraces scattered with giant sun-pods and a huge infinity pool. This might be a celeb hangout but it doesn't feel glitzy, more barefoot boho. Spend hours lolling in a hammock, zip-wire down to the beach for some snorkelling, kite surfing or paddle boarding; befriend

giant tortoises and huge iguanas; feed lemurs and photograph flamingoes. And on your travels you might come across a treasure chest filled with champagne, a floating sushi bar or a beach barbecue. Operated on an all-inclusive basis, Necker Island is a place to indulge, Branson-style.



## Son Bunyola

Recently he has also been sprinkling his luxury magic over Mallorca. Last summer saw the opening of **Son Bunyola**, a vast 680-acre estate on the island's northwest coast, home to just two villas: the four-bedroom Sa Terra Rotja and the five-bedroom Sa Punta de S'Agulla (a ten-minute drive apart), with a third, Son Balegueret, due to open this summer. They have been built in traditional Mallorcan style with exposed beams and terracotta tiled floors; there are private heated pools, gorgeous terraces for outdoor dining and stunning en suite bedrooms. Acres of vines, citrus fruit trees, almonds and olive trees cocoon the villas, whilst a herb-scented track leads down to a pebble beach. Dine out on tapas in nearby local villages or stay put for culinary feasts full of local produce: fish, lamb, cured meats, cheeses, homemade bread and olives are served up with local Mallorcan wine and Spanish

*Clockwise from right:* Sa Terra Rotja: terrace, lounge, bathroom



bubbly. As an all-inclusive retreat, breakfast is a help yourself affair, lunch is buffet-style and dinner, a sit-down extravaganza. Spend days swimming, reading, trekking the surrounding Tramuntana mountains or simply chilling out. This get-away-from-it-all escape is a perfect hangout for both families and friends.



### Go wild

**Mahali Mzuri** translates from Swahili as 'beautiful place'. Book a front row seat in one of just 12 tents for the Great Migration between July and October, possibly one of the greatest natural spectacles on earth.



### Wine and dine

Branson's ultra-luxe foray into South Africa comes in the form of **Mont Rochelle**, a 26-bedroom hotel and vineyard in Franschhoek. Highlight of the trip: wine tasting and workshops at the winery with Estate Manager, Dustin Osbourne.

### Mountain high

Whether winter skiing or summer hiking, there is no more indulgent a place to stay than Branson's Verbier bolthole, **The Lodge**. It sleeps 18 and comes with a pool, indoor and outdoor Jacuzzis, a party room with fully stocked bar, wine cellar, snooker table and dance floor, plus nightly feasts whipped up by the super-duper chef.



*Clockwise from right:* Giraffes at Mahali Mzuri; suite at The Lodge Verbier; Mont Rochelle Valley

# Dreaming in Dubrovnik

Effortlessly blending old with new at a sought-after sea meets city location, the iconic **Hotel Excelsior** provides extraordinary views overlooking the Adriatic Sea as well as the glorious Old Town. This spring, the hotel will be unveiling their extensive refurbishment; the stylish design and state of the art mod-cons will have you wishing you'd booked a longer holiday. Graced by royalty and movie stars, the hotel has an air of prominence and the tranquil gardens only add to its serene character – you'll find yourself wandering around, taking in the floral scents for hours. A real culture hub and brimming with ancient churches, monasteries, and fountains, a five minute stroll will lead you to the medieval fortress walls and the UNESCO Old City of Dubrovnik. After a day

pounding the cobblestones, retreat back to the private beach, recharge at the Energy Clinic Spa with its freshwater indoor pool or reward yourself with sumptuous seafood at Prora and a cocktail or two at Abakus Piano Bar.

Just around the bay is **Hotel Bellevue**, a boutique hotel carved into the cliffside that features astounding floor-to-ceiling windows, giving guests extraordinary panoramic scenes of the Dalmatian coast. Also within the impressive **Adriatic Luxury Hotels** portfolio is **Villa Orsula**, complete with an exclusive beach and views of Lokrum Island. The sights are as good inside as they are out with surrealist artwork hanging on the walls created by renowned artists Roberto Matta and Victor Vasarely.



*Clockwise from top*

Villa Odak Classic Room; Abakus Piano Bar; Villa Orsula



# HOLISTIC HEALING



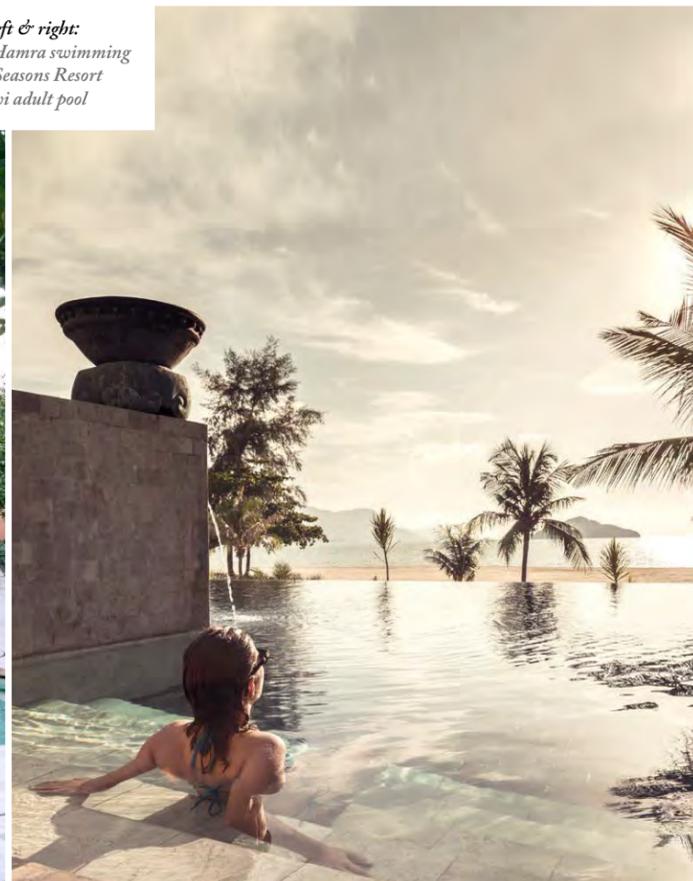
FROM TREATMENTS BASED ON ANCIENT TRADITIONS AND THE MYSTICAL ENERGIES OF A TROPICAL ECOSYSTEM, TO PRIVATE HILLSIDE PAMPERING AND A BAREFOOT DIGITAL DETOX, THESE LUXURY WELLNESS RETREATS ARE THE GO-TO PLACES FOR HOLISTIC HEALING JOURNEYS DESIGNED TO NOURISH EVERY PART OF MIND, BODY AND SOUL.

**D**estination de-stress. Nestled in lush jungle on the hillsides of Ubud, Bali's **COMO Shambhala Estate** is the flagship for **COMO's** worldwide holistic wellness brand; it has been the recipient of the 'Best Destination Spa' accolade in the Condé Nast Traveller Readers' Travel Awards for two years in a row. And it's easy to see why. Your body is truly treated as a temple here – and Bali has many.

At **COMO Shambhala** spas across the globe, every last detail has been thought of. As health enthusiasts, they take pride in creating an unforgettable experience to ensure there's complete wellness immersion at every moment of your stay. Including what you eat. The energising and concentration boosting cuisine has been developed and perfected for over ten years. **COMO** has placed a team of resident experts – from dieticians, Ayurvedic doctors to yoga teachers – at each of its resorts so that they are on-hand to deliver treatment plans bespoke to you no matter where you decide to stay. Choose from traditional healing retreats such as the five day yoga programme at **COMO Uma Paro** and **COMO Uma Punakha** in Bhutan, the more low-key relaxing experience of **Pranayama** at private island hideaway **COMO Parrot Cay** in Turks & Caicos, or invigorating massage therapy during a city break at **COMO Metropolitan Bangkok** or **COMO Metropolitan Miami Beach**.



*Below left & right:  
Amanjena Al Hamra swimming  
pool; Four Seasons Resort  
Langkawi adult pool*



**H**ammam healing. A little closer to home, *Amanjena* is an oasis of calm just 15 minutes' drive from the lively metropolis of the Red City. Peach-hued and pool-filled, its name means 'peaceful paradise' and the exquisite 32 luxurious Pavilions and six spacious two bedroom Maisons (complete with private pool) provide enthralling views of Marrakech's nearby Atlas Mountains. At the heart of Moroccan wellness is the traditional hammam cleansing ritual with its famous black soap and invigorating exfoliation. Happily, the captivating, Amanjena spa is one of the best places in the city to experience this. The spa contains two hammams, several massage rooms and a glass-encased whirlpool; you're bound to emerge feeling dewy, cleansed and polished.

For complete rejuvenation, enrol in a three-day retreat. Under the expert instruction of Himalayan-trained spa manager, Ria, and her team of resident and visiting practitioners, the programme includes daily spa treatments, movement and alignment workshops, argan oil head massage, Atlas Mountain biking and evening 'calming and grounding' sessions. Later this year, new restaurant Nama – from the Japanese word for raw – will tantalise with traditional washaoku cuisine. Signature dishes will include wild salmon and chicken cooked on a traditional charcoal grill.

**N**ature's nirvana. Paradise is found at *Four Seasons Resort Langkawi*. Located within the Langkawi UNESCO Geopark – one of the most diverse tropical ecosystems on the planet – the stylish accommodation is set out in the style of a Malay village, dotted around the pristine landscaped gardens and next to the mile-long white sand beach, one of the finest in the area. The raison d'être here? To reconnect with yourself and the world around you.

Begin at the Geo Spa with its six floating pavilions, set beside dramatic limestone cliffs. Treatments use ila products and are based on the Geopark's ancient energies – earth, water, light and air. Unsure which to choose? Opt for Elemental Balance for a quadruple dose of wellness – the Earthlight Ritual helps you feel grounded, the Feminine Flow and Masculine Vigour enable to centre your inner chakras, the Bio Rhythm Restore gives an energy boost and the Rainforest Ritual will leave you floating on air. Wonder at the miracle of life on a mangrove safari for up-close encounters with eagles, monkeys, otters and walking fish. Afterwards, nourish the body at Ikan Ikan with deliciously authentic Malay delicacies. Warning, you may have to share with visiting dusky leaf langur monkeys.

**B**eachside bliss. It's all about fun in the sun at the effortlessly exquisite *One&Only Reethi Rah* with its eight eateries, popular tennis courts and no fewer than 12 beaches. And it's easy to stay safe in the heat thanks to it boasting the Maldives' first dedicated Sun Spa – get expert guidance on your skin type and how to safely achieve a long-lasting tan, receive skin-matched products from Institut Esthederm and enjoy access to a fleet of therapists who will reapply your sun lotion throughout the day and lather you with aftersun. At the serene beachfront ESPA spa therapies take influence from Ayurvedic medicine and there is also a dedicated vitality pool. For the gentlemen amongst you, the resort has recently revealed male grooming studio Barber&Blade, offering shaving and facial pampering.

Keep active with a personal trainer, private yoga lessons, on the climbing wall, at the PADI dive centre or choose from canoes, paddle boards, water-skiing and windsurfing. For something more low-key, try a lesson with the resident artist in Club One's boutique art studio. Refuel with toes-in-the-sand dining at boho-chic Fanditha, balanced cuisine at Rah Bar (salads and smoothies by day, music and champagne by night), or organic fare at Chef's Garden – try the yellowfin tuna tartare.

**P**ivate pampering. The hotel's setting atop a verdant hillside with panoramic views of Vinh Hy Bay is impressive, but it's the acclaimed Aman Spa that tops the offering at *Amanoi* in Vietnam. A retreat within a retreat, therapists utilise local ingredients such as aromatic herbs, rice and coffee, whilst the five double treatment rooms are perfect for couples. Find Buddha-like Zen and limber up for the long-haul flight home with yoga in the open-air pavilion. For private pampering, stay in one of the two spa houses, the first of their kind in Asia. Thuy Lien is perched next to a tranquil lotus lake, and An Son provides sensational vistas of Nui Chua National Park. Both have a double treatment room, private swimming and plunge pools, steam room, outdoor relaxation areas, Jacuzzi and include a daily Hammam or Banya treatment, as well as a daily Aman or Vietnamese massage.

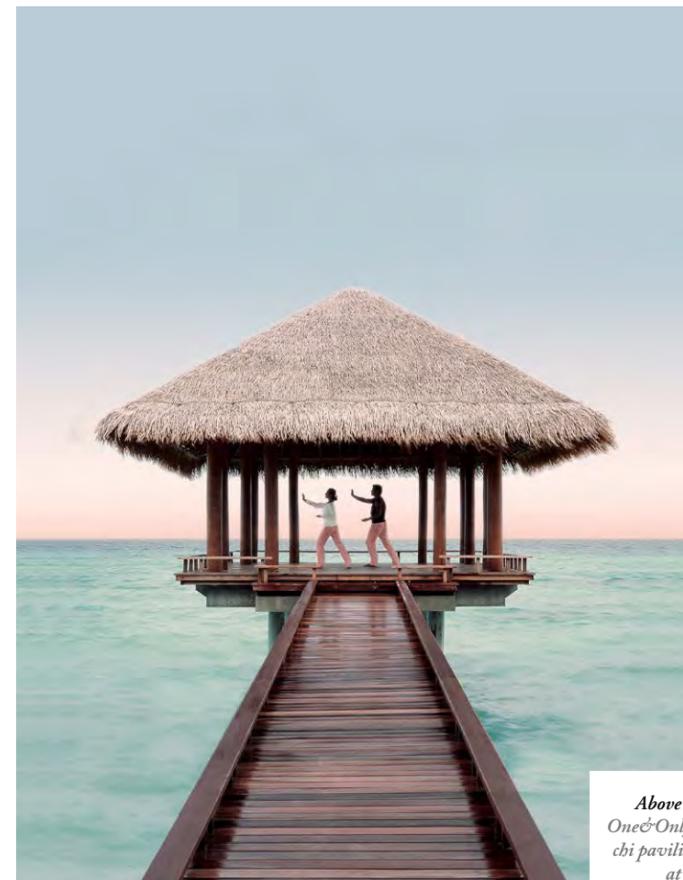
Further de-stressing diversions are found at the Beach Club with its saltwater infinity pool, non-motorised motorsports, al fresco dining and sublime stretch of white sand beach flanked by ancient rock formations. For cultural immersion, attend a cookery class and learn how to make traditional Vietnamese Bò lá lot, a minced beef fillet mixed with spice wrapped in a betel leaf. Delicious.

## HEAVENLY HELI

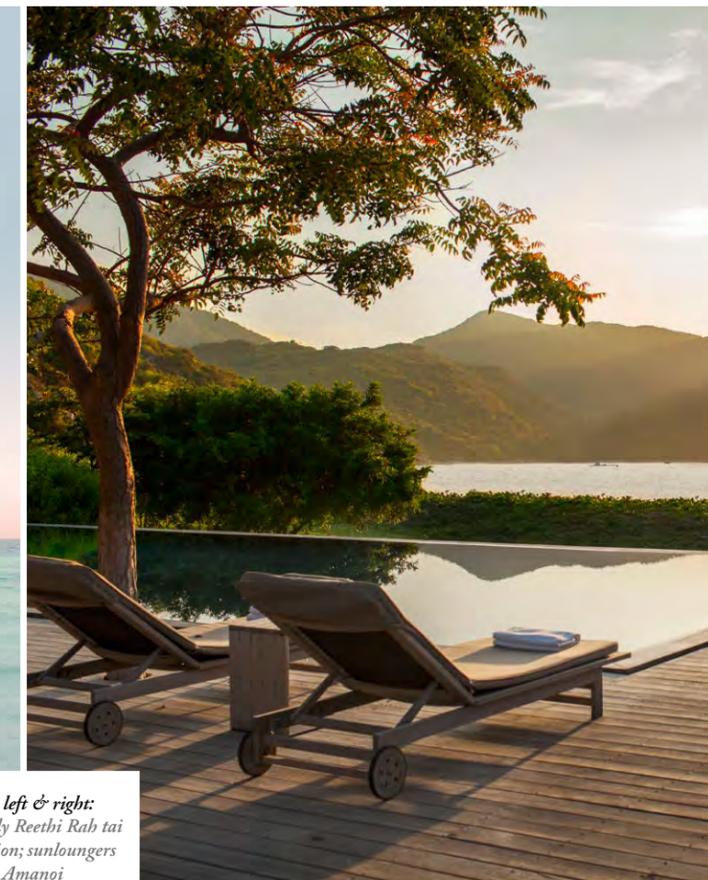
The holistic healings of Hippocrates are the cornerstone for treatments at *Amanzoe*, a Grecian sanctuary overlooking the Mediterranean. Find peace at the Aman Spa and experience the signature Zoe Treatment in one of the seven double treatment rooms or try a floating session in the Watsu pool. Top up the feel-good factor with yoga or Pilates.

## DIGITAL DETOX

For true barefoot escapism, leave the iPhone at home and experience a complete digital detox at Caribbean bolthole *Petit St Vincent* where there are no cars and the only Wifi is at reception. Need something? Raise the yellow flag at your beachside cottage or the red flag to be left alone. Don't leave without trying the Island Fusion massage at the treetop spa.



*Above left & right:  
One&Only Reethi Rah tai  
chi pavilion; sunloungers  
at Amanoi*



Travellers are increasingly looking for ways to delve deeper and connect better to the destination that they're visiting and sophisticated retreats around the world are taking full advantage of their location by offering a menu of adventures along with the creature comforts of a luxury resort.

# THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS



## SAFARI IN STYLE

Set high up on Kenya's Oloololo Escarpment bordering the Mara Triangle and home to some of the most famous scenes from the 1985 film *Out of Africa*, **Angama Mara** is a safari lodge like no other. Whilst the conventional canvas sides and dramatically tented roofs still remain, each of the 30 beautifully furnished suites eschews classic safari style with polished parquet floors, freestanding roll top baths, gin and whisky filled decanters and 180 degree views from their industry first, floor-to-ceiling windows. Every deck overlooks the horizon and features two red rocking chairs and binoculars, so you can take in the mesmerising views on a 'rocking chair' safari from the comfort of your own tent. Jump aboard your safari truck, complete with guide - there is no better opportunity to descend down the private

track and truly immerse yourself in the glory of the wildlife. Just a 30 minute drive away, you'll discover some of the biggest crocodiles in the Mara River and benefit from front row seats to the spectacle that is the Great Migration from July to October. For an alternative to game watching activities, take to the skies in an unforgettable hot air balloon ride at dawn before a champagne breakfast. Or, enjoy delicious cuisine on the crest of the third kopje with a unique 'Out of Africa' picnic, a recognisable spot from the film overlooking the extraordinary landscape. There are guided walks, bird safaris and a fitness centre to enjoy, as well as traditional song and dance displays performed by the local beaded Masai warriors. We recommend taking time to visit one of the Angama Foundation's Education, Healthcare or Conservation projects, for a deeper insight into the heart of Maasailand.

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## INTO THE DESERT

Just three hours from Dubai Marina and two hours from Abu Dhabi's city centre, skyscrapers pave the way to the legendary Liwa Desert located in the world's largest uninterrupted sand desert - Abu Dhabi's fabled Empty Quarter. Immersed in this incredible setting is **Anantara Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort**, rising like a mythical fortress out of the mesmerising dunes. Once reserved exclusively for royalty, over 200 rooms, suites and villas are beautifully decked with huge stone bath tubs, Nespresso machines and private sunbathing decks. The award-winning Anantara SPA, designed around Moroccan hammam healing baths, offers ancient massage rituals. Sunshine butlers are on hand with cooling rose-water spray by the vast swimming pool, accompanied by Arabian sand gazelle grazing in

the shade below. As well as catering to guest's relaxation needs, with a landscape straight out of Lawrence of Arabia, it's also the idyllic location for the fearless adventurer. Dune bashing is a must-do; traverse towering dunes and fly down sandy desert trails on a thrilling four wheel drive excursion. A bedouin-style camel trek, horseback riding, fat bikes and sand boarding are alternative methods of transport for exploring the rugged sandscape, but remember to pack comfortable shoes for an enchanting guided desert walk at sunrise or sunset. Delve deeper into the culture of Dubai with Emirati cooking classes and indigenous experiences such as falconry, which are available in the winter. All outdoor pursuits are organised by the resort's Desert Excursion Centre and are tailored to suit individual abilities.



## ON THE WATER

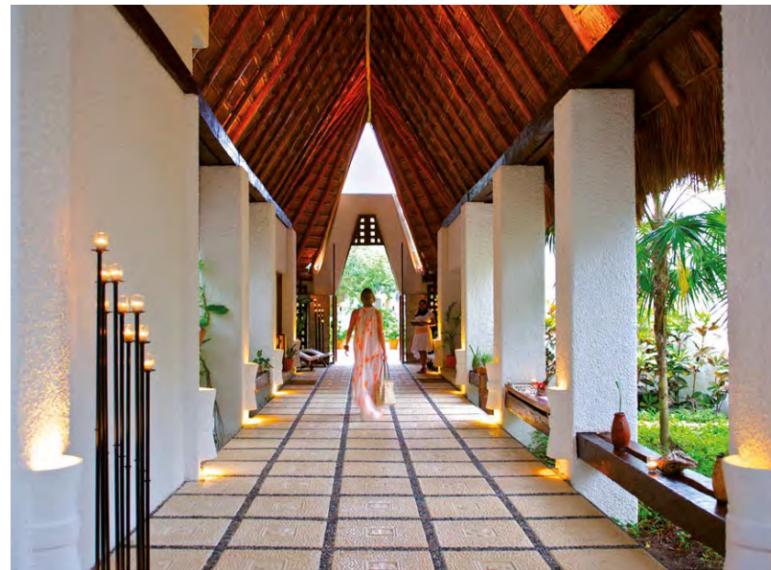
The only hotel in the Maldives' remote Thaa Atoll, getting to **COMO Maalifushi** is an adventure in itself - the picturesque atolls, reefs and lagoons to take in during the 50 minute seaplane transfer from Male are sure to delight. Whilst this paradisiacal island is the ultimate escape for relaxation, its enticingly clear lagoon beckons to be explored. The kaleidoscopic house reef at the end of the boardwalk is ideal for snorkelling and the PADI centre is well-equipped for diving. Marine biologist Francesco will point out coral life including baby black-tip reef sharks, puffer fish and, if you're lucky, witness whale sharks in their natural habitat. It's the nearby reef breaks that prove to be Maalifushi's

calling card though, as it's the perfect location for surf enthusiasts in search of isolated waves. Organised by the world-renowned Tropicsurf, venture to the famous 'Farms' break for an unrivalled surfing experience, where COMO guests have almost exclusive access. With so many different spots to choose from, there truly is something to suit every surfing ability. For something more peaceful yet equally as enjoyable, try your hand at game fishing, opt for an exclusive castaway picnic on a private beach or embark on a cultural tour on a nearby island. With COMO's mantra of wellness, we'd be remiss not to mention the over-water COMO Shambhala Spa, our go-to place after an activity-filled day.

**SEA MEETS JUNGLE**

A nature lover's paradise, you can access the world's second largest barrier reef, the Mesoamerican coral reef system, right off the shore from *Belmond Maroma Resort & Spa*, located on Mexico's Riviera Maya. We recommend a visit to the ecological biosphere of Sian Kaan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a short distance away and home to crocodiles and a vast array of birds. There are also deep-sea fishing excursions, dolphin swimming and whale shark tours available, each accompanied by a dedicated instructor. With 200 acres of jungle and coconut plantations encasing the white sand beach, on land explorations equally demand attention. Rent a four-wheel drive and just

under two hours away, discover the Mayan ruins of Coba, Tulum and Chichen Itza. The latter is decorated with teachings and is one of the new Seven Wonders of the World. After a day of exploration, head back to the sanctuary of the resort, situated on one of the world's most beautiful stretches of sand. Paying homage to the Mayan jungle village that once sat here, this is a hacienda-style escape with thatch-roof palapas. Partake in a cooking class, sample local mezcals at the beachfront cantina or pay a visit to the Kinan Spa, which boasts its own homemade hive filled with indigenous bees – the honey harvested is used in the treatments due to its healing properties.



**THAI TEMPTATIONS**

You can be as relaxed or as active as you like at *COMO Point Yamu* on Phuket's east coast in Thailand, though magnificent marine life also begs to be discovered. The resort overlooks the limestone cliff faces of Phang Nga

Bay, which is protected by UNESCO, another idyllic spot for snorkelling, diving, sea kayaking and boating expeditions. On land, why not take a bike tour through local villages, rubber and banana plantations or even pay a visit to the nearby gibbon sanctuary.



**IN THE CITY**

If Cape Town is on your bucket list, *Cape Grace* is the perfect base from which to explore. For over 20 years, this popular hotel has sat on its own private quay within the vibrant Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, offering majestic views of Table Mountain. It's a stone's throw from famous sites, including the ferry to historic Robben Island and the Two Ocean Aquarium, ideal for those travelling with children. The sundeck around the heated outdoor pool will be



a welcome haven after a day of visiting the local markets which offer a great selection of clothing, jewellery and local food. A highly recommended activity offered by the hotel is the whisky tasting experience and tapas at Bascule Whisky and Wine Bar.

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