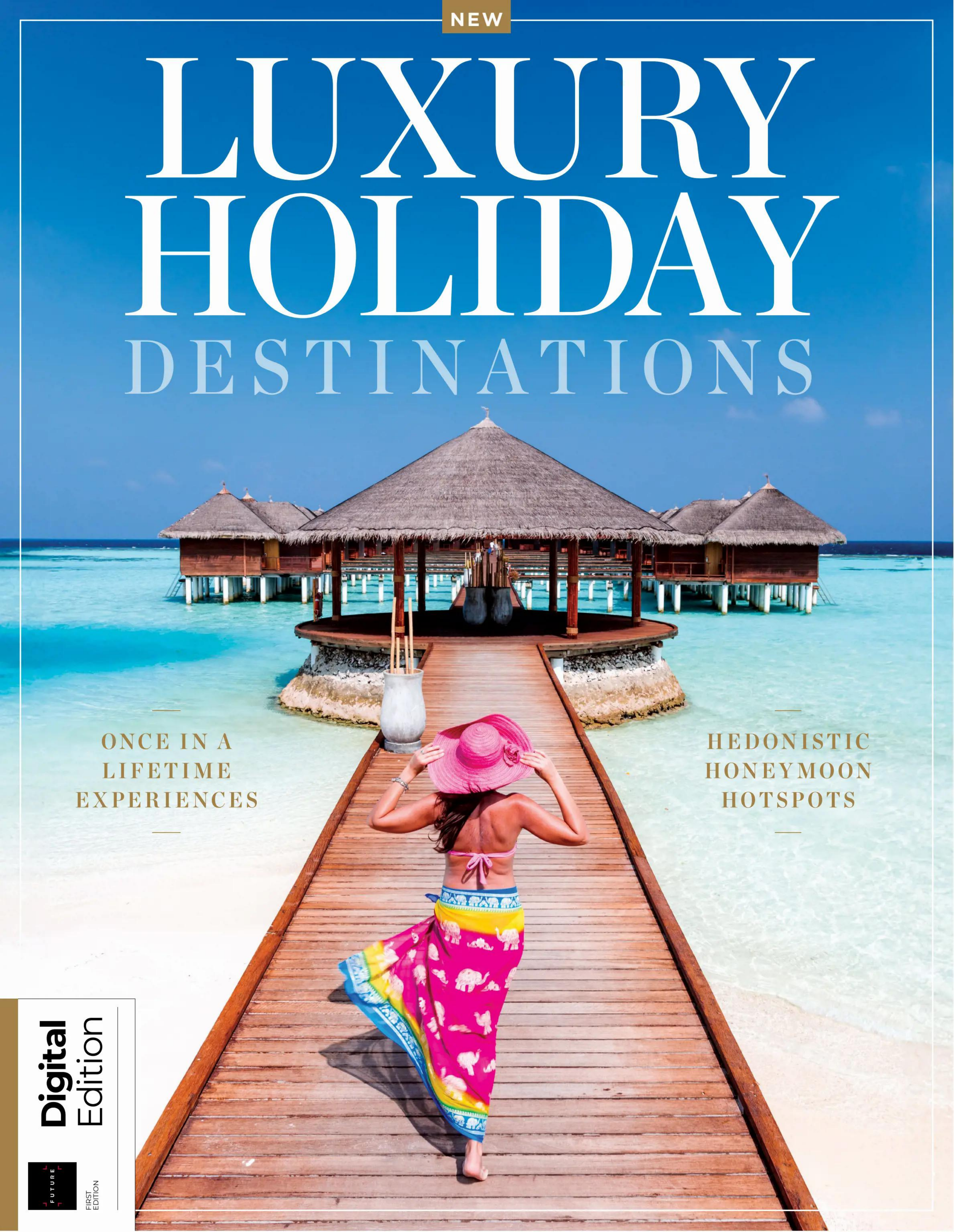
NEW

LUXURY HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS



ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCES

HEDONISTIC HONEYMOON HOTSPOTS

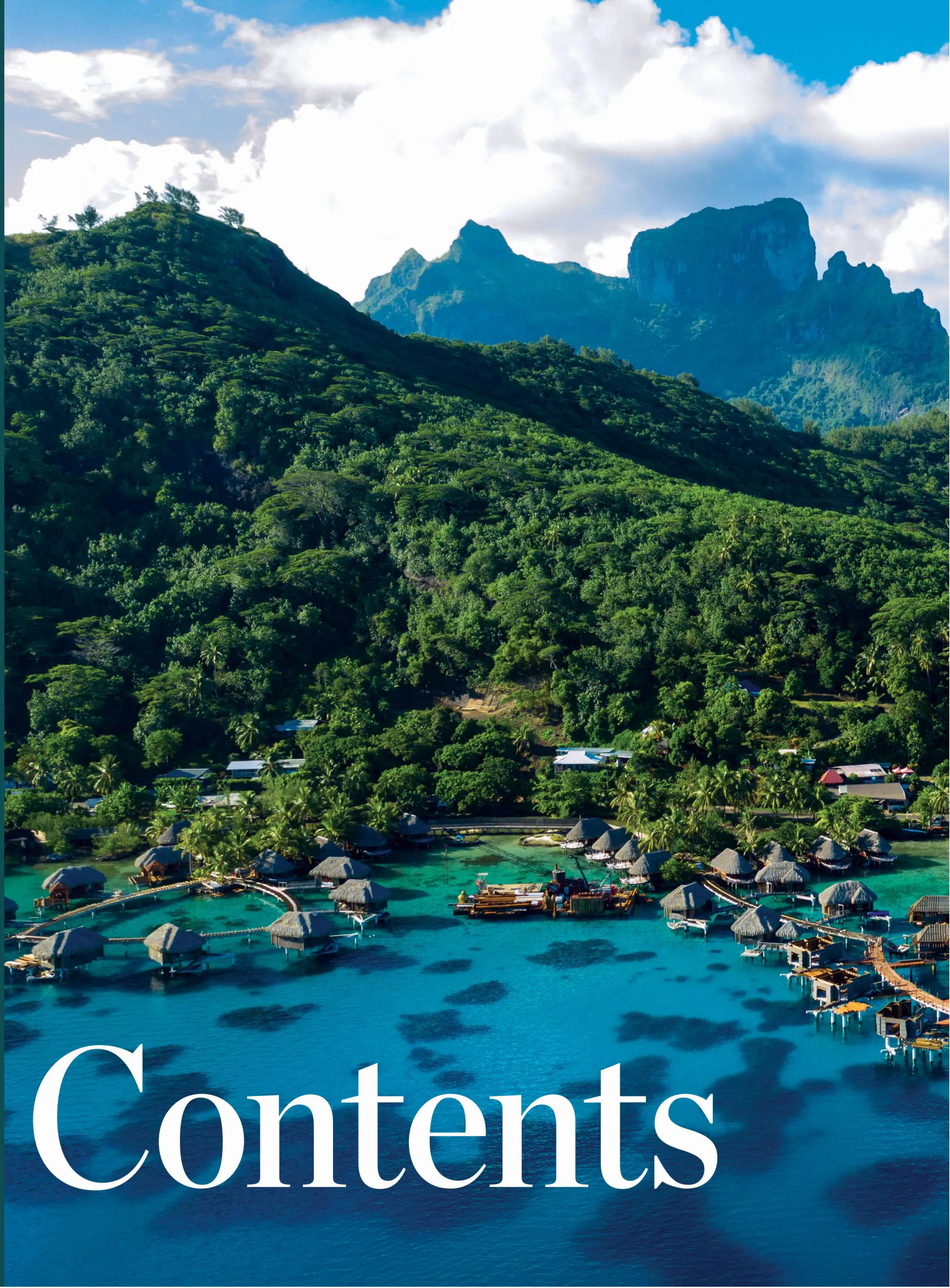
Digital Edition

FUTURE

FIRST EDITION

LUXURY HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS

What does luxury look like to you? Is it the bliss of a world-renowned detoxifying body treatment? Perhaps it is an exclusive beachfront resort with your own personal butler serving you your favourite cocktails as you bask under the tropical sun? Maybe it's cruising the Mediterranean on a private yacht, sipping champagne as you overlook the sparkling azure sea? Is it a shopping spree of Milan's designer boutiques? Adrenaline junkies might claim luxury is that once-in-a-lifetime trip to Everest or a glamping adventure in the Arabian desert. Whatever your idea of luxury, your very own paradise awaits inside these pages. Whether you are looking for a glamorous jet-setting getaway, a sumptuous spa break or a safari adventure fit for a tsar, the royal treatment awaits…



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Planning Your Trip

HERE'S HOW TO PLOT YOUR HIGH-END ESCAPE TO ENSURE IT GOES OFF WITHOUT A HITCH

— WORDS **EMILY BROWN** —

You know the old adage – fail to prepare, prepare to fail. When it comes to travel, though, that's something a true VIP never does: they know what they want, and they know how to get it. Whether it's picking which dream destination to visit or the travel aficionado to call upon, here's what you need to know about booking a trip like the rich and famous.

PICK THE PLACE

Wishes and desires: The first question to ask is "what do I want?". If money is no object, there's no need to constrain yourself to the place with the cheapest flights or accommodation costs. Fantasising about an overwater bungalow for a family holiday in the Maldives, a ski break in one of the finest French Alps resort, or an adventure into the unknown? When you've got limitless spending power, nothing is off-limits.

Time of year: If you're visiting Europe, North America or other non-tropical destinations, the best time of year is invariably late spring and summertime. However, fair weather isn't the only consideration: think about whether you'd like to go in the low (or even rainy) season to take advantage of fewer crowds and the chance for a more intimate experience.

Festival favourite: If you are going somewhere to enjoy a VIP experience at a specific event – think Portugal's NOS Alive festival in July, or the famous Trinidad and Tobago Carnival in March – expect the destinations to be busier than usual. Plan ahead and book that dreamy suite before anyone else snaps it up.

GET SET FOR SUCCESS

Class divide: Destination picked, decide how you're going to get there. If chartering a private jet is on the cards, contact the aviation firm for their rates and availability, and be sure to inform them of how many others are travelling with you. If first class on a regular airline is more your thing, do a little research on which to pick: Emirates is often said to have the best first class in the world, with on-board shower spas and private suites to bed down in.

Think insurance: Annual worldwide travel insurance policies should cover most destinations in the world, but if you're a VIP, you're going to need a little extra cover for those priceless items in your baggage, longer stays, plus higher cancellation and medical cover.

Passport to anywhere: The crème de la crème jet off all around the world, but no-one is exempt from visas. If where you want to go requires a tourist (or even business) visa before travel, be sure to apply as early as you can, as they can be a time-consuming and complicated document to get hold of.

Fit to travel: Though it's not glamorous, it's wise to get special vaccinations, from Japanese encephalitis to rabies – and these are best organised at private medical clinics, which stock even the most unusual of immunisations. Book appointments around eight to ten weeks before your departure date to ensure you'll get what you need.

Stay in touch: While going off-grid is a privilege, no celebrity would be truly disconnected. Stay on top of things by purchasing an eSIM and loading it onto your phone before travel, or buying a local SIM card – that way, you'll be able to talk to the people back home from a beach in Mauritius or a mountain in Morocco.

PACKING LIST

Wonder wardrobe: If you're bringing designer clothes, luxury cosmetics and other expensive items you wouldn't want to get damaged – or even creased – pack smart: invest in a good set of padded packing cubes, garment bags, or even some tissue paper to prevent wrinkling. Then, lock up your case (ideally hard shell) with a padlock to keep it safe.

VIP treatment: Wealthy travellers, international business people and families with cash to splash often use bag pickup services, which collect luggage from home and ensure it gets on the plane (or private jet) before takeoff, so their clients can breeze through the airport bag-free.

GO THE EXTRA MILE

Lounge around: There's no need to mingle with other passengers in the departures hall. If you're A-list or above, many airports have private terminals, but if that's a little out of reach then airport lounges in mainstream terminals can offer a taste of the high life. Pre-book lounge access to the finest first-class lounges at your airport – for example, British Airways' offering at Heathrow Terminal Five is second-to-none. First-class passengers and Gold-level Executive Club members check in at the First Wing area, a space dripped in gold – then, they're whisked through security to the Concorde Room, where pre-flight meals are paired along with sparkling wine and unbeatable views of the runway.

Taxi transfer: Tinted windows, champagne fridges and hatted chauffeurs: that's how celebrities get to the airport. Be sure to book an executive car service so your getaway gets off to a flying start.

LEFT From leaving the house to touching down, make your trip luxurious every step of the way

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The Right People

THERE'S NOTHING LUXURY TRAVEL AGENTS AND TOUR OPERATORS WON'T DO FOR THEIR CLIENTS – HERE'S HOW TO USE THEM YOURSELF

One of the benefits of infinite financial resources is that having people to do the paperwork isn't a frivolous expenditure. In fact, it's a necessity when it comes to luxury travel, as chartering private jets, booking private yachts and securing the top hotel suite can be a lot of work, and requires someone with serious connections.

Luxury travel agents are specialists in providing the very best for their clients. They plan trips in meticulous detail (such as picking their client's favourite champagne to be placed in the suite), have established relationships with the finest hotels, and book activities and experiences high net worth individuals couldn't find on their own. Luxury travel agents are available to their clients 24/7, and in return for their services, earn a commission from the companies their clients book with.

Top-end tour operators such as Abercrombie & Kent work slightly differently. They will plan perfect itineraries for the discerning customer, whether they're bespoke, self-guided or an intimate group tour. However, they don't take a commission. If you're keen to enlist some expert help, here's our pick of the best people to know.

BELOW Travel concierges do all the hard work for you

> "Luxury travel agents are specialists in providing the very best for their clients

Ariodante Travel

BEST FOR
— EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL —

Do you travel for the culture, the food and the people? Then book a trip with Ariodante Travel agency, which gives its ultra-exclusive clientele the best cultural experiences: from sleeping in bedrooms where kings and queens once laid their heads, to enjoying dinner in a famous monument with a Nobel prize-winning author.

Abercrombie & Kent

BEST FOR
— PRIVATE JET TOURS —

In the luxury biz for over 60 years, Abercrombie & Kent is one of the world's most reputable tour operators. It offers trips anywhere in the world (from the Amalfi Coast to the remote reaches of Antarctica), including itineraries incorporating private jets: think a two-week trip around the ancient sites of Greece, Turkey and Egypt or a 24-night gallivant from Portugal to Cambodia.

Berkeley Travel

BEST FOR
— BESPOKE BREAKS —

Berkeley Travel has a team of concierges ready to plan your perfect five-star getaway, from indulgent spa escapes in Scandinavia to barefoot luxury in Bali. Those who like to get more for their money will love Berkeley's relationships with hotels around the globe (such as Belmond and Mandarin Oriental), who can provide complimentary gift vouchers, resort credit and room upgrades.

Artisans of Leisure

BEST FOR
— ESCORTED TOURS —

With tours in 70 different countries, this US-based company specialises in touring; having an experienced guide on the ground, luxury travellers get an unparalleled look into their destination, with the very best in hospitality. Artisans of Leisure build holidays around every interest, from genealogy to garden tours.

Mahlatini Luxury Travel

BEST FOR
— SAFARI —

Mahlatini specialises in the wonderful world of safari: think of capturing the perfect photo of a lion on the prowl in Kenya, or experiencing the wonder of the wilderness in Congo. Safari lodges with infinity pools, sunset dinners and more are the most prestigious way to stay: Mahlatini promises only the finest lodges, many of which are on private game reserves, so you will get to enjoy the wildlife all to yourself.

Sienna Charles

BEST FOR
— ALL-ACCESS PASSES —

US luxury specialist Jaclyn Sienna India is the travel concierge to the stars, arranging after-hours tours of famous monuments (impossible to most others) as well as VIP access to events and trips aboard luxury yachts. However, availing her services isn't easy: clients must have an annual net worth of over $100 million to be a member.

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A Romantic Getaway

IF YOU'RE PLANNING THE PERFECT ROMANTIC GETAWAY, THE SKY'S THE LIMIT!

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

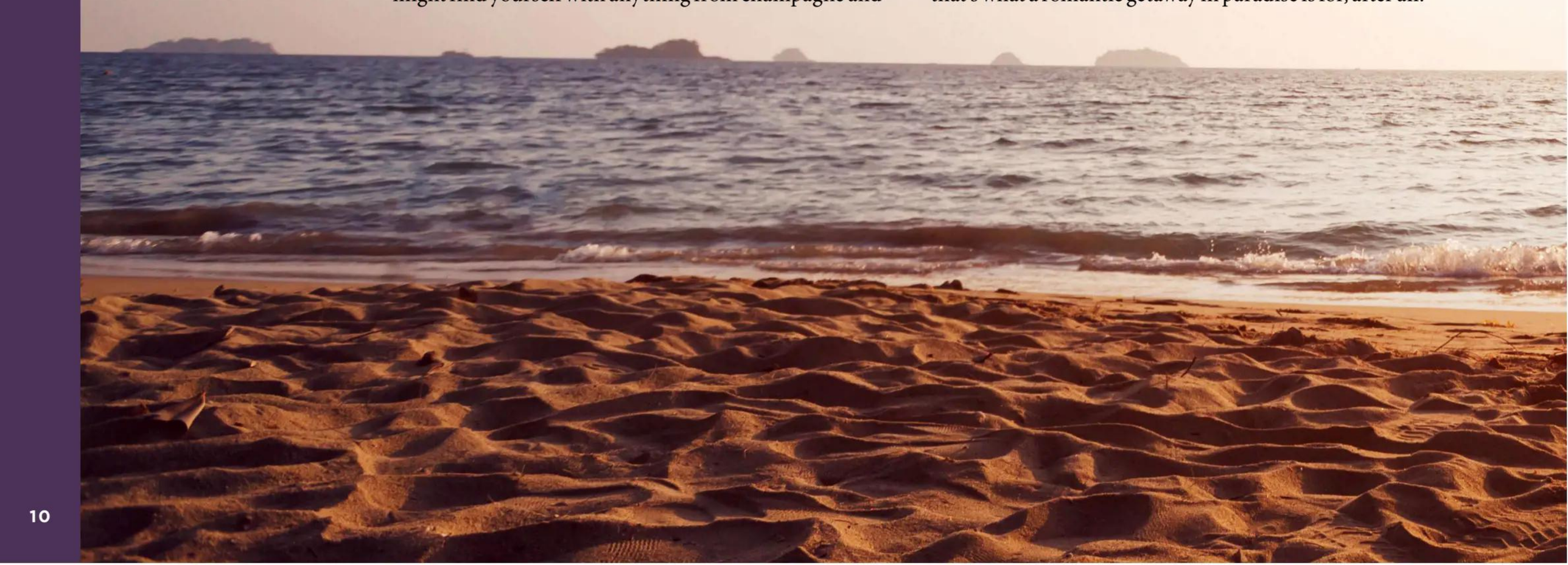
RIGHT Make sure to treat yourself to the very best of everything for a dream romantic escape

First things first: when you're planning a truly luxurious romantic getaway, forget about the budget. No scrimping, no counting the pennies and no cutting corners; this is all about making your dreams come true, so treat yourself and your partner to the very best of everything and make it an escape to remember. You'll find some amazing locations that are just perfect for couples, weddings and honeymoons in this book, so now is the time to start planning that dream getaway!

Once you've decided upon your perfect destination, you can start to investigate the accommodation of your wildest fantasies. It's always worth booking directly with the venue if you can, because that will give you the perfect opportunity to mention that you and your partner are looking forward to experiencing the trip of a lifetime. It's also a great chance to find out if the resort offers any special extras for couples on romantic breaks and you might find yourself with anything from champagne and chocolates on arrival, to rose petals, a room upgrade or a spa treatment!

Before you head off, plan some special experiences for the two of you to share, but don't overdo it. A private boat trip could be the perfect blend of enjoying the sights and spending quality time together, while the best table in the house at the best restaurant in town is a surefire winner. You'll already know what your partner loves to do, so take that as your lead and push the boat out. Make them feel as special as you know they are.

Though you'll want to set some time aside to explore, don't forget that you're here for romance and, if things are going to plan, you'll be checking into the finest accommodation your location has to offer. It's not just somewhere to rest your head. You don't have to pack every moment with expensive meals and exclusive excursions, so don't forget to include some time for the two of you to unwind in each other's company. Order room service, pour the wine and settle down for some quality time together – that's what a romantic getaway in paradise is for, after all!



HEDONISTIC HONEYMOON HOTSPOTS

WHEN YOU'RE PLANNING YOUR HONEYMOON, DON'T SETTLE FOR ANYTHING BUT THE BEST

If your romantic break has gone to plan, it might not be long before you're planning your honeymoon. Let this book be your guide to the true dream hotspots, because many travel and accommodation providers have stunning honeymoon extras available. If you're not the sort who likes to plan, you can hand the whole lot over to a specialist honeymoon concierge who, for a hefty fee, will do all of the hard work. All you need to do is show up and enjoy.

However, if you prefer to take the lead when it comes to the planning, make sure that every venue knows that this isn't a holiday, it's a honeymoon. It's been said that everyone loves a lover and when it comes to honeymoons, hotel chains, cruise lines and other providers can't wait to treat you to the very best. It does no harm to be a bit cheeky so, if you want extras, ask for them. It'll make that extra bottle of bubbly on arrival taste all the sweeter!

Safari Sleepout

Queen Elizabeth II spent some of her honeymoon sleeping under the African stars, and so can you. You can enjoy a Kenyan conservation safari that culminates in a night spent not just in any four poster bed, but a four poster bed set high above the ground. You'll enjoy panoramic views against an unspoiled valley teeming with wildlife and fall asleep beneath the wide open sky.

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Getting There

FORGET THE BUDGET AIRLINES, YOU'LL BE TRAVELLING FIRST CLASS ALL THE WAY

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

When it comes to seeing the world by air, it doesn't get much more luxurious than DreamMaker's Passport to 50, the first private jet trip to completely circumnavigate the globe on two custom-outfitted Boeing 767s. On a journey of 50,000 kilometres, You'll see 20 cities in 20 days and at every stop, you'll experience the highest levels of service and luxury you can possibly imagine. DreamMaker has promised its guests an experience so exclusive that it is usually reserved for royalty, but it comes with a very hefty price tag.

You'll start your trip in Koh Samui before taking off around the world, visiting locations including Florence, Cannes, Havana, Barcelona and a tempting secret paradise island. Best of all, this trip isn't for anyone: the £12 million fee gets you exclusive use of both jets, for you and 49 of your closest family and friends. Experiences include a mile-high poker tournament for charity, alongside the world's highest ranked poker player and you'll also get a free gift to say thank you – a set of 18-karat gold swizzle sticks valued at £1 million.

With 50 handpicked staff on hand to cater to the 50 guests, this is a holiday like no other. Whether you're in flight or on the ground, your butler will be on hand to ensure that you and your guests never want for anything, no matter how extravagant. With passengers spending 12 per cent of the holiday in the air, hypnotherapist April Norris has developed a unique holistic experience that incorporates sleep technology, reiki and other therapies to ensure that guests reach the ultimate state of relaxation as they see the world in style. Just as you'd expect, everything from the hotels to the in-flight catering offers the very definition of a world-class experience, meaning that you will never forget this lavish jet trip around the globe. So what are you waiting for?

Money raised by the Passport to 50 experience will benefit children around the world thanks to donations to a host of international charities, with partners including the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Water.org and Starlight Children's Foundation.

ABOVE Enjoy the true high life with Emirates First Class

> “If your bank balance can stand it, you can hire anything from a small jet to an airliner

Your Own Private Plane

If even first class isn't luxurious enough for you, the only option is to hire your own private plane. If your bank balance can stand it, you can hire anything from a small jet to an airliner, but expect to pay anything from a few thousand pounds an hour for a small jet to tens of thousands per hour for an Airbus A380. You'd need a lot of friends to fill it, though!

GO FIRST CLASS

FLY FIRST CLASS, FOR THE ULTIMATE IN-FLIGHT EXPERIENCE

With Emirates leading the pack when it comes to luxury, first class air travel has never been more opulent. You'll experience unparalleled privacy when it comes to Emirates' completely enclosed suites, a feature that really sets it apart from the competitors: there's no curtain and no divider, but a fully self-contained room. In your suite you'll find a large-screen TV, a cot bed and even ambient lighting and temperature, so you can create your own atmosphere. You'll also be free to choose from a menu that would challenge any world-class restaurant and enjoy unlimited Dom Pérignon and caviar. You'll even get special pyjamas that moisturise your skin as you sleep, and a complimentary Bvlgari toiletries kit for use in the onboard spa and shower.

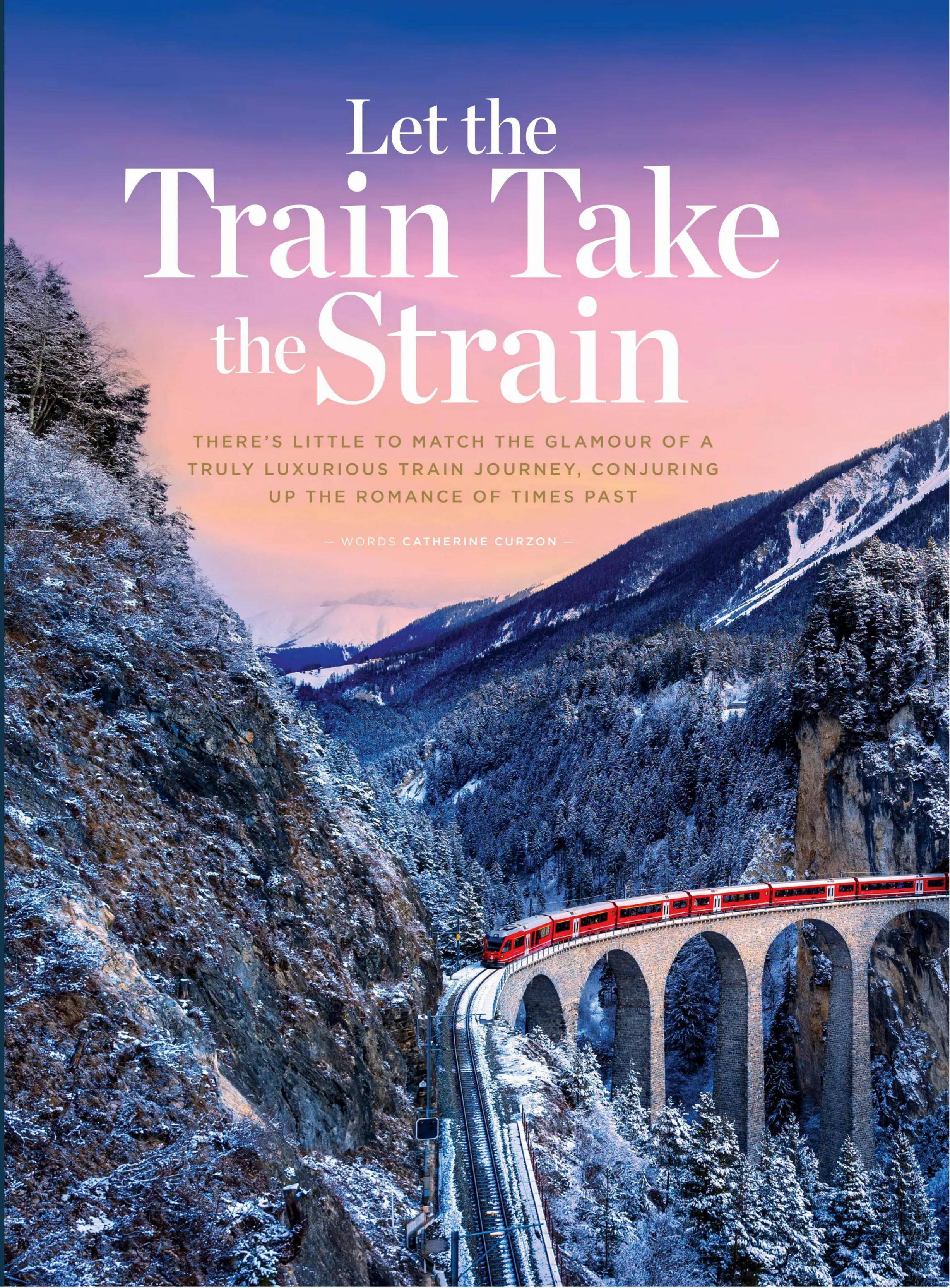
Lufthansa, Air France, Japan Airlines and Etihad Airways are chasing the top spot with their own luxury offerings, though. With private spaces for first-class passengers, breathtaking menu options and even double beds, it's a home from luxury home. WIth Etihad, however, the first-class experience starts early, with a chauffeur-driven pick up from your own front door. You could even book The Residence, a private three-room suite with a private sitting room, bathroom and double bedroom. And if that's not enough, it comes with a private team of staff too!

© Getty

Let the Train Take the Strain

THERE'S LITTLE TO MATCH THE GLAMOUR OF A TRULY LUXURIOUS TRAIN JOURNEY, CONJURING UP THE ROMANCE OF TIMES PAST

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —



There's something romantic about being a passenger on one of the world's most celebrated and historic trains, crossing continents in luxury as staff tend to your every whim. It's a celebrated mode of travel that goes back generations, turning the journey itself into part of a holiday to remember.

When it comes to luxury train travel, there are three names to set any railway enthusiast's heart racing: Belmond, the Orient Express and the aptly-named Palace of Wheels, which criss-crosses the Indian subcontinent. Each of these offers an unparalleled experience and the opportunity to see the world at a different pace, without sacrificing that first-class experience.

As part of the group behind the Orient Express, Belmond offers a range of trips encompassing everything from a tour of Britain to a journey to Machu Picchu or even the Andes. Whatever the destination, you'll find yourself living the five-star hotel life on the rails. With a choice of fine or casual dining prepared by chefs of international renown, individually designed suites that you won't want to leave and even onboard spas, so you can be pampered as the world goes by.

The Orient Express, meanwhile, needs no introduction. As the last word in luxury train travel since 1883, it is a true icon and, naturally, ticket prices reflect that. For a true taste of luxury, costing tens of thousands, you can book the celebrated Grand Suite on the legendary Paris to Istanbul route and travel like royalty, attended by 24-hour cabin service as you enjoy unlimited champagne on tap and bespoke toiletries and amenities. Each of the six Grand Suites is inspired by one of Europe's most celebrated cities, so you'll need to take half a dozen trips in order to experience them all!

From September to April, the Palace on Wheels offers a trip that you'll never forget, setting off from Delhi for a seven-day trip that takes in locations including Jaipur, Chittorgarh Fort, Jodhpur and the Taj Mahal, before returning you to Delhi once more. The Palace on Wheels offers exactly what its name suggests and took inspiration from the traditions and residences of the Indian Maharajas in everything from its design to the route it takes. Since launching in 1982, the Palace has prided itself on its luxuriously appointed cabins and restaurants, where guests can take time to relax and unwind before enjoying a variety of cuisines.

Luxury train travel is an irresistible way to see the world. Combining glamour with speed and offering the finest service imaginable, it really is travel at its finest.

LEFT Forget the commuter route, luxury train travel will take you worldwide

India's Palace

If you travel on the Palace on Wheels, your whole trip is mapped out for you. The journey comes complete with guided excursions each day; of course, there's also plenty of free time to wander through the breathtaking stops or just kick back in your luxurious cabin!

DINNER ON THE RAILS

FORGET CURLY SANDWICHES AND WEAK TEA, THIS IS FOOD AT ITS FINEST

The Orient Express is as famed for its food as for its history. At each stop along the route, seasonal local supplies are loaded onto the train before being prepared by the chefs to serve at dinner that night. Head chef Jean Imbert's gourmet menus change with the season to reflect the particular route that you're travelling, while honouring the heritage and reputation of the Orient Express itself. This is no ordinary railway catering, but a true culinary one-off, uniting local artisans and producers with visionary chefs and creatives.

The Orient Express brings to life a bygone era of travel, with lazy breakfasts offering dozens of freshly-prepared choices, decadent lunches and extravagant traditional high teas on offer. Though dinner has always been the centrepiece when it comes to the Orient Express's dining experience, the cocktails that are served first are not to be missed and if you're a night owl, midnight brunch served with bubbly is a time-honoured tradition for travellers. And of course, caviar is always available to guests, whatever the hour.

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Next-Level Cruising

CRUISE SHIPS CAN OFFER SOME OF THE FINEST LUXURY TRAVEL MONEY CAN BUY, FROM SUPERYACHT SAILINGS TO SIX-STAR CRUISES...

— WORDS **EMILY BROWN** —

LEFT Enjoy a luxury cruise to some of the world's most beautiful destinations

Though your initial impressions of a cruise may be of massive vessels packed to the brim with large groups, supersized facilities and bland dining, think again. The world of ultra-luxury cruising is growing, so you'll find lots of sublime sailings available to discerning customers.

All the convenience of a cruise – namely, the opportunity to see many destinations while only unpacking once – is combined with the joy of a high-end hotel. Premium ships are usually smaller, meaning you can sail to more private and secluded destinations. Stepping on board feels like stepping into another world, with grand foyers graced by crystal chandeliers, priceless art and slim flutes of champagne clinking as you check in.

The star attractions don't stop there. From the minute they step aboard, passengers can rest assured that they'll be well and truly pampered, because the guest-to-crew ratio (that's the amount of staff to each passenger) is often far lower on luxury ships than on standard ones – on some lines, it's almost one-to-one, meaning customer service is tailored to a guest's every whim.

Unlike on other cruises, everything you could possibly need should be included on a luxury cruise: Wi-Fi, tips for the crew, sumptuous cocktails, the in-room minibar, valet laundry, fancy restaurants, and sometimes excursions and spa treatments.

Even the most basic suites will make for a once-in-a-lifetime holiday experience, but if you're truly keen to push the boat out (pun intended), then plump for a top-end suite on one of the larger lines: think private dining rooms and in-room spas, wraparound balconies with the best views on board, and your very own butler. All for the price of around $10,000 per night.

Ready to set sail in style? Then pack your suitcase, pick your destination, and get ready to receive a regal welcome on board these super-luxury cruise lines.

> "Everything you could possibly need should be included on a luxury cruise

© Getty

Regent Seven Seas Cruises

SIX-STAR LUXURY AT SEA

— MEDITERRANEAN —

BELOW Regent Seven Seas cruise ships call in at more than 550 ports worldwide

Regent Seven Seas Cruises claim to be the 'World's Most Luxurious Cruise Line', and there are so many reasons that's true. For starters, Regent keeps its ships both small and spacious – there are never more than 750 guests – and the line boasts an 'all-suite fleet', meaning that almost every stateroom has a balcony of its own. Along with a welcome bottle of champagne on ice, naturally.

Complimentary room service is included, should you decide to bask in your decadent suite, but with gourmet restaurants (think flavoursome family-style Italian dining in Sette Mari, or an indulgent 14-layer chocolate cake in the Prime 7 steakhouse) plus top-shelf spirits included in the cruise fare, it's well worth leaving your suite to explore all your ship has to offer.

Décor on board skews towards the understated, with hallways in elegant monochrome and public spaces featuring crisp golden lines, but this belies a collection of astonishing artworks: aboard the latest ship, Seven Seas Grandeur, there's a custom-made Fabergé egg and two works by Spanish surrealist, Pablo Picasso.

However, it's the included shore excursions that make Regent stand out. In each of the 550-plus ports of call, the line lays on a breadth of trips that delve deep into the culture, history and gastronomy of each place. The Mediterranean has a particularly strong selection of shore excursions: dream of exploring a farmstead in Mykonos where a local family cooks you a meal of home-grown ingredients. Or take a trip to the world's smallest town in Croatia, where an intimate walking tour is complemented by smooth local brandies.

Even sea days provide plenty of opportunity for enrichment: shop for designer watches, fragrances, clothing and more in the elegant boutiques, take a cooking class to taste local flavours with the guidance of a professional chef, or indulge in a 'thousand flower detox wrap' in the spa to wash away life's little worries.

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© Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection

Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection

THE WORLD'S FINEST FLOATING HOTEL

— ASIA —

Currently boasting two superyacht-inspired small ships, the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection is new to the cruising game, but it's already proved itself to be at the cutting edge of luxury. The line claims to have the highest ratio of space per guest at sea – and since the largest and newest ship, Ilma, carries only 448 passengers, you can rest assured that privacy and discretion is guaranteed on every voyage.

A cruise aboard a Ritz-Carlton yacht combines all that's opulent, stylish and thoughtful about the iconic hotel collection, with the chance to stop in at a new destination every day. Begin the morning by perking up with a shower stocked with Diptyque premium toiletries – the perfect way to get ready for a few hours of adventure, or lounging glamorously by the pool.

Staff are trained to anticipate their guests' needs, from pressing laundry before the cruise's formal nights to bringing iced coffee and champagne for guests that demonstrate a penchant for a cool beverage. If you're planning to live well and truly large, reserve the 96-square metre Owners' Suite: the private bar means you can host a cocktail night with friends on board. And if VIP guests are feeling hungry, there's a private dining room on board too, where they can celebrate special occasions.

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection offers cruises all over the world, but for something a little different, try the line's 12-night cruise from Hong Kong to Tokyo, which features the perfect balance of sailing and sightseeing days. Five sea days are combined with an overnight stop in thrilling Shanghai, as well as long days in trendy Seoul, historic Nagasaki and energetic Osaka. It's the perfect introduction into East Asia's most varied and exciting cities – and should you wish to stay longer, the cruise line can arrange for you to enjoy stays in Ritz-Carlton hotels in any departure and arrival port.

ABOVE The pools aboard the Ritz-Carlton yachts seem to trickle down to sea level

© Getty

Silversea Cruises

FOOD-FOCUSED CRUISING

— CARIBBEAN —

ABOVE A Silversea deck doesn't just offer a place to swim and soak up the sun – there are barbecues, too

Step onto a Silversea cruise, and you'll quickly grow accustomed to the white-gloved butlers handing you classy cocktails at any given opportunity. The award-winning line sails all over the world, but board a sailing in the Caribbean to take advantage of the sunshine and hideaway feel of expansive suite balconies; and, if you are lucky enough to check into the Owner's Suite, you can watch the sea roll by from the whirlpool tub in the Italian marble bathroom.

The VIP voyage begins the minute you close your front door, with executive vehicles whisking you from home to the cruise port. In fact, when booking with Silversea, passengers find they barely need to lift a finger – return flights, sometimes with business class upgrades, are included in the cruise fare, as well as a selection of immersive daily shore excursions.

On one Caribbean itinerary, you can choose to take part in an eco-trek to a gushing waterfall one day, explore island rum and chocolate production on another, then round off the trip with a hip-wiggling Soca dance workshop on the beach. With late stays in many Caribbean ports often going on until 10 or 11pm, you'll find that you get plenty of time to explore the Caribbean islands in all their glory.

However, Silversea passengers might want to make a beeline back to the ship for dinner. There are plenty of options, with the line's S.A.L.T (Sea And Land Taste) programme giving passengers the chance to sample dishes from the region the ship is sailing in, as well as French haute cuisine and delicious Italian options for palate-pleasing meals.

In need of some company? Silversea offers the chance to invite a member of the bridge crew to dinner, so you can dine with distinguished company. Or, take a seat in the Connoisseur's Corner to sip top-shelf cognac and smoke cigars with new friends; after all, you own the night.

Seabourn Cruise Line

EXCLUSIVE EXPEDITIONS

— ANTARCTICA —

Sailings to the epic ice fields of Antarctica are rapidly gaining popularity, so why not see the southern hemisphere in style? All of Seabourn's high-end expedition ships are equipped with ice-strengthened hulls, which ensure a smooth ride, even when weaving between sheets of broken ice.

The fully-inclusive line is known for its large, balcony-equipped suites and spacious ships; think nearly 2,800 square metres of open deck space to survey the frozen vista, or taking the best seat in the theatre without needing to show up really early. Smaller ships also make for a more relaxed, friendly atmosphere, and the crew operate an open bridge policy, so passengers get exclusive access to the control room and can ask questions about maritime navigation or life on board.

A 13-day sailing to Antarctica in early 2026 briefly takes in Buenos Aires, before flying down to Ushuaia (the southernmost city in the world) where the 264-guest Seabourn Pursuit sets out from. A couple of days at sea to reach Antarctica means there's plenty of time to enjoy all that the recently-launched ship has to offer, including daily 'fireside chats' with geography experts, eight prestige restaurants, plus opulent 'caviar on ice' get-togethers where you can mingle with all of the other well-heeled, adventurous passengers.

When the Pursuit reaches Antarctica, a team of 24 expedition specialists are there to ensure passengers enjoy the ice desert safely, responsibly, and insightfully. Don your waterproofs, wellies and beanies and step aboard one of the line's 24 Zodiac boats, which can take you on a rip-roaring whale watching trip.

Alternatively, go beneath the waves in one of the Pursuit's two custom-built submarines, spotting seals and penguins cutting through the icy waters as they chase down a fish supper: it's an experience you'd be hard-pressed to find anywhere else.

BELOW The Seabourn Pursuit offers a yacht-inspired experience, even in remote Antarctica

© Alamy

In the Lap of Luxury

FORGET CHEAP AND CHEERFUL, THESE ARE THE MOST LUXURIOUS HOTELS YOU'LL FIND

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

When it comes to the last word in luxury, there are a few options for the traveller who simply must have the very best of everything. The premium hotel suites aren't available to just anyone, though, and might even need you to be vetted before your reservation is accepted. For the chosen few, however, the rewards are well worth the effort. You'll enjoy palatial surroundings and private staff, where nothing is too much trouble. From the big brands to more intimate surroundings, it's all about that experience of a lifetime.

If you fancy something a little more unusual, meanwhile, you might prefer to check into a palace in India or China, or enjoy a warrior's welcome in Japan. And if sleeping in a cave doesn't sound like the height of splendour, there's a little place in Spain that might just surprise you. Happy travels!

When a plain old hotel room won't do, it's time to book the very best

© Getty

The Empathy Suite

PALMS CASINO RESORT
— LAS VEGAS, USA —

You can't just book the Damien Hirst-designed Empathy Suite at The Palms: they'll decide if you're the sort of high roller they want when you enquire. If you make the grade, you'll be treated to a suite that is pure Vegas. With curated artwork on every wall, a private rooftop pool and even your own bar and custom-designed Damien Hirst pool table, it'll be like the Rat Pack never went away. Of course, you'll have a dedicated butler and concierge and a chauffeur-driven car will whisk you from the airport to the VIP check-in. And to get you ready for a night of gambling, the suite includes private massage rooms and a sauna, so you can relax high above the famed Strip.

BEST FOR Vegas hedonism, following in the footsteps of the famous

> "Guests in the Grand Riad are guaranteed privacy and discretion

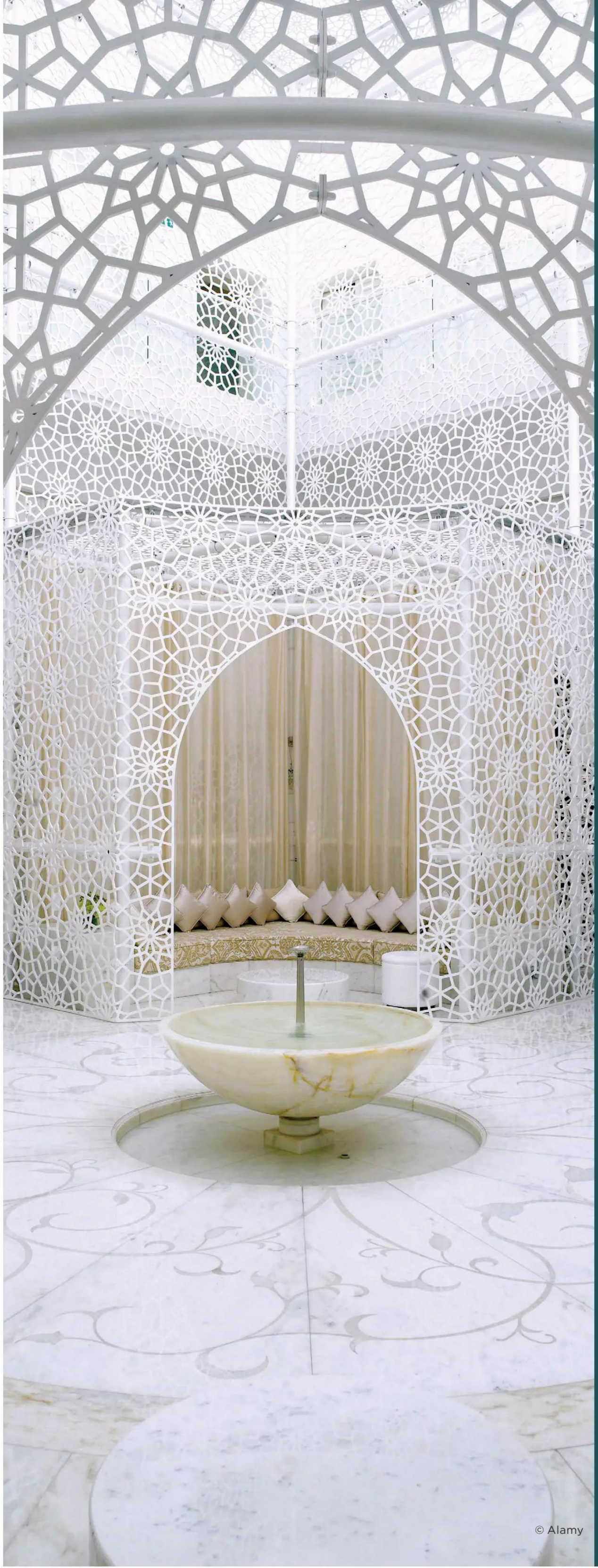
Grand Riad

ROYAL MANSOUR
— MARRAKECH, MOROCCO —

A stroll through your private olive grove, past your plunge pool and through your landscaped gardens will leave you in no doubt that the Grand Riad is a place you won't want to leave. The Royal Mansour prides itself on the sumptuous attention to detail in this riad, where fine textiles, hand-carved cedarwood detailing and crystal chandeliers lend your holiday a regal flavour. You'll have to pass security to even get into the hotel, which is 85 per cent handpainted in gold and silver, but guests in the Grand Riad are guaranteed privacy and discretion as they enjoy Michelin-starred food. And don't worry about the airport shuttle; the Royal Mansour's gold Bentley will chauffeur you every inch of the way.

BEST FOR Lovers of old-school grandeur and service

RIGHT Travel concierges do all the hard work for you



© Alamy

© Lartisien

MAKE IT UNIQUE

IF HOTEL SUITES LEAVE YOU COLD, TRY SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT

Aman Summer Palace in Beijing is an architecture lover's dream. In this peaceful retreat, you'll leave the modern world behind as you settle into a royal pavilion. Over 100 years ago these tranquil pavilions hosted the guests of the Empress Dowager Cixi but now, for a few nights at least, you're the guest of honour in this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

If a palace isn't your style, how about a cave? Cap Rocat in Mallorca was once a fortress but it now boasts National Monument status and the extraordinary Sentinel cave suites – luxurious accommodation carved out of the rockface. With a private plunge pool and uninterrupted views of the ocean, it's a unique experience.

Finally, when you book exclusive use of Japan's Ozu Castle, you'll arrive to a traditional warrior's welcome before entering the castle, where a team of staff await. Once a favourite haunt of samurai lords, Ozu Castle is a blend of ancient and modern, offering contemporary standards and amenities but also a traditional Japanese experience, including cultural performances and living history demonstrations. After all, how many holiday rentals send a samurai warrior to greet you at the airport?!

Villa Azzurine

VILA VITA PARC
— THE ALGARVE, PORTUGAL —

With six luxuriously-appointed bedrooms and a dining table that seats 22, grab your best friends and head for the Villa Azzurine. It's your home away from home, boasting a dedicated team of housekeepers and concierges, two private pools and even a fully-stocked wine cellar. You can work out in the private gym, relax on your rooftop terrace, or chill out in the oceanfront reading room, surrounded by handcrafted mosaics. You'll even have access to a private chef and sommelier as well as priority use of the resort's chauffeur-driven Porsche Cayenne Dakar.

BEST FOR Relaxing in style with your family or best buddies

ABOVE Contemporary chic is the vibe at Villa Azzurine

Royal Penthouse Suite

HOTEL PRESIDENT WILSON
— GENEVA, SWITZERLAND —

Geneva's Royal Penthouse Suite can be home to you and 23 guests, who will relax in one of the 12 bedrooms, each with its own marble bathroom, outfitted with Hermès toiletries. Arriving by helicopter to your private helipad, you'll be following in the footsteps of heads of state as you enjoy the Steinway grand piano, watch a movie on the 103-inch television or browse through one of the priceless books in the suite's library. If you need anything, just give your private butler, chef or concierge a shout, and don't forget the vast terrace, offering glorious views of the Alps and Lake Geneva!

BEST FOR Travellers with deep pockets and lots of guests

> This lavish penthouse will dazzle you with its attention to opulence

The Mark Penthouse

THE MARK HOTEL
— NEW YORK, USA —

The Mark Hotel's magnificent grand penthouse is a vast 929 square metres, including 232 square metres of rooftop terrace with unmatched views of Central Park and New York City. Designed by iconic French interior designer, Jacques Grange, this lavish penthouse will dazzle you with its attention to opulence. Over two floors, the penthouse includes five bedrooms, a couple of wet bars and a living room that can be transformed into a full-sized ballroom for entertaining. With your own private library and dining room, as well as al fresco entertaining options, you'll feel like you own the city.

BEST FOR Chic Manhattan style, high above Madison Avenue

Royal Villa

GRAND RESORT LAGONISSI
— ATHENS, GREECE —

This suite was designed specifically to welcome royalty and it shows. The best of everything can be found in the Royal Villa, from a fully-fitted kitchen – obviously a chef can be provided – to business facilities and a spacious, contemporary living space. You can take a dip in one of your two pools or enjoy the fully-equipped private gym, before enjoying spa treatments in your personal massage space. The suite comes with separate butler's quarters, access to the resort's private beach and a choice of restaurants, so you can dine overlooking the idyllic peninsula.

BEST FOR Would-be royalty who demand the best

BELOW Enjoy the buzz of New York from your own private rooftop terrace

© Atlantis The Royal

> Guests can expect a menu of pillows to guarantee the ideal night's sleep

Royal Mansion Suite

ATLANTIS THE ROYAL
— DUBAI —

This four-bedroom suite links the two sides of Atlantis The Royal and includes an enormous outdoor space, as well as a private foyer complete with olive trees. Besides all the amenities you'd expect, from a pool to a library, you'll get a Louis Vuitton ping pong table and an entertainment centre, with a huge choice of gaming systems, movies and more. Your butler will answer your every need and guests can expect a menu of pillows to guarantee the ideal night's sleep, in addition to gold-plated toothbrushes to keep you smiling. If you want to grab a souvenir of your stay, head down to the hotel's shop and pick up an original Picasso, before ducking into one of the world-class restaurants to toast your new purchase!

BEST FOR The best of everything; following in the footsteps of megastars

ABOVE Fancy a gold-plated toothbrush? Try Atlantis The Royal

Maharajah Pavilion

THE RAJ PALACE
— JAIPUR, INDIA —

It's not often that you get to follow in the footsteps of royalty, but the Maharajah Pavilion was once the personal domain of monarchs and many of the features and furnishings were once part of the royal collection. As well as opulent surroundings and your own butler, chauffeur, concierge, masseuse and chef, you'll enjoy private facilities including a gym, spa, sports facilities, cinema and even a fully-stocked wine cellar. The Raj Palace also prides itself on the quality of its welcome gifts for guests in the Maharajah Pavilion and you won't even have to enter through the main hotel: guests in this most elite of suites get their very own entrance and elevator!

BEST FOR Lovers of everything extra; minimalists need not apply

BRAND IT

WHEN IT COMES TO LUXURY CHAIN HOTELS, THE NAME IS EVERYTHING

If you're a fan of the very best and like your labels, you'll need to know your luxury hotel brands. Bvlgari has a select portfolio of hotels in major cities and luxury destinations, while One&Only resorts likewise offer just a handful of destinations, ensuring that every guest gets a personal, luxury experience. Aman has nearly three dozen properties, but that doesn't mean there's a compromise on standards, instead, this long-established brand has refined its offerings to match the expectations of even the pickiest guests.

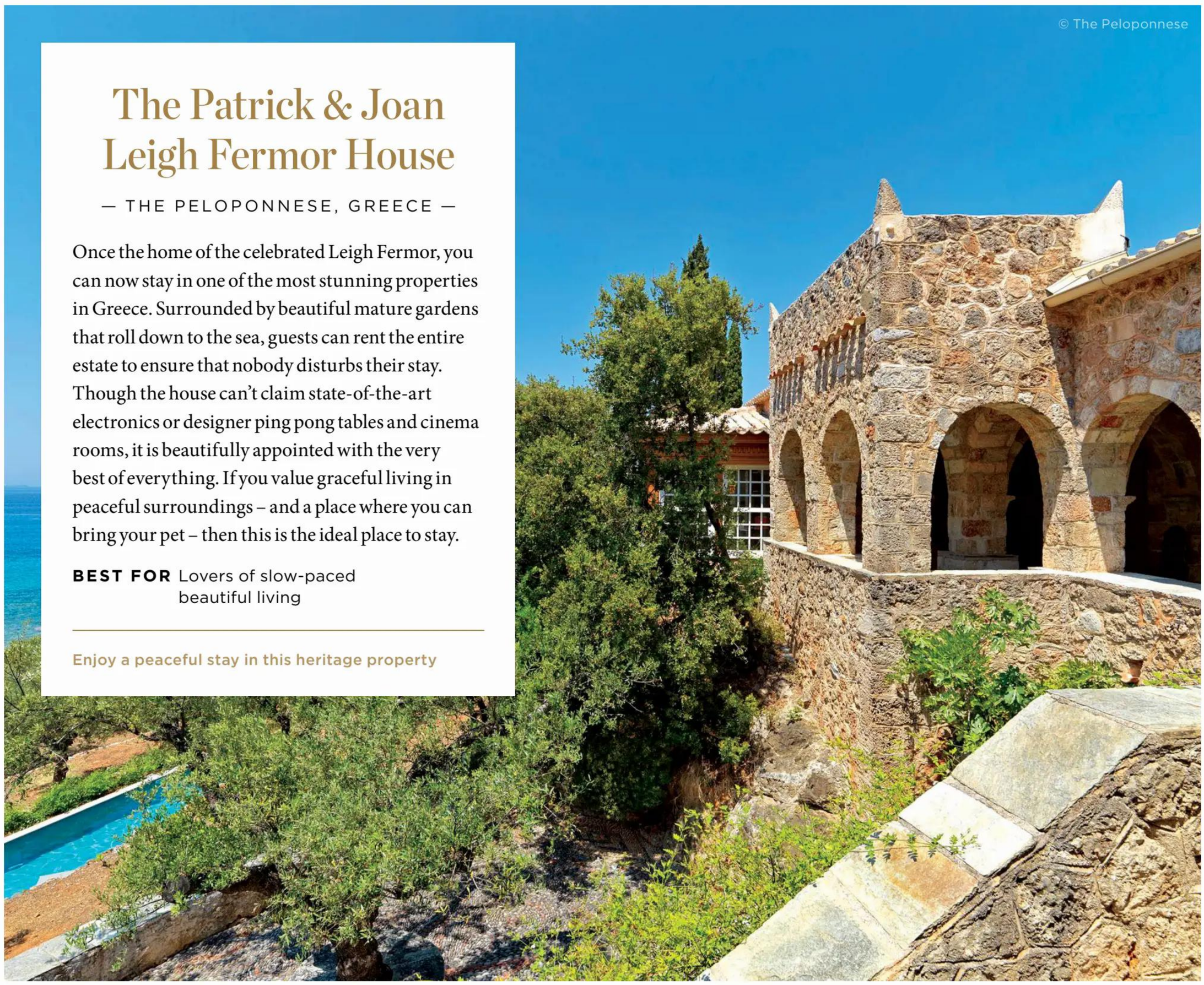
Heritage names such as the Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton, Rosewood Hotels & Resorts, and Rocco Forte Hotels, meanwhile, are known for a long lineage of five-star service and beyond, making them the go-to for loyal brand followers as well as newcomers to their opulent offerings. With so many stunning locations to choose from, both old and new, it might take you a while to tick them all off!

Penthouse Suite

FAENA HOTEL
— MIAMI BEACH, USA —

You don't need to be vetted for this one, but you do need tens of thousands per night. For that, you'll bask in the sort of relaxed glamour that makes Miami Beach such a favourite. Personally designed by Frank Pollaro, the two-floor suite is elegant and stylish, with each of its five bedrooms boasting large balconies, while the living space offers panoramic, floor-to-ceiling views. Your private rooftop infinity pool is a tempting place to relax, and the handpicked original art collection perfectly accents the building's Art Deco leanings.

BEST FOR Luxury overlooking the ocean



© The Peloponnese

The Patrick & Joan Leigh Fermor House

— THE PELOPONNESE, GREECE —

Once the home of the celebrated Leigh Fermor, you can now stay in one of the most stunning properties in Greece. Surrounded by beautiful mature gardens that roll down to the sea, guests can rent the entire estate to ensure that nobody disturbs their stay. Though the house can't claim state-of-the-art electronics or designer ping pong tables and cinema rooms, it is beautifully appointed with the very best of everything. If you value graceful living in peaceful surroundings – and a place where you can bring your pet – then this is the ideal place to stay.

BEST FOR Lovers of slow-paced beautiful living

Enjoy a peaceful stay in this heritage property

A Taste of Tranquillity

PREPARE TO BE PAMPERED AT THESE SERIOUSLY DECADENT SPAS AND RESORTS THAT ARE SURE TO PROVIDE A EUPHORIC EXPERIENCE

— WORDS **DR KATHERINE BEBO** —

ABOVE Take advantage of the specialist care offered by many companies to put the pep back in your step

Are you desperate for a detox, seeking a spot to unwind and destress, looking to indulge in first-rate beauty treatments or do a spot of soul-searching? If so, find yourself – or lose yourself – at one of the most sumptuous, spectacular, serene and satisfying sanctuaries in the world, for a self-care sojourn in a class of its own. Whether it's yoga in India, cheese making in Italy, breathwork in New Zealand or napping in America, each getaway promises that you'll feel like a new you on the journey home.

© Adobe Stock

> Prepare to feel calm, cleansed and positively healed after a stay

Go With Your Gut

LANSERHOF SYLT

— SYLT, GERMANY —

Located on the isle of Sylt – known as the 'Hamptons of Germany' – prepare to feel calm, cleansed and positively healed after a stay at this luxurious medical clinic and spa. Holistic health is the order of the day, so expect beach walks at sunrise, breakthrough psychotherapy sessions, and IV therapy to replenish your amino acids as part of your personalised detox plan. The eco-friendly establishment's signature LANS Med Concept combines naturopathy with whizzy medical techniques and the Mayr Cure, which focuses on the idea that a healthy gut can help to solve many medical issues. The Cure is supported by four pillars: nutrition, exercise, regeneration and medicine. It doesn't hurt that you'll be breathing in restorative sea air throughout your stay.

BEST FOR Holistic health

ABOVE The surroundings of Lanserhof Sylt are beautiful

Take My Breath Away

ARO HĀ

— GLENORCHY, NEW ZEALAND —

You'll need all the breathwork you can get at this luxury retreat as the surrounding scenery of Lake Wakatipu and New Zealand's Southern Alps will completely take your breath away. Join the Ecstatic Breathwork session, which promises that you'll 'rediscover harmony' and 'enhance your vitality'. Aro Hā is Māori for 'love', and there's no way you won't fall madly in love with your surroundings, your daily deep-tissue full-body massages, and the place's overall wow factor. Choose from three programmes: Revive & Thrive, Winter Wellness, and Featured Educators, all promising to lighten your mood, improve your health, deepen your consciousness, nourish your immune system, and delight your senses. Aaaaaand… breathe.

BEST FOR Stunning scenery

© Ananda in the Himalayas

Hydration Elation

PALAZZO FIUGGI
— FIUGGI, ITALY —

Think Italy and your mind probably strays to pasta, pizza and wine, right? Think again! In this sumptuous medical spa that promises to transform your body and mind, the food is prepared by a Michelin-starred chef who focuses on low-carb, low-fat, high-protein fare (snapper carpaccio with peach and mango chutney, anyone?). Wine is out; Fiuggi spring water is in, which originates from the region's natural springs. It's said to have had healing properties for at least 600 years – having even cured ailments for Michelangelo! – and is at the heart of the retreat's many wellness programmes, for both inside the body (drinking it) and outside the body (swimming and floating in it). Palazzo Fiuggi's clinic offers its clients full medical check-ups and you can pick from a range of personalised programmes that have been specially designed to detox, rejuvenate and reach your personal goals. Other facilities at the spa include a Turkish steam room, sauna and a state-of-the-art gym.

BEST FOR Water therapy

Strike a Pose

ANANDA
— HIMALAYAS, INDIA —

Where better to get your yoga on than its birthplace? Yoga began in India 5,000 years ago and is still going strong. At Ananda, which is housed in the former Viceregal Palace, you'll don the resort's signature white pyjamas to partake in traditional Hatha-style yoga. Then go for a pampering treatment – like the Abhyanga, which involves warm oil being poured over your forehead to open the 'third eye' for better mental clarity. Treatments are also on offer to help with hormonal, menstrual and reproductive health.

BEST FOR Yoga

ABOVE Get those chakras well and truly balanced by paying a visit to Ananda

Green Getaway

BORGO SANTO PIETRO
— TUSCANY, ITALY —

Would you like your facials, Ayurvedic massages and exfoliating scrubs delivered with a side of cheese making? Then Borgo Santo Pietro is a boutique retreat for you. With 300 acres of gardens, woods, vineyards, hiking trails and farmland the company is proud to be 80% self-sufficient. It also means there's plenty of space to stretch out. You can also charter a yacht, nip around on a Vespa, or take flight in a hot air balloon.

BEST FOR Sustainability

> Just an hour outside of Los Angeles, you'll feel like you're on a different planet in this restorative refuge with the Santa Monica Mountains as a backdrop

Sweet Dreams

THE RANCH MALIBU
— MALIBU, USA —

Any retreat that schedules daily afternoon naps into the routine gets the thumbs-up from us. Just an hour outside of Los Angeles, you'll feel like you're on a different planet in this restorative refuge with the Santa Monica Mountains as a backdrop. There's no hustle, there's no bustle, and there's absolutely no photos allowed (in case you're sitting down to eat your plant-based menu with a celebrity or high-powered executive). There's also no caffeine. But there is mindfulness – and plenty of it. Pack your walking boots as you'll be hitting beautiful hiking trails for hours at a time. You've got to earn that nap somehow.

BEST FOR Unplugging

WELL, WELL, WELL

LET YOUR TROUBLES DRIFT AWAY

Costa Rica's Hacienda AltaGracia lives by the philosophy 'where there is water, there is life'. And you'll certainly feel alive as you immerse yourself in the River Bath Experience hosted by the resort's spa, The Well. The purpose of this experience is to cleanse your aura, which is achieved by riverside meditation, and floating in two different pools of water – one a natural river and one a herbal bath – surrounded by lush rainforest, fluttering butterflies and hovering hummingbirds. An exfoliating body scrub using local coffee is applied to your skin; as you rinse it off, don't forget to drink in your beautiful surroundings and listen to the hypnotic sounds of nature.

BELOW Immerse yourself in the water treatment at The Well and feel fabulous

© Auberge Resorts Collection

> Head into the lavish underground spa to lose yourself

The Good Life

F ZEEN
— KEFALONIA, GREECE —

F Zeen translates to 'the good life' in Ancient Greek and you'll find just that at this adults- and residents-only hotel that sits above the glistening Ionian Sea. If the lure of the ocean from your sunlounger proves too much, join one of the guided excursions. Back on dry land, head into the lavish underground spa to lose yourself and find inner calm with a massage, facial or hammam session. Alternatively, detox your body and mind with meditation or yoga. In contrast to this subterranean spa, the resort's outdoor cinema is very much out in the open. Set under the twinkling stars, you can watch classics (such as *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, filmed on the island) or new releases with wireless headphones provided, of course, in order to maintain the tranquility of the retreat.

BEST FOR Adults only

Love Nest

KEEMALA
— PHUKET, THAILAND —

Whether you want a sound bath or an actual bath (bathrooms boast mosaic floors, indoor and outdoor showers, and deep, soak-your-troubles-away bathtubs), the Keemala resort won't disappoint. Perfect for honeymooners, the Romantic Escape Package includes a 'harmonising massage', a Thai cooking class and a fragrant floral bath. The tiki-torch-lit nights also up the romance factor, as does the lagoon-shaped swimming pool with mini waterfall. But you don't have to be loved-up to enjoy everything this boutique retreat has to offer. Other activities include: sunrise yoga on the rooftop, cocktail-making classes, photography tours, HIIT sessions in the state-of-the-art gym, and raindrop healing therapy.

BEST FOR Romance

BELOW Let the tranquil surroundings at F Zeen banish your cares

© F Zeen

© Absolute Sanctuary Koh Samui

FACE VALUE

THIS 24-KARAT-GOLD FACIAL IS ELECTRIFYING

You could never say that Dubai is a destination that does things by halves. The city that brought us the 'world's first seven-star hotel' has now brought us the 24-karat-gold facial. Which is precisely as extravagant as it sounds. Intrigued? Take a trip over to the Talise Ottoman Spa inside the Jumeirah Zabeel Saray resort. Then sit back and try to relax as the gold chainmail mask is placed over your face while electric currents are run through it. The goal of the treatment is to slow the breakdown of elastin and collagen depletion, and regenerate skin cells to provide a tightening effect. The result? A radiant, youthful-looking visage... and a much lighter purse.

But the pampering doesn't stop there. In addition to the gold mask ceremony, this treatment includes an Arabian gold hammam and a rose oil Jacuzzi bath. However, even that isn't the end of the experience. After you've been thoroughly pulsed and bathed, you are then escorted to a private suite, where you'll tuck into a champagne and caviar lunch. Dubai, you've done it again!

Sweat it Out

ABSOLUTE SANCTUARY KOH SAMUI

— KOH SAMUI, THAILAND —

Thailand does some things really well: food, massages and making visitors feel welcome. All three combine at this serene retreat on a tropical hillside that looks out over the ocean. But don't think that you'll be sitting around eating and being pampered all day. There's also bootcamp training – after analysing your fat mass, muscle mass and metabolic age – to make you sweat (and destress). Other destressing activities include yoga (of course), Pilates, reflexology and meditation classes. Oh, and daily colon hydrotherapy sessions.

BEST FOR Pushing your boundaries

ABOVE Expect to put the work in at the Absolutel Sanctuary

Winter Wonderland

OTAVA LODGE

— LAPLAND, FINLAND —

Otava Lodge is a place of wonder… and contrasting temperatures. Embrace the winter wonderland with everything from skiing to husky sledding. Then warm up in the lodge with a drink by the fireplace, before hitting the hot tub or trying a traditional Finnish sauna. Look up to the sky in the Aurora Lounge and and you'll see the real showstopper: the northern lights.

BEST FOR Stargazing

Recreation

ALL OF THIS LUXURY TRAVEL CAN BE TIRING, SO LEAVE SOME TIME TO UNWIND

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

For the jetsetting global traveller, chasing the sun and chasing the snow is second nature. Whether you unwind with 18 holes or on the slopes, make sure that you don't settle for anything less than the very best.

RIGHT Hit 18 holes in style

Eighteen Holes in Paradise

FROM THE CALIFORNIAN SHORES TO SCOTTISH LEGENDS, GET A HOLE IN ONE IN STYLE

Across the globe, luxury resorts offer golfing enthusiasts professional-standard courses, staffed by PGA professionals and with everything you might need to enjoy the perfect 18 holes. Of course, the luxury doesn't stop there when you're staying at the very best the world has to offer. With palatial rooms that overlook stunning views, gourmet menus, full spa services and more, these are the ultimate golf breaks that money can buy.

> "Luxury resorts offer golfing enthusiasts professional-standard courses

Anantara Villa Padierna Palace Resort

MARBELLA'S FINEST IS NOT TO BE MISSED

— MARBELLA, SPAIN —

Whether strolling around one of the three 18-hole courses on offer or honing your skills on the driving range, this stunning Spanish resort is a must. The hotel offers a spa with Roman baths, a choice of stunning restaurants and private villas, where you can unwind after a tough day on the green.

The Évian Resort

EVIAN ONE, THE RESORT'S PRIVATE CATAMARAN, WILL BRING YOU TO PARADISE

— ÉVIAN-LES-BAINS, FRANCE —

The Évian Resort's Hôtel Royal offers the ultimate luxury stay and is home to the Évian Resort Golf Club. Commanding views of Lake Geneva, the club has hosted international championships and there's even an Academy, so novices can pick up the basics. True golf aficionados can stay right on the green in Le Manoir du Golf, for total immersion.

Adare Manor

THE RYDER CUP 2027 HOST IS WAITING TO WELCOME YOU

— ADARE, IRELAND —

It's no surprise that Adare Manor, which drips in old world glamour, has been chosen to host the Ryder Cup in 2027. Boasting extensive practice facilities and the sort of manicured course that golfers dream of, as well as roaring fires and a long list of single malts, this is the perfect place to relax.

Four Seasons Resort Lanai

EXPERIENCE HAWAII'S LAST UNSPOILED ISLAND

— HAWAII —

Designed by the legendary Jack Nicklaus, Lanai's Manele golf course offers unmatched views of Hulopoe Bay and the sparkling waters of the Pacific Ocean. Check into the resort's Alii Royal Suite and you'll enjoy the trip of a lifetime, with the very best of everything you could wish for.

Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve

THIS ROCKEFELLER-BUILT RESORT IS ALL ABOUT LUXURY

— PUERTO RICO —

With a private pool and your very own butler, you'll live the A-list life in a Dorado Beach Residence. While away the lazy days on two courses, with rivers and native sand ensuring that your round is as beautiful as it is challenging, before enjoying dinner in one of the resort's unforgettable restaurants.

Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort

PROVENÇAL PARKLAND MAKES FOR A LUSH GETAWAY

— PROVENANCE, FRANCE —

With two courses, Terre Blanche has water hazards and steep fairways to challenge even confident golfers. The resort's suites are among idyllic woodland and guests can choose from high-end restaurants. If you fall in love with the place, it's possible to become a permanent resident in a custom-built villa!

The Resort at Pelican Hill

LUXURY, CALIFORNIA STYLE

CALIFORNIA, USA

Pelican Hill at Newport Beach offers guests a choice of villas or bungalows and you can even grab your own private poolside cabana or book one of the many exclusive excursions. Golf fans, however, won't stray far from the two courses, Ocean North and Ocean South, which offer breathtaking ocean views and the very best amenities you can imagine.

Sandy Lane

LET YOUR PRIVATE STAFF LOOK AFTER EVERYTHING AS YOU ENJOY A ROUND OR TWO!

— BARBADOS —

The only place to stay at the famed Sandy Lane in Barbados is the Villa, a stunning residence with private gardens and its own team of dedicated staff, including a gourmet chef. All you need do is head for the fairways and choose from one of three courses, each legendary in the golfing world.

© Adobe Stock

Take to the Slopes

WHEN WINTER COMES, THE DISCERNING TRAVELLER PACKS THEIR SKIS AND HEADS OFF!

If summer is for golf, winter is for skiing. You'll find plenty of wonderful destinations in the Alps in this book, but there's a whole world out there for people who love the pistes. And when you come in from enjoying the snow, these resorts will give you the very best après-ski experience you can imagine.

> "There's a whole world out there for people who love the pistes

BELOW Enjoy all the action on-piste and après-ski!

Bürgenstock Resort & Alpine Spa

RELAX, HIGH ABOVE LAKE LUCERNE
— LAKE LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND —

With three hotels and exclusive residences to choose from, Bürgenstock Resort Lake Lucerne offers Alpine luxury like no other. As well as amazing ski slopes, you can relax in the multi-award winning Alpine Spa. If you fancy a VIP experience, guests can reserve the exclusive private spa, for a real A-list experience.

Hotel Arlberg

THIS FAVOURITE HOTEL OF PRINCESS DIANA OFFERS A FIVE STAR, FAMILY-RUN EXPERIENCE
— LECH, AUSTRIA —

Opened in 1956 and still family-run, Hotel Arlberg offers its illustrious guests the very best of everything. A hydrotherapy chamber will ease away any aches and pains you have earned before you enjoy gourmet fondue with Wagyu beef, the speciality of the house, and retire to your individually-designed room, rich in Alpine comforts.

Gstaad Palace

THE PERFECT COCKTAIL OF HOSPITALITY AND VIEWS
— SWITZERLAND —

The Gstaad Palace promises its guests a fairy tale experience, as befits its castle-like exterior. For the real VIP experience, the Penthouse Suite enjoys a panoramic terrace and private hot tub and sauna, the latter hidden away in a turret. If you want to dine with the other guests you'll find a choice of restaurants offering everything from haute cuisine to traditional fondue, served in the bunker where a Swiss bank hid its gold during wartime.

The Little Nell

WHEN IT COMES TO LUXURIOUS AMERICAN SKIING, ASPEN HAS IT ALL
— ASPEN, USA —

Holding a coveted Five Diamond rating (in fact, it is Aspen's only five-star, five-diamond hotel), The Little Nell is celebrated for its luxurious standards. With a wine cellar bursting with more than 20,000 bottles, lobster and Wagyu beef available daily, not to mention the stunning rooms, you might not want to leave. However, with exclusive ski-in/ski-out access to the slopes, you won't be able to help yourself!

Four Seasons Megève

THIS BRAND NEW HOTEL IS AS EXCLUSIVE AS IT GETS
— FRANCE —

This brand new hotel has just 55 rooms and suites, as well as the area's largest and most luxurious spa and direct access to the slopes. Be sure to reserve Suite Idéal, a secluded retreat at the top of Mont d'Arbois serviced by dedicated staff. With the suite accessible only by ski lift, you'll be in your own private idyll.

Hochfirst

THIS ALPINE-WELLNESS RESORT IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO GET AWAY FROM IT ALL
— OBERGURGL, AUSTRIA —

Set in some of the highest peaks, this idyllic 'church village' is skiing heaven. Guests have access to state-of-the-art lifts and the slope starts and ends right outside the door of this 5-star hotel. Check into the Suite Penthouse for a stay to remember, with awe-inspiring views, and every amenity you could wish for.

The Omnia

UNRIVALLED VIEWS OF THE MATTERHORN BRING THE DRAMA
— ZERMATT, SWITZERLAND —

This mountain lodge sits high above Zermatt and if you reserve the Roof Suite, you'll enjoy panoramic views and complete privacy. The on-site spa will soothe aching muscles after a day on the piste before you enjoy a dinner of local, seasonal delights designed by executive chef, André Kneubühler.

Eleven Deplar Farm

THE ONLY CHOICE FOR THE DAREDEVIL WHO DEMANDS LUXURY
— TROLL PENINSULA, ICELAND —

If you want to indulge in heli-skiing before watching the Northern Lights or relaxing in a saltwater flotation tank, this is the place for you. Eleven Deplar Farm blends activities with suite accommodation and attentive service for a holiday you'll want to repeat. Turn to page 100 to read more about it.

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Slick City Breaks

EMBRACE THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE

— WORDS **ALICE PATTILLO** —

Cities offer new heights of opulence for luxury travellers. They are vital organs of the culture of their country and these economic hubs have often seen hundreds – if not thousands – of years of decadence. Cities are where the royalty resided and aristocracy thrived, where iconic brands were established and the most astonishing architecture was built. Today they still function as political and financial hubs, where you can find everything and anything your heart desires. From delicious cuisine prepared by top Michelin-starred chefs, extravagant hotels, world-class entertainment and flagship designer stores, to historic monuments and museums and galleries rich in cultural heritage – a trip to any one of our carefully selected urban jungles is sure to satisfy almost every luxury traveller…

RIGHT Take a city break to Hong Kong for views like this

"A trip to any one of our carefully selected urban jungles is sure to satisfy almost every luxury traveller...

© Getty

Highlights of London's High-Life

THE UK'S CAPITAL CITY IS HOME TO THE SUPER-RICH AND THEY SURE KNOW HOW TO LIVE

— WORDS **DAVID CROOKES** —

© Getty

London is a millionaire's playground and it's also one of the world's richest cities in terms of art, history and culture. Location of the King's royal residence and home to many famous people, England's powerfully glamorous capital can cater to your every whim, ensuring a stay can be filled with decadent dining, high-end shopping and visits to the most marvellous museums and galleries.

To best take in the splendour of the city's sights, private tours are a must. A prime example is an out-of-hours visit to the British Museum, which lets you enjoy navigating different galleries before they open to the public. Your engaging guide will explain the rich historical significance of the collections drawn from across the world and the extraordinary cultures that created them. It's a wonderful way to better understand the stories behind the Elgin Marbles and the Rosetta Stone.

You can also enjoy a private chauffeured visit to Windsor Castle, where you'll be escorted up to its medieval gates. You can gain access to the State Apartments on days when the Castle is closed to the public and enjoy a glass of English sparkling wine as you peruse the official guidebook and listen to an expert guide talking you through the building's history. There are private tours of the Tower of London as well, either in the morning or evening, accompanied by expert warders. And, if you can spare the time, perhaps embark on a tour of former UK wartime prime minister, Winston Churchill's life while beating the crowds.

For a more general overview of London, you could explore the city via a private taxi tour, viewing the most iconic attractions and getting a good feel for the capital's historical and architecturally impressive streets in comfort. For greater luxury, however, you can choose a professional chauffeur service and travel in style inside a black limousine. Your chauffeur can even take you further afield to Stonehenge, the world's best-known prehistoric megalithic structure constructed over centuries from 3100 BCE, and on to Bath, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is synonymous with spas. Guided Tours will enable you to gain a greater insight into the prehistoric standing stones and let you explore the four main sections of the Roman Baths, in addition to The Royal Crescent, Bath Abbey and The Circus.

Depending on the time you visit, you may be able to enjoy some of London's most prestigious events. If you're fond of tennis, for instance, the Wimbledon Championships is a tremendously delicious occasion – more so if you're partial to the event's iconic dish of the finest strawberries served with fresh whipping cream. Held in London in late June and early July since 1877, Wimbledon offers the opportunity to watch the world's finest tennis players competing on lush green grass in the oldest tournament of its kind. So secure the Debenture tickets and you'll not only have the best available seats on Centre Court and No. 1 Court, you'll also have exclusive access to the finest restaurants and bars.

Likewise, you can enjoy a more luxurious experience at Royal Ascot, a prestigious horse race meeting in which some of the world's finest racehorses compete over five days. The event is opened by royalty in a tradition that involves the raising of the Royal Standard accompanied by the playing of the national anthem. Gain entry to the Royal Enclosure by becoming a guest of a member or seek membership yourself (you need to be sponsored by two eligible members). Alternatively, opt for the beautiful Queen Anne Enclosure. There are also private boxes with trackside views and the finest of dining options. The Parade Ring Restaurant sees the multiple Michelin-starred chef, Simon Rogan MBE, presenting a five-course à la carte luncheon.

Hospitality packages are available at other key events, such as the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. You can view amazing floral displays and garden designs while quaffing champagne, eating canapes and bar snacks, visiting the garden bar and sitting down for a four-course dinner. Live entertainment is also on hand. If a more up-beat event is your thing, consider going Premium at The O2 for the best views of world-class musicians, comedians and jaw-dropping events. The most exclusive seats are on Level

LEFT The centre of power – the Palace of Westminster

EYE IN THE SKY

SEE LONDON FROM ABOVE

The London Eye is a 135-metre-high observational wheel on the South Bank of the River Thames and you can ride it in style. But before you do, why not embark on the 40-minute long circular London Eye River Cruise, choosing Priority front row seating on either the upper and lower deck? Then, when booking tickets for the wheel, select the VIP Champagne Experience and enjoy a glass of chilled Pommery Brut Royal as you spend 30 minutes rotating and enjoying amazing 360-degree views over the city. Or book a private pod and select from a range of delicious food and drink.

© Getty

ABOVE Wander along Regent Street for some of the most luxurious shopping London offers

1 in Club 101 where there is also a private lounge catering for just 45 members.

Of course, London and the surrounding area is also blessed with some of the best restaurants – 80 of which have Michelin stars. As such, London's cuisine will simply tantalise your tastebuds and you'll be able to relax inside elegant interiors as you eat succulent steaks, internationally-influenced dishes and multi-sensory experiences such as that provided by Dinner by Heston Blumenthal. Every taste is catered for and the experience doesn't always stop at eating. Michelin-starred chef Theo Randall passes on more than 20 years' experience by giving Italian cooking masterclasses at the InterContinental London Park Lane. You can take part in an Italian cocktail masterclass with the hotel's head mixologist, too.

You'll find great restaurants all across the city, from The Ivy to Sweetings, which only opens for lunch. A high-end dining experience is offered by the Argentine chef, Mauro Colagreco, who has a signature restaurant in Raffles London at The OWO. You can also try British dishes at Kerridge's Bar & Grill or Restaurant 1890 by Gordon Ramsay. Of course, a visit to London wouldn't be complete without an excellent afternoon tea full of British specialities and pastries at Claridges. You should also make time for the American Bar at The Savoy. It's the city's longest surviving cocktail bar and you'll be stepping into a space that has welcomed the likes of Ernest Hemingway and Marilyn Monroe.

Perhaps you'd like to work up an appetite first, though, and there's no better way than visiting London's inspiring stores – although you're sure to be tempted by the gourmet goodies available at Fortnum & Mason's famous Food Hall. Harrods offers appointments with a personal shopper and you can call upon numerous stylists who will work across London's stores to find you the perfect wardrobe. Knightsbridge also has lots of other high-end shops – in addition to beautiful leafy gardens – while Harvey Nichols and Selfridges are known for their curated fashion and beauty merchandise. And then with Regent Street offering internationally-recognised names such as Liberty, Burberry and top toy store, Hamleys, you're certainly going to be spoiled for choice – just have that limo on call to store your bags because you're sure to have lots of them by the end of the day.

Yet rather than simply buy what's available, why not have a hand in creating something unique? Floris lets you develop your own signature fragrance at its perfumery in Jermyn Street and Savile Row in Mayfair remains the perfect place to go for bespoke male tailoring. Indeed, it's the experiences you'll take away from London which will prove most memorable, whether you're flying in a helicopter along the River Thames, travelling in a luxury vintage carriage behind a British Pullman steam train from Victoria Station, or settling down in the stalls and dress circle sections of a theatre to catch a show in the best seats in the West End. London really does have it all.

Fine Five-Star Hotels

CONSIDER THESE LUXURIOUS AND EXCLUSIVE PLACES FOR YOUR STAY

Corinthia London

— WESTMINSTER —

Overlooking Britain's seat of power, the Palace of Westminster, the Corinthia Hotel offers the height of excellence within walls that, if they could talk, would tell a million stories. Opt to stay in the Royal Penthouse and you'll benefit from a terrace with views of the Thames as well as a private butler.

BEST FOR Bursting with history

Blakes

— SOUTH KENSINGTON —

If you're after some romantic nights away, you really can't go wrong with a stay at this beautiful boutique hotel. Adult-only and perfect for a honeymoon or special weekend treat, it's a stones throw from King's Road, offering all who stay the utmost privacy and discretion, hence its popularity among celebrities and royalty.

BEST FOR Romance rules

11 Cadogan Gardens

— CHELSEA —

Situated off Sloane Square and occupying what used to be four separate Victorian townhouses, this charming and relaxed hotel offers visitors 56 individually-designed rooms and suites. The finest is the tastefully-decorated and furnished Sloane Suite with its antiques, super king four poster bed and large-screen television.

BEST FOR A beautiful boutique

45 Park Lane

— MAYFAIR —

One of ten five-star luxury hotels owned and managed by the Dorchester Collection, this gorgeous, glamorous Art Deco hotel has just 45 rooms, including suites and a penthouse that fills the entire top floor. Every one of them overlooks Hyde Park, offering unrivalled views.

BEST FOR The gorgeous views

© Vitor Y/Wikimedia Commons/CC-BY-2.0

Hong Kong

Pearl of the Orient

DISCOVER THE CHARM OF CHINA'S STATELY SAR

— WORDS **PHILIP S KAY** —

Hong Kong is a fantastic fusion of East and West, a place where tradition and modernity mix to create a beautiful and unique blend. One of the most densely populated places on the planet, the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China overflows with affluence. The former British colony's role as a cosmopolitan port city and leading economic and financial hub has led to it becoming one of the most expensive and extravagant must-visit luxury holiday destinations in Asia. With the highest number of skyscrapers in the world and the most dramatic urban panoramas to be enjoyed anywhere, Hong Kong is nothing short of spectacular.

FIRST-CLASS HOTEL EXPERIENCES

Although it is The Peninsula (see boxout) that possesses the most storied reputation of Hong Kong's hotels, several other establishments stand out for their quality and unique features.

In Kowloon, the state-of-the-art Rosewood has quickly built a stellar reputation for its city-best combination of contemporary design and impeccable service, while The Ritz-Carlton boasts the Ozone Bar – the highest rooftop bar in the world. Perched on the 118th floor, its dizzying

BELOW Hong Kong's panoramic perfection

elevation and vertigo-inducing vistas are just as likely to leave you with unsteady legs as its heavenly cocktails.

On Hong Kong Island, the Mandarin Oriental contains the remarkable Krug Room, where diners can enjoy feasting in an elegant recreation of a train carriage as they are served their choice of extraordinary champagne. For those wanting to sample the most sumptuous local cuisine, Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong is a must. For a start, it is the home of Lung King Heen, the first Chinese restaurant in the world to be awarded Michelin's elusive three-star rating.

BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

Despite its image as an urban phenomenon, Hong Kong offers more than just the high-rise havens of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. The New Territories encompass a staggering number of hidden islets and natural wonders. Sailing the subtropical shores in a private pleasure craft opens up a world of exploration, with great opportunities for romantic day trips and peaceful hikes.

To get above and beyond the skyscrapers to view the city and its surroundings from even greater heights, a tour from one of The Peninsula's twin helipads is the way to go, and for high-rolling risk takers who really want to overindulge, the casino resorts of Macau are only a short distance away.

THE PENINSULA HOTEL

GET TO KNOW HONG KONG'S TIMELESS CLASSIC

A century after its construction, The Peninsula Hotel's nickname of 'Grand Dame of the Far East' is more accurate than ever. Over the years, several younger, more fashionable upstarts have tried to dethrone the venerable showpiece, but its prestige and pedigree have always shone through.

VIP visitors are granted access to the exclusive aviation-themed China Clipper lounge, where they can step back in time and immerse themselves in the elegance of travel from a bygone era.

A stay in The Marco Polo Suite allows guests to soak up more of the hotel's evocative historical atmosphere. Situated in the original heritage building and furnished with silk textiles and bespoke antiques, the suite's decadent opulence is complemented by the Rolls-Royce Phantom and chauffeur that is on call for guests' personal use.

For those seeking more romantic views of Hong Kong's harbour, the lavish Peninsula Suite, located on the top floor of the hotel's tower building, features floor-to-ceiling windows. The extravagance of the penthouse is highlighted by the inclusion of a grand piano and a private gym.

When it comes to gastronomical delights, The Peninsula's eclectic array of restaurants provides a tour de force of culinary excellence; they range from the exquisite Cantonese cuisine created at Spring Moon to the outstanding Michelin-starred French fare of Gaddi's. In addition to its superb dining facilities, the hotel also has a fashion arcade with high-brand retailers such as Chanel, Rolex and Tiffany & Co, offering visitors an unequalled level of luxury shopping without having to leave the hotel.

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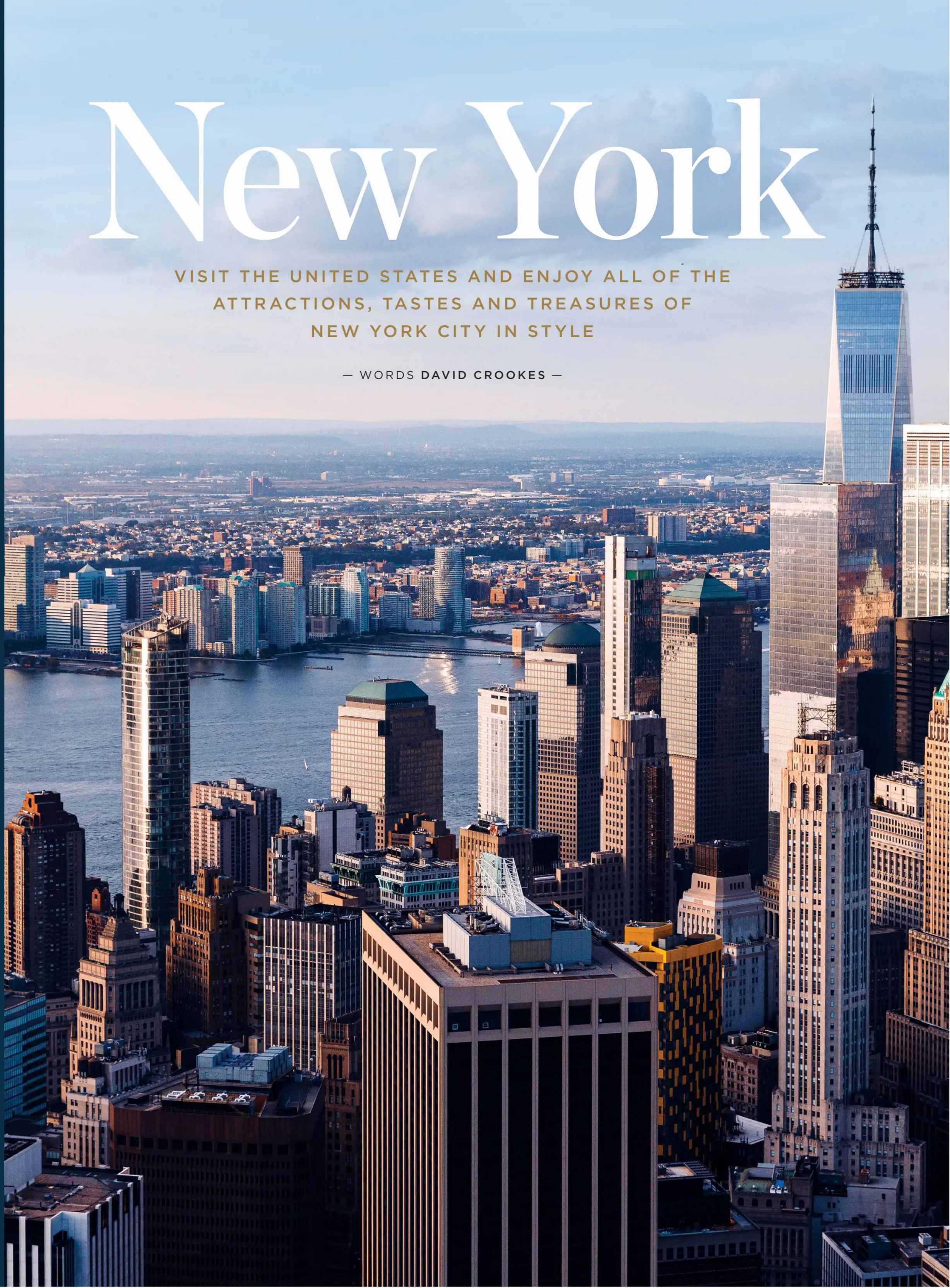
New York

VISIT THE UNITED STATES AND ENJOY ALL OF THE ATTRACTIONS, TASTES AND TREASURES OF NEW YORK CITY IN STYLE

— WORDS **DAVID CROOKES** —



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The American author and poet, John Updike, once said: "the true New Yorker secretly believes that people living anywhere else have to be, in some sense, kidding". And when you look out over the Big Apple's skyline, a symphony of light and steel with glimmering towers kissing the clouds, you can totally understand where he was coming from.

New York is a city of ambition and innovation and those vertical marvels are only part of the attraction. There is certainly so much to see and do in America's concrete jungle; in those streets that, as Alicia Keys sang, will make you feel brand new. But while it's exciting to ride the subway, eat from a hotdog stall on a street corner and simply hang out in Central Park, New York also lets you live in the lap of luxury.

There are many star attractions in the city; things you simply must see and do. Visiting the Empire State Building is among them and you'll get so much more out of your visit if you opt for a premium experience. Limited to parties of up to seven, this offers you priority access – allowing you to skip the queues, which inevitably build up on the 360-degree, open-air 86th and enclosed 102nd floor observatories. As well as soaking in views stretching as far as 129 kilometres, you'll also be able to enjoy a guided tour of the building, taking in the Art Deco lobby, the Celebrity Walk and exhibits, finishing off with a complimentary souvenir photograph.

Not to be outdone, the Rockefeller Center also offers a VIP experience and it's often said that visiting this building offers the best views of New York, since you'll also be able to see the Empire State Building. With the VIP pass, you'll speed through the entry points, enjoy a champagne toast and be guided to the 'Top of the Rock' in a private sky lift and elevator. If your head and stomach can take it, you can also enjoy a private Beam experience – a wonderful ride that lets you sit on a steel beam that raises over 3.5 metres above the 70th floor observation deck, allowing you to recreate the infamous 1932 photograph showing 11 ironworkers sitting on a beam having their lunch.

Private tours are available at other landmarks. You can enjoy a VIP tour of the One World Observatory, located in the replacement building of the World Trade Center complex in Lower Manhattan, which was destroyed in the 9/11 terrorist attack. This gives you priority, escorted entry into the observatory and a 60-minute guided tour. You can also visit the Edge, a remarkable observation deck with glass floors and angled glass walls located at 30 Hudson Yards. It's the highest outdoor sky deck in the Western Hemisphere. Mastercard holders can skip the line, get priority elevator access and sip a complimentary glass of champagne or, if you're an early bird, you can visit the Edge before it opens to the general public.

Being active in the morning has other advantages. You could head over to the Blue Box Café, which is located in Tiffany's 5th Avenue flagship store, and enjoy a scrumptious 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' courtesy of a menu by French chef Daniel Boulud (alternatively, go there for afternoon tea). You can also beat the crowds that build throughout the day by visiting the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island early. You can only gain access via a ferry service operated by Statue City Cruises, but private tours are available where you can learn more about Ellis Island immigration. You will need to book in advance if you want to access the statue's crown and pedestal.

Another amazing way to see the jagged peaks and relentless pulse of the metropolis is by air and there are plenty of helicopter tours offering breathtaking views of Manhattan. You'll feel like a movie star as you skim past the skyscrapers and hover around Central Park. There's plenty of scope for taking amazing photographs as the pilot describes the various key sights and you'll definitely come away having an even greater appreciation of one of the world's finest human-made marvels.

You can also ride by chopper to the seaside resorts of Southampton and East Hampton. Collectively and better known as The Hamptons, you'll find an abundance of

LEFT Whether you decide on a private tour of Manhattan's skyscrapers or fly among them in a helicopter, you'll have an amazing time

LET'S GO SPORTS!

GET CLOSE TO THE ACTION AND EVEN MEET PLAYERS

You can't leave New York without experiencing some sport, so why not consider the Inside Experience at a Yankees baseball game, which lets you sit in the lower level for a great view of the action and meet a former and current player? You could also watch the professional soccer club, The New York Red Bulls, in luxury premium box seats or opt for a lounge experience with a padded midfield seat. There are VIP packages for the New York Knicks and the New York Rangers basketball and ice-hockey games at Madison Square Garden as well. You won't be able to influence the game results but you'll have a great time nonetheless.

BELOW You can find VIP Broadway theatre packages and experiences that include meet and greets with favourite artists

spas where you'll be able to relax in heated saltwater pools, enjoy beautiful bath houses with steam rooms and feel refreshed with rejuvenating treatments. It's a great way to take a break from the hustle and bustle in an area full of private golden sandy beaches. One of the helicopter companies, Blade, has also rolled out a luxury bus service from New York City to The Hamptons if you would prefer to stay closer to the ground. Passengers are handed hot towels and cashmere blankets and can sip espresso martinis from seats that recline 45 degrees.

Once you're feeling and looking good, you may want to consider capturing the moment in the most perfect way possible – with a professional photoshoot. There are many photographers offering private shoots and they'll help to preserve your memories in the glossiest way possible. You could also go further and help a fashion photographer plan a shoot. Aman New York, located in the Crown Building on the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 57th Street in Midtown Manhattan, not only provides exquisite rooms, suites and homes, as well as three floors for wellness and longevity, but it also has a host of experiences. And while these include private tours of more than 100 museums, one is a photoshoot with Mark de Paola, who will let you assist him in preparing a model who you will then see photographed on New York City's streets.

Once done, you can continue exploring and there's certainly lots to do. Take a romantic stroll along the 2.4-kilometre-long High Line, visit Prospect Park and walk around Governors Island – off limits between 1794 and 1996 but now throbbing with art, culture and performance. And take lots of time to hit the shops.

Upper East Side is retail heaven so visit Madison Avenue and potter around this pulsating, heavily residential area for luxury designer boutiques from Alexander McQueen, Chanel and Gabriela Hearst to Missoni, Prada and Ralph Lauren. The relatively new four-floor flagship Hermès store is an absolute delight, allowing you to effortlessly move between salons to take in all it has to offer. This elegant building includes a domed ceiling made up of 20 bas-relief panels and there's a rooftop garden, cocktail bar and private lounge.

Saks Fifth Avenue, the luxury department store which opened in 1867, is also full of designer brands and premium home goods, while Bergdorf Goodman is perfect for fine jewellery and an all-round luxury shopping experience. Having worked up an appetite you can then head off to some amazing eateries, such as Eleven Madison Park, the three-star Michelin restaurant overseen by chef Daniel Humm. Other gems include the Japanese restaurants icca, Ito and Shion 69 Leonard Street and there's plenty of contemporary cuisine to be had at Chambers, Farra and Atera. And once you've had a taste of what New York has to offer, you'll definitely want to return time and time again.

© Getty

Places to Stay

ENSURE YOU SLEEP AS WELL AS YOU PARTY

The Beekman

— LOWER MANHATTAN —

Housed in a landmark building constructed in the 19th century, The Beekman oozes sophistication and it provides a great sense of history in its every nook and cranny. Gloriously old-fashioned and imposing yet also wonderfully comfortable and stylish, it offers an experience like no other.

BEST FOR Steeped in history

Crosby Street Hotel

— SOHO —

Splendidly chic and classy while also being undeniably quirky, the Crosby Street Hotel is bursting with fun. Aimed at couples and located down a quiet cobbled street in the bustling SoHo district, it has a 99-seat screening room for Sunday night movies and a roof kitchen garden as well as a lovely inner courtyard.

BEST FOR Quirky and fun

Casa Cipriani

— FINANCIAL DISTRICT —

Located in the Battery Maritime Building, which was once a ferry terminal built in the Beaux-Arts style, the Casa Cipriani feels effortlessly chic. You'll sleep beneath sheets made by Milan's Rivolta Carmignani and enjoy Art Deco features. Have a peek outside the window, and you'll see the Statue of Liberty too.

BEST FOR Italian luxury

The St Regis New York

— MIDTOWN —

A large hotel on Fifth Avenue, The St Regis has been around for more than 100 years and it's ideally suited for families. It has a rooftop ballroom with jaw-dropping views, and distinctive suites with butler service. There are plenty of experiences too, such as a 30-minute private Sabrage masterclass.

BEST FOR Butler on hand

© Getty

Perfect Paris

EXPERIENCE THE HIGH LIFE IN FRANCE'S CAPITAL. PARIS, WHERE LUXURY, ROMANCE, GOURMET DINING AND ICONIC LANDMARKS COMBINE FOR AN AMAZING ADVENTURE

— WORDS **DAVID CROOKES** —

Paris is the epitome of romance, culture and elegance and simply being in the French capital can feel as if you're living the richest of lives. Its blend of history and modern sophistication makes it one of the most attractive cities in the world and as you wander around its vibrant neighbourhoods, potter down narrow streets and watch the world go by with a coffee at a pavement bistro, you really can't help but fall in love with the place.

One of the key attractions is, rather obviously, the 330-metre Eiffel Tower and if you happen to pass by you will often see large queues. You can avoid these by buying tickets in advance and there are many options that will elevate your experience even further. As well as guided tours to the second floor, you can go to the top of the Tower and enjoy a gourmet brunch at Madame Brasserie. It's also possible to contact the Eiffel Tower and arrange a premium, exclusive two-hour tour for up to six adults with an expert guide pointing out the structure's history. You can include lunch at the Tower's Michelin two-star Jules Verne restaurant as well.

A premium experience is also ready to be enjoyed at the Musée du Louvre, which has so many pieces of art, it's estimated it would take you about 100 days to see it all – and that's spending 30 seconds at each one. Since you're very unlikely to ever be in a position to do that, you should explore the various private tours on offer from companies such as Babylon Tours Paris, who will help you bear the entrance lines and show you the collection's highlights, including the *Mona Lisa*. The museum itself offers private access if you're deemed to be a high-profile personality or if you want to organise a company event, so it's worth making contact to see what it can do.

The Musée d'Orsay holds an impressive collection of French paintings, sculptures, furniture and photography dating from 1848 to 1914 and also has guided tours in English for anyone over the age of 13. If you would rather not be with a group of people you don't know, there are companies offering private tours with a local expert who will likely tailor the experience depending on what you want to see, whether that be master works by Monet and Renoir or Degas and Van Gogh.

To better get under the skin of all that Paris has to offer, you should consider a private tour of the entire city. You can do this by limousine or you can opt for something quirkier such as a two-hour highlights tour in a vintage Citroën 2CV – an economy car that was often dubbed an umbrella on wheels, offering an unforgettable experience. An expert guide will be on hand to drive you around and show you the sights. But if that doesn't appeal, you could try an open-roof vintage Citroën or, for true luxury, combine a trip in a Rolls-Royce with a trip the Louvre, complete with skip-the-line tickets.

Such an experience will live long in the memory but there are so many more. At Les Caves du Louvre, an 18th-century royal wine cellar constructed by the sommelier to King Louis XV, you can enjoy a private, customisable tasting visit, a wine-tasting class or a private event in one of 11 beautiful rooms. You can also go behind the scenes with a small group at the Rungis Market – the largest fresh market in the world – to visit a cheese cellar, attend the carving of a veal head and if you have an appetite after that, enjoy a gourmet breakfast.

Given Paris is arguably the fashion capital of the world, you should take some time to visit La Galerie Dior, a three-story museum dedicated to the luxury fashion house, before checking out the large shop next door. There are also private tours that delve into the history of Parisian fashion, stopping by iconic locations such as the Place Vendôme, once the home of Coco Chanel, and Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, where you'll find the likes of Lanvin, Hermès and a Chanel boutique in one of Paris's most exclusive streets. This street is so prestigious, it has the residence of the President of France, the Élysée Palace – although you can only visit during European Heritage Days on the third weekend of September and there are no luxury options.

Time your visit well and you may be in the city for Paris Fashion Week. The shows are usually invite-only but

LEFT Paris simply oozes class wherever it is you look

VISIT VERSAILLES

LESS A HOTEL AND MORE AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

You don't have to stay in Paris if you want luxury. You could visit Le Grand Contrôle, a boutique hotel in Versailles, and truly get away from it all. Built in 1681 in the grounds of the Palace of Versailles by Jules Hardouin-Mansart, the favourite architect of Louis XIV, this hotel offers 13 individually designed rooms and suites, an amazing spa and beautiful gardens. You can be discreetly woken by a personal butler, who will prepare a bath and serve a hot drink. You are also able to take private tours of the Palace of Versailles in areas that are usually off limits to the public.

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> Many hotel concierges will set up shopping appointments at the most exclusive stores

ABOVE The Louvre is the world's largest museum and a private tour will help you get the most out of it

there is a slim chance you could grab a ticket if you have a strong social media presence, are particularly associated with a brand or have a job that brings you very close to the fashion industry such as a stylist, make-up artist or a buyer. If not, then don't despair because the city as a whole is lifted by fashion week and you can always revel in the well-dressed company that flock to the event. You can also keep a lookout for off-calendar events staged by individual designers where tickets will be available for purchase. These include those held at the department store Galeries Lafayette Paris Haussmann, where you'll also find an abundance of clothes to buy from more than 3,500 brands in a gorgeous Art Nouveau building complete with jaw-dropping views.

Other high-end clothes and jewellery can be found at La Samaritaine, a large department store founded by Ernest Cognacq in 1870, and at the even older Le Bon Marché in Paris's Left Bank where you'll be able to buy the likes of Burberry and Fendi as well as French brands such as Maison Margiela. It's also worth heading to the Triangle d'Or located in the area marked by Avenue Montaigne, Avenue George V and Rue Francois 1er, where you can take a look around the Louis Vuitton flagship store. Be sure to take some time to peruse Le Marais in the 3rd and 4th arrondissements – there are lots of small brands and boutiques from the likes of Alexander Wang and BY FAR in an area full of museums, art galleries and restaurants.

Many hotel concierges will set up shopping appointments at the most exclusive stores and if you go early and wear gorgeous clothes, you're almost sure to be welcomed with open arms. For more shopping, there's arguably Paris's most well-known street, the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, which has an abundance of big name stores such as Nike, Lacoste, Tiffany and Sephora as well as Bar à Chocolat de Mauboussin for those with a sweet tooth. Anyone into tech will love the stunning Apple Store in a building packed with carefully restored historic features. There really is a store for all tastes.

Talking of which, Paris is also a foodie's dream and so it's no surprise to hear that it has the second-most Michelin-starred restaurants (after Tokyo). You'll find all kinds of cuisine on offer in the city from classic and creative to modern and world at restaurants such as Plénitude in the Cheval Blanc Paris hotel, L'Ambroisie, Kei, Le Cinq and Pierre Gagnaire. They'll offer rich food for rich palates and help to round off a perfect time away.

Places to Stay

WITH ROOMS THIS BEAUTIFUL, YOU WON'T WANT TO CLOSE YOUR EYES

Hotel Fouquet's Barrière

— 8TH ARRONDISSEMENT —

This iconic hotel is perfect for a romantic trip away. With a spa and swimming pool beneath the Champs-Elysées, two restaurants, three bars and interiors by furniture designer Jacques Garcia, you'll be staying in exceptional rooms and elegant suites overlooking the city.

BEST FOR Unmatched elegance

JK Place Paris

— 7TH ARRONDISSEMENT —

This boutique hotel only has 29 rooms but each one is the height of luxury. You'll find black-and-white marble bathrooms, hair dryers made by Dyson, ornate fireplaces and furniture that wouldn't look out of place in a palace. There is also a spa, pool and a well-equipped gym and you can request your room to be created specially for work or play.

BEST FOR A bespoke room

Park Hyatt Paris – Vendôme

— 2ND ARRONDISSEMENT —

Be sure to reserve a table at PUR' – Jean-François Rouquette if you're looking to stay in one of the 111 rooms or 45 suites at this hotel. Staying here means you'll be well-placed to enjoy the Louvre, Eiffel Tower and the splendid Notre-Dame de Paris, which recently reopened.

BEST FOR Staying in an apartment

The Peninsula Paris Hotel

— 16TH ARRONDISSEMENT —

Stay in the luxurious rooms and suites of this hotel and as well as having a two-star Michelin French restaurant to hand, you'll be able to enjoy an iconic 1934 Rolls-Royce Phantom II to take you around the city or to and from the airport. You'll also have access to BMWs and Minis, all coloured green and modified with wi-fi.

BEST FOR Rides in classic cars

© The Peninsula Paris Hotel

Sleek, Stylish, Sophisticated: Welcome to Tokyo

JAPAN'S CAPITAL IS A POWERHOUSE OF CULTURE, CUISINE AND FASHION

— WORDS **PHILIP S KAY** —

Tokyo is electrifying. From the dazzling neon lights of Shibuya and Shinjuku to the tempting designer boutiques of Ginza and Omotesando, the biggest metropolis on the planet is packed with exciting opportunities for once-in-a-lifetime experiences. The city boasts a bewildering blend of the futuristic and traditional, and with an unwavering belief in omotenashi hospitality, the extra care and attention the Japanese lavish on their guests makes luxury travel feel out of this world.

THE HEIGHT OF CULTURAL REFINEMENT

To get a rich taste of Japan's refined formality, head to Tokyo Maikoya in Shinjuku. Set within its own private manicured garden, the idyllic teahouse allows visitors to participate in an unforgettable traditional tea ceremony. The deluxe plan transports guests to an even larger garden and tranquil pond. Learn the correct way to don a graceful kimono, then contemplate the aesthetic perfection of your harmonious surroundings as you sip matcha from priceless antique bowls.

For lovers of the performing arts, Ginza's historic Kabuki-za theatre has premium-class box seats that let the fortunate few peer into the world of Japan's centuries-old Kabuki performances from an unrivalled vantage point. The most prestigious seats are on the first floor and include the option of a lunch or dinner service.

SHOP AND DINE LIKE AN EMPEROR

Tokyo has always had its finger on the pulse of fashion and technology. Chic Omotesando's designer boutiques are the place to go for the most self-indulgent retail experience. To seek out the latest state-of-the-art tech, surrender yourself to the boisterous maze of Akihabara's electronics district. If you desire something more regal, Yamada Heiando's flagship store in Daikanyama sells exceptional handcrafted lacquerware that has been the choice of Japan's imperial family for over a century.

Being the city with the highest number of Michelin-starred restaurants in the world, Tokyo is a gourmet wonderland. From sublime sushi to succulent wagyu beef, excellence abounds. However, it is Japan's haute cuisine, known as kaiseki-ryori, that should be at the top of your list. The combination of subtle seasonal tastes and exquisite artistry is the pinnacle of fine dining. Elevate your experience even further by hiring a limousine to take you to your destination.

ELITE EXCURSIONS

Japan's amazing trains are the envy of the world, so take advantage of their comfort and convenience. Hop on a Shinkansen bullet train to the beautiful rural prefecture of Shizuoka, then embark on an exhilarating helicopter cruise over magnificent Mount Fuji. The spellbinding national symbol is complemented by five stunning lakes that add a sense of scale to the dramatic volcanic scenery.

Even the speedy Shinkansen can't compete with the ultra-expensive decadence of the Train Suite Shiki-Shima. The golden-hued sleeper represents the absolute apex of millionaire railway travel. With dedicated lounge, dining and observation cars, plus private suites that contain bathtubs, passengers can spend a couple of days exploring in the most exuberant style imaginable. The experience is so exclusive that even the wealthiest are not guaranteed a seat; the lucky recipients of tickets are selected through a draw. Why not test your fortune?

LEFT Tokyo's elegant evening skyline

A CUT ABOVE

TOKYO'S MOST OPULENT ACCOMMODATION

The city has an abundance of high-end hotels, but a few establishments truly set themselves apart for their features and services.

Aman Tokyo overlooks the grounds of the Imperial Palace and is a haven of serenity, with a huge spa spread across two floors. In addition to its Signature Spa Journey treatment, it offers a water purification ritual.

Hotel Gajoen Tokyo is a distinguished member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World community. This superb heritage hotel in trendy Meguro is an artistic marvel. Adorned with charming murals and antiques, it feels more like a museum.

Finally, the Tokyo EDITION, Toranomon was designed by renowned architect, Kengo Kuma. The skyscraping sensation provides some of the most jaw-dropping views of Tokyo Tower and the city's skyline. The suites and private terrace rooms are incredible.

© Getty

Dubai
Miracle of the Desert

SPOIL YOURSELF IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES' CITY OF THE FUTURE

— WORDS **PHILIP S KAY** —

No place on Earth has had such a meteoric rise to riches as Dubai. Over the space of a few decades, the shimmering city on the edge of the Persian Gulf has grown into one of the world's most coveted luxury travel destinations. Its striking silver skyline seems to have emerged from the surrounding desert sands as if by magic. What was once a small fishing village is now home to the tallest building on the planet, the best hotel rooms money can buy and the most extravagant shopping mall experiences available.

DUBAI'S DIVINE HOTELS

Whether you opt for a room in the heavenly heights of the Burj Khalifa's Armani Hotel or a suite in the underwater realm of Atlantis The Palm, Dubai has a range of exclusive accommodation that comes with some serious cachet. Quite likely the world's most luxurious place to stay, the Jumeirah Burj Al Arab (see boxout) is so illustrious that it is often described as a 'seven-star hotel'. Fashion houses Versace and Bulgari offer other exalted options across the city, but the highest density of upscale hotels is on the stunning artificial island of Palm Jumeirah.

DUBAI'S SEVEN-STAR HOTEL

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK INSIDE THE JUMEIRAH BURJ AL ARAB

Shaped like a ship's sail, the iconic hotel sits on its own exclusive island and is of such high quality that it has gained the reputation of being a seven-star establishment. Officially, it has the maximum five-star rating, but consideration of its most decadent highlights makes it easy to understand how it got its famous moniker.

The Burj Al Arab boasts a private beach terrace, Michelin-starred cuisine and an award-winning spa. The interior is decorated with over 30 kinds of lavish Statuario marble gilded in 24-carat gold; its ceiling is adorned with a representation of the Milky Way created with 21,000 Swarovski crystals.

Upon arrival at Dubai's airport, guests can use the hotel's chauffeur-driven luxury cars to get to the hotel. Once there, they have access to round-the-clock butler service and can choose their own pillow from a menu of nine different options. The Burj Al Arab's opulence even extends as far as accommodating majestic helicopter tours of the city from its remarkable high-altitude helipad, which once played host to a tennis match between Andre Agassi and Roger Federer.

© Getty

> “Full of high-end brand boutiques and first-rate restaurants, Dubai’s massive malls know how to push the boundaries of extravagance

The palm-shaped paradise hosts some fantastic resorts: Raffles The Palm and Atlantis The Royal stand out, but it is the latter’s sister hotel that steals the show. The palatial Atlantis The Palm contains the extraordinary Underwater Suite, where guests can enjoy watching the denizens of the deep from the comfort and privacy of their own window, and the resplendent Grand Atlantis Suite, which has five balconies and two ornate fountains. As a finishing touch, all the hotel’s Signature Suites come with a personal butler service.

SHOPPING, SAFARIS AND SUPERCARS

Full of high-end brand boutiques and first-rate restaurants, Dubai’s massive malls know how to push the boundaries of extravagance. After a serious spending spree at Dubai Mall, visit its gigantic aquarium or enjoy one of the spectacular fountain shows that take place outside. For a more historic retail experience, explore the wealth of glittering items on display at the city’s Gold Souk, then treat yourself to a romantic stroll around the nearby heritage district.

If you are after an exciting or adventurous way to take in Dubai and its stirring natural environment, there are plenty of options: charter a private yacht to see the lustrous skyline reflected in the waters of the Persian Gulf while you party the day or night away, or gaze down on the towering structures from above with a helicopter tour. To appreciate the city’s impressive silhouette from the shifting sands, arrange a luxury desert safari, and for the ultimate combination of exhilaration and style, go all out and hire a supercar to cruise the streets.

ABOVE Dubai from the desert dunes

Visit Sydney in Style

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST CITY BOASTS WORLD-CLASS LUXURY, FINE DINING, PRIVATE HARBOUR CRUISES AND DESIGNER BOUTIQUES

— WORDS **DAVID CROOKES** —

Sydney is one of the world's most expensive cities and it offers many ultra-luxurious experiences to the high-end travellers it attracts. While many of those can be enjoyed for free, such as gazing across Sydney Harbour to enjoy one of the most breathtaking views Earth has to offer, or visiting one of the many picture-perfect beaches, you'll find plenty of opportunities to splash the cash and experience the very best the Harbour City has to offer.

Sydney Opera House is particularly iconic – an amazing performing arts facility with its 2,679-seat Concert Hall. You can book guided tours and go behind the scenes, finishing with lunch at the Opera Bar or House Canteen. Alternatively, you can take in a performance, opting for premium tickets to grab the best seats and enjoy dinner nearby at top restaurants such as Bennelong, Aria Restaurant Sydney and Midden by Mark Olive, the latter serving amazing Indigenous Australian food.

You can then consider taking your experience even higher by climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge. If you make the climb up over 1,000 steps, you will get to peer down at the Opera House and enjoy amazing views across

the city. There are romantic packages available that combine a climb with a spa or a premium picnic. It's also possible to book a private climb experience that involves just you and a personal leader, with the option to add lunch consisting of a harbourside luxury picnic.

While you're up high, you're sure to see lots of activity on the water, not least a fair few private boats and luxury yachts. There are opportunities to hire such vessels and sail around the waters. You'll likely be offered extra experiences such as sea safaris and on-board dining, perfect for a decadent afternoon. You'll find the crews will keep your glass topped up and ensure you see and enjoy everything the harbour has to offer.

Even if you don't charter a boat, there is nothing to stop you enjoying the magnificent waters. Bondi is usually the go-to beach but it can become very crowded with millions of people visiting each year for its soft golden sand and clear blue waters. You can take some time out by dining at exclusive restaurants such as Makaveli Bondi and Icebergs Dining Room and Bar (where you may spot some world-famous celebs) but for a more private experience, head to the much smaller Tamarama Beach, which isn't nicknamed Glamarama for nothing (it's where the beautiful people hang out). It's only a short stroll away and well worth the visit.

For an even more exciting water experience, you could sightsee by air with Sydney Seaplanes. These depart from Rose Bay Water Airport, about eight kilometres from the city centre. It'll take you over some of the city's most iconic sights – including Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge – as well as Bondi Beach, touching down for a private picnic. If you get a taste for being in the air, maybe head for Sydney's Central Business District (CBD) and visit Dean & Nancy on 22 for delicious cocktails amid the city's skyscrapers. You won't need to look far for exciting nightlife either – MVP Nightclub in the CBD plays some banging R&B tunes in decadent surroundings with lots of private areas and booths.

You can get ready for such fun by engaging a stylist at a high-end boutique to find you the perfect outfit or simply head over to The Strand Arcade and Queen Victoria Building for some serious premium retail therapy. There are international labels and clothes by Australian designers as well as department stores with their own personal shoppers. You'll even find the world's rarest pearls at Paspaley. Sydney really is a gem of a city.

BELOW Sydney Opera House is located adjacent to the CBD

© Getty

Capetown
a Diamond Location

EXPLORE WORLD-CLASS VINEYARDS AND SAFARIS

— WORDS **DAVID CROOKES** —

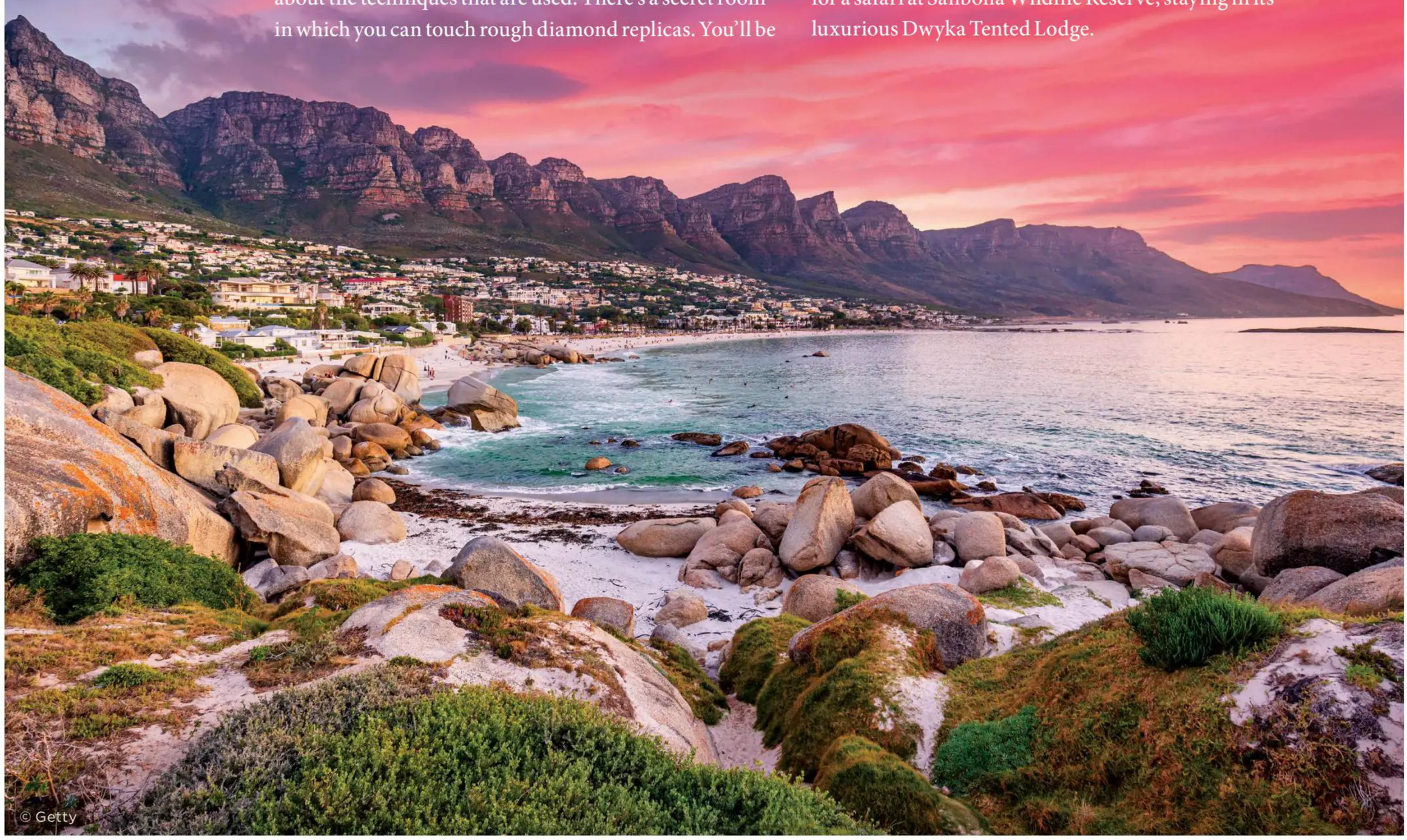
BELOW The stunning Camps Bay, sitting at the foot of Table Mountain

If diamonds are a girl's best friend, then Cape Town is set to feel like a home from home. The city has become synonymous with these gems since they were first discovered there in 1867 and you can enjoy many diamond experiences to truly appreciate why they're highly sought. The Cape Town Diamond Museum should be your first stop. Located at the V&A Waterfront, it offers a 45-minute guided tour by a diamond professional and you can learn how rough diamonds are formed and transformed. You can then take a ten-minute walk to Rockwell Shimansky, Africa's largest jewellery showroom.

Make an appointment and you can embark on the private Rockwell Diamond Experience Tour of the factory where you'll see jewellery being manufactured and learn about the techniques that are used. There's a secret room in which you can touch rough diamond replicas. You'll be able to get hands on and help transform a diamond from rough to finish as well.

If that isn't enough, you may want to explore the diamond industry in more detail by going on a chauffeur-driven private tour of three specialised boutique diamond and gemstone stores, spending two hours at each one. The cars have wi-fi and the tour includes bottled water, fruit juice and coffee. You won't get lunch but there are many options for food. Try the Asian fusion restaurant, Beluga, on the V&A Waterfront, or Café Paradiso, which also attracts high-flying clientele.

There are lots of other things to do as well, with wine tours and sunset cruises ready to book. If you're feeling particularly adventurous, you may also want to consider getting up close with the Big Five animals by signing up for a safari at Sanbona Wildlife Reserve, staying in its luxurious Dwyka Tented Lodge.



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Cairo
Fit for a Pharaoh

DISCOVER EGYPT'S TREASURES IN STYLE

— WORDS **PHILIP S KAY** —

With the world's most iconic ancient wonders on its doorstep and a tourism industry that is almost as old, Cairo has always provided a gateway to luxury. Few places stimulate the senses like Egypt's capital. With so many years of history and culture, it seems that the city has been linked to the opulent and ostentatious forever. Travel back in time to experience the grandeur of kings and queens as you enjoy the extravagance of one of Africa's most evocative locations.

A personal chauffeur service offers the most comfortable way to get to the awe-inspiring Pyramids of Giza and the Great Sphinx. Before you visit the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, hire a professional Egyptologist as your private guide to learn about the world's largest collection of Egyptian antiquities. When you are ready to take a break from the ancient, uncover the city's medieval jewels and seek out curios in the beguiling bazaar of Khan el-Khalili, or charter your own yacht for the ultimate cruise along the Nile.

FINDING YOUR OASIS

Given the variety of exceptional hotels to choose from, it is easy to find the perfect place to recharge after a busy day of sightseeing and shopping. Situated along the east bank of the Nile, near the city's bustling heart, the exclusive St Regis Cairo features a world-class spa facility and pamper service. If you prefer your sanctuary to be closer to Giza's famous tombs, the Marriott Mena House Cairo has rooms with spectacular views of the pyramids. For convenient access to the airport and onward travel, the Waldorf Astoria Cairo Heliopolis is a great option.

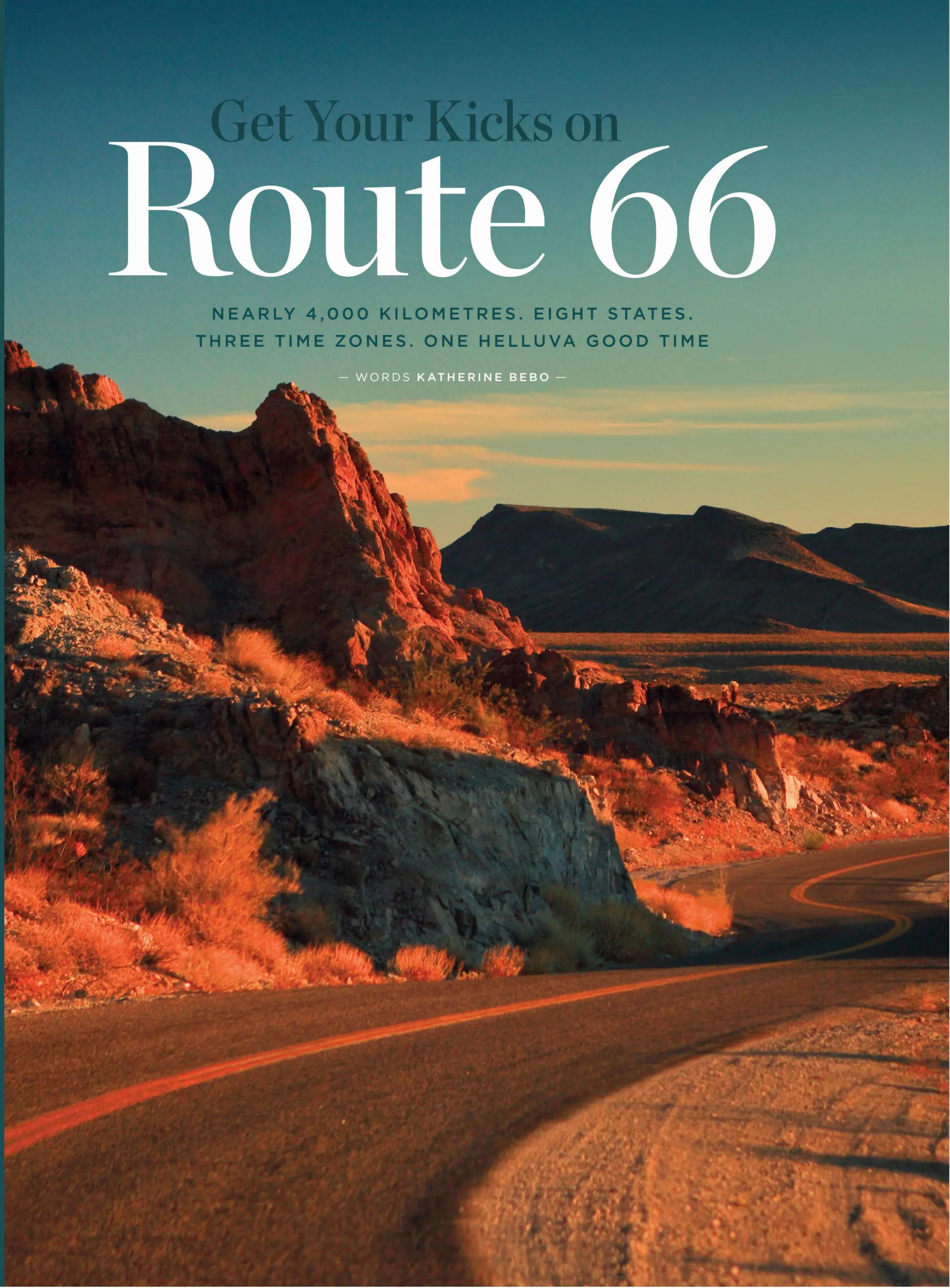
BELOW Heavenly homes of god-kings

© Adobe Stock

Get Your Kicks on Route 66

NEARLY 4,000 KILOMETRES. EIGHT STATES. THREE TIME ZONES. ONE HELLUVA GOOD TIME

— WORDS **KATHERINE BEBO** —



Driver's licence? Check! Toothbrush? Check! Playlist that includes Chuck Berry's rendition of '(Get Your Kicks On) Route 66'? Check! Looks like you're all set for the ultimate adventure along America's Mother Road. There's really no better way to see the United States than cruising through the ever-changing scenery that is Route 66's backdrop. From gorgeous coastal roads to desolate deserts, rugged terrains to lively cities, this epic highway has got it all. And then some.

Route 66 was established on 11 November 1926 and stretches 3,940 kilometres across eight states – Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. Although the original route has altered over the years due to improved sections of highway being constructed, it still takes you from east to west, starting in Chicago and ending in Santa Monica. Often referred to as the 'Main Street of America', we suggest that you make a few detours while on this bucket-list road trip. There's no way you can be an hour from the Grand Canyon or Las Vegas and not swing by to take a look/play a couple of hands of blackjack, right?

You may choose to drive part of Route 66 and fly to some destinations along the way. Certain areas may be of more interest to you than others, or you may be pressed for time. It's your trip, so you make the rules and the itinerary. We've suggested some luxury hotspots that you may like to visit but we encourage you to make your own discoveries, stopping at picturesque viewpoints, exploring off-the-beaten-track towns, eating at quirky diners, even posing in front of the world's largest bottle of ketchup in Collinsville if the mood strikes. Soak up all the culture, history, beauty and serendipitous encounters that you can.

Now, fasten your seatbelt and put some music on… your American Dream awaits.

BELOW Road trip! See some of the best sights America has to offer from behind the wheel

Hit the Road in Style

The wind in your hair. The sun on your skin. The open road stretching ahead. As you embark on an adventure of a lifetime, you're going to need a trusty steed. Rent an all-American classic muscle car – think a Ford Mustang, Chevrolet Chevelle or Dodge Charger – and get ready for the drive of your life. Sunglasses on, foot down.

© Getty

All That Jazz

THE WINDY CITY WILL SWEEP YOU OFF YOUR FEET

Start your Route 66 adventure in Chicago where, if you're a sports fan, you'll have an absolute ball. Watch a Chicago Bulls basketball game from a courtside seat at the iconic United Center and delight in every close-range slam dunk, air pass and swish. Courtside tickets come with VIP perks like access to exclusive lounges and gourmet dining. If the players' fancy footwork – and footwear – inspires you to play your own (style) game, head to the Chicago School of Shoemaking to create your very own custom Air Jordan sneakers. Just do it!

If you'd rather your shoes were already constructed, the Jimmy Choo and Christian Louboutin stores on Oak Street, Chicago's luxury shopping district, will oblige. This chic street is lined with many other high-end boutiques, where you can indulge in some retail therapy. Show off your new wares as you wander around the upscale Gold Coast neighbourhood, before nipping into Bernard's cocktail lounge and sipping a rum-based Hemingway Special, a flute of bubbly Cristal or a glass of full-bodied Rioja.

You may prefer, however, to bathe in a Spanish wine, rather than drink it. This wish can come true at the AIRE Ancient Baths with a relaxing Wine Soak; the antioxidants in the vino will leave your skin silky soft and rejuvenated. The extraordinary treatment includes time in the various thermal baths, as well as some yummy cheese to nibble on. For a less classy – but equally delicious – cheesy snack, make your way to the ChiTown Drive-In and order yourself some cheese-topped nachos. Then tuck in as you settle down to watch a movie on the big screen with Chicago's skyline in the background.

For a bird's eye view of this skyline and beyond, book a private helicopter tour, where you'll soar above famous landmarks like the Willis Tower, Navy Pier and Millennium Park. Another well-worth-it jaunt is an architecture tour along the Chicago River. The guides will point out the city's unique buildings, each with a story and fascinating history attached.

LEFT Take to the Chicago River for an architecture tour

© Adobe Stock

Roof Down, Volume Up

THE NEXT STRETCH COVERS MORE THAN 2,570 KILOMETRES – YOUR PLAYLIST WILL NEED TO LAST AT LEAST 25 HOURS!

© Getty

ABOVE If you have the stomach for the journey, the view from the Gateway Arch provides unbeatable views over St Louis

With Chicago ticked off, it's time to jump in your wheels and hit the road. First stop: Springfield, Illinois, where history buffs will get their fix as they visit Abraham Lincoln's Tomb, the Lincoln Home and the Lincoln Presidential Museum. Next up, make a stop at St Louis, which is situated along the Mississippi River. Book a private tour around the Missouri Botanical Gardens and be sure to sit a while in the 14-acre Japanese Garden (one of the largest in North America), taking in its serenity. Also visit Gateway Arch National Park and take a tram to the top of the tallest monument in the United States, 195 metres high. Vertigo sufferers beware!

Continuing southwest, make a stop at the Meramec Caverns in the Ozarks region, where you'll be amazed by all the weird and wonderful cave formations deep underground. Outside in the open air, join a canopy-covered riverboat for a relaxing tour along the Meramec River. Back on dry land, stop at Springfield, Missouri (different from the aforementioned Springfield), which is recognised as the birthplace of Route 66. Time it for the annual festival – held in August – that celebrates this fact and watch the parade of vintage cars vroom through downtown. We defy you not to play the *Happy Days* theme tune in your head.

MUSIC TO YOUR EARS

Blast – and sing along to – Dusty Springfield's '24 Hours From Tulsa' on the way to your next destination. Once you arrive, you'll want to spend at least 24 hours in Tulsa, hitting up the Deco District, which has one of America's most vast collections of Art Deco architecture, and the Philbrook Museum of Art, housed in a stunning Italian-style villa. Now time to blast the *Oklahoma!* soundtrack – 'Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'' – en route to Oklahoma City. The Bricktown neighbourhood is fun and funky with an 'industrial chic' vibe thanks to the repurposed warehouses now home to cool shops, hip restaurants,

Make Waves

After hours spent in the car, you deserve some pampering. Book yourself in for a relaxing massage at the Japanese-inspired Ten Thousand Waves Spa in Santa Fe. Then a facial. Then a dip in one of their eight ahh-inducing hot tubs. FYI, clothing is optional in certain parts of this spa.

© Getty

ABOVE Red Rock Park in Gallup is the backdrop to many western movies

jumping piano lounges, and stylish wine bars. Charter a Bricktown Water Taxi for an entertaining narrated private tour of the area, or a dinner cruise.

Amarillo is an entertaining stop off, with a kooky photo op in the shape of Cadillac Ranch. Pose next to these ten graffiti-covered Cadillacs standing upright with their noses buried in the ground to really get your Insta account buzzing. For art that's more 'polished', Santa Fe's 250-plus art galleries won't disappoint. Don't miss wandering down Canyon Road – popping into eye-catching exhibitions, cute shops and tasty restaurants as you go – and the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.

SADDLE UP

Past Albuquerque – giving a nod to the statue of *Breaking Bad's* Walter White and Jesse Pinkman at the Albuquerque Convention Center – and onto Gallup. This small town is located at the heart of Native American culture on Route 66, and is home to members of several tribes, including Zuni, Hopi and Navajo. Visit Tanner's Indian Arts (by appointment only) for authentic handmade turquoise jewellery and natural hand-woven rugs. Then head to Red Rock Park and marvel at the red cliffs formed more than 200 million years ago. More recently (from the 1940s to 1960s), this landscape was the setting for many western films, with movie stars such as John Wayne, Doris Day, Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn staying in the town's El Rancho Hotel. Yee-haw!

From Gallup, it's about an hour and a half's drive to Holbrook, Arizona, the first major stop from the east.

Caffeine Hit

If you plan a detour to the Grand Canyon, stop at the beautiful Bespoke Inn Flagstaff, Arizona. Located in the heart of downtown, this boutique hotel combines historic charm with modern style. And its Bespoke Blend coffee will give you a boost when you resume your road trip.

Rock On

MOTHER NATURE WAS SHOWING OFF WHEN SHE DESIGNED THIS AWE-INSPIRING MARVEL

Are you ready to have your breath taken away? One of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World, the 1.6-kilometre-deep Grand Canyon is well worth the hour and a half detour from Flagstaff on Route 66. However you choose to soak up the spectacular scenery, it will stay with you forever. Perhaps you'll take a helicopter tour and chopper your way through the 446-kilometre-long canyon, watching the Colorado River snaking below. Or maybe you'll channel your inner cowperson to explore the gorge by mule or on horseback, either on a short ride or a multi-day adventure. Pack grit.

If camping doesn't appeal, Under Canvas is a nearby luxury glamping experience complete with morning yoga, organic bath products and nightly s'mores around a firepit. Treat yourself to a stargazer tent for a dreamy after-dark view of the night sky in all its twinkling glory. Be sure to set your alarm clock to watch the sunrise and see the geological wonder in a whole new light. Mather Point, Hopi Point and Cape Royal are some of the best spots to watch the sun yawn above the red rocks. Equally impressive is a Grand Canyon sunset, with no two ever the same. Take a tour or go it alone, heading for spots such as Yaki Point or Bright Angel Point.

For another unique experience with a view, how about a panoramic picnic? Canyons and Chefs will serve up a lavish lunch, complete with artisanal charcuterie, fine wines and comfy pillows and rugs. A thrown-together ham sandwich and KitKat this is not.

BELOW Watching the sunrise over the Grand Canyon is a sight you'll never forget

North Vs South

The Grand Canyon has two sides – the North Rim and the South Rim. The South is known for its wide, sweeping views, while the North has a more varied landscape, with dramatic overlooks and forested areas. Both are spectacular.

© Getty

Vegas Baby!

HIT THE JACKPOT IN THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS

BELOW The Las Vegas Strip comes alive at night

From the outstanding natural beauty of the Grand Canyon to the glitzy, not-so-natural bright lights of Las Vegas, these two must-visits are world's apart. About a four-hour drive from the Grand Canyon, Vegas is known as the Entertainment Capital of the World… and, boy, will you be entertained!

Treat yourself to front-row seats at a legendary performance by the likes of Adele and Britney Spears, or if you prefer, an Elvis impersonator. A Cirque du Soleil show is also a delight, as is Le Cirque restaurant – serving exquisite French food – inside the Bellagio Hotel (of *Ocean's Eleven* fame). If you're staying at the Bellagio, splash out on a room with a view of the Las Vegas Strip, and perhaps even a personal butler if Lady Luck has been on your side at the roulette wheel. Other five-star hotels you may want to stay in, or at least explore, include The Wynn, ARIA Resort & Casino and The Venetian, where you can board a gondola on the canal inside the hotel.

If you'd prefer to laze by some water rather than glide along it, hit up one of the exclusive pool clubs like Encore Beach Club, where your private cabana and bucket of champagne on ice awaits. Inside the Spa at Encore (a little slice of heaven in Sin City), massage therapists are ready to bliss you out. Journey to Euphoria massage, anyone? To ramp things up a notch, head to Speed Vegas, where you can drive Porsches, Ferraris, Aston Martins, Lamborghinis and other supercars around a racetrack. Even if you've lost at the slot machines, you'll feel like you're winning here.

Shop Till You Drop

Gucci… Dolce&Gabbana… Louis Vuitton… Cartier… Chanel… Dior… High-end brands abound in Vegas. Head to The Shops at Crystals and The Forum Shops at Caesars Palace for a serious spree.

© Getty

Good as Gold

ALTHOUGH MUCH OF CALIFORNIA ISN'T ON ROUTE 66, EXPLORING THIS FINE STATE IS DEFINITELY WORTH THE DETOUR. HERE ARE JUST A FEW HIGHLIGHTS…

© Getty

ABOVE The grape outdoors: reaching new heights in Napa Valley

California – the Golden State – is one of the most popular states in the US for international tourists. And with good reason. It's the perfect playground for those seeking adventure, luxury, beauty… and wine. Napa Valley is world-renowned for its wineries and gourmet cuisine. Stay at the French-inspired Auberge du Soleil for stunning vineyard views, or Meadowood Napa Valley for a close-to-nature spa treatment. Arrange private wine tastings at prestigious wineries like Opus One or Domaine Carneros, complete with food pairings dreamed up by expert sommeliers. For a truly heady experience, board a hot air balloon and fly high above the valley. Book a sunrise flight for extra wow factor. Other wine regions in California include Sonoma County, Paso Robles, Santa Maria Valley and Santa Ynez Valley.

TAKE IN A PARK

The fact that California has nine National Parks – more than any other state – is certainly worth drinking to. Clink! Joshua Tree National Park is so named due to the region's tall, bristly Joshua trees that are dotted between the rugged rock formations and stark – almost surreal – desert landscape. A private guided tour will take you to the park's hidden oases during the day, and the best stargazing spots after night falls. Designated an International Dark Sky Place (IDSP) – meaning there's not much light pollution – prepare to gasp in wonder as you crane your neck up. In nearby Desert Hot Springs, stay at Two Bunch Palms wellness retreat, which combines the area's mineral-rich hot springs with luxe spa treatments and eco-chic suites to bring a contented smile to each guest's face. Other Californian National Parks that are worth a visit include: Yosemite, Channel Islands, Sequoia & Kings Canyon.

Howdy, Folks

The Pioneertown Motel, located in California's desert about 20 minutes from Joshua Tree, offers a rustic yet stylish retreat. Originally built as a stopover for 1940s movie stars acting on the nearby Pioneertown Wild West film set, it now features cosy rooms that blend vintage charm with modern comforts. Perfect for stargazing, desert adventures and immersing yourself in quirky Old West vibes.

© Adobe Stock

> Explore the coastline by chartering a private yacht or paddleboarding along the peaceful waters

COAST ALONG

For completely different terrain to the vineyards, deserts, and National Parks, California's beaches are among some of the best in the world. With over 1,350 kilometres of coastline, take your pick: sandy, rocky, wild, manicured, surfer-friendly, crowded, secluded…

Santa Barbara is often called 'the American Riviera' and combines laid-back beach vibes with upscale charm. Stay at the Rosewood Miramar Beach or the Ritz-Carlton Bacara, both offering oceanfront luxury with incredible views and private beach access. Explore the coastline by chartering a private yacht or paddleboarding along the peaceful waters. Coronado Beach is also a haven for indulgence. Make like Marilyn Monroe and stay in the Hotel del Coronado, which was featured in her 1959 film *Some Like It Hot*. Here, guests can reserve a private cabana with butler service, so you can soak up the sun without the pesky need to move from your lounger. Enjoy a sunset bonfire with melty s'mores and lip-smacking cocktails, or settle down under the stars to watch a movie in the open-air cinema on the beach.

If sand between your toes and a sunkissed nose aren't really your thing, you don't even need to step foot on a beach if you'd rather not. There's plenty of 'city exploring' to be done. Just across a bridge from Coronado Beach is San Diego, the city that produces the most avocados in the United States. To get your avo fix, look out for Smashed Avocado Toast, whose stall serving – you guessed it! – pops up at various farmers' markets around the city. The San Diego Zoo, considered one of the best zoos in the world, is a must while you're here, too. Book onto the Elite Adventure, where you'll be escorted around the park and taken to meet the adorable giant pandas. For more wildlife fun in California, the barking sea lions on Pier 39 in San Francisco can't help but bring a joyous grin to your face. As will the city's charming cable cars, striking Coit Tower and dramatic Golden Gate Bridge peeking through the famous, fascinating, fantastic fog.

LEFT The top of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge peeks through the fog

End of the Trail

SPREAD YOUR WINGS IN THE CITY OF ANGELS

LA has many fancy neighbourhoods. Cruise around Bel-Air, Malibu, Orange County and Beverly Hills, taking in the magnificent mansions, pristine palm trees and intoxicating smell of money. Stop off at Rodeo Drive for a browse/splurge in the shops. Flagship stores like Chanel, Hermès and Louis Vuitton provide personalised shopping experiences. Nearby, The Beverly Center and Melrose Avenue offer a mix of designer boutiques and more 'everyday' fashion stores. Buy some beachwear, then head to one of LA's beaches for a dip/surf in the Pacific and bask under the toasty Californian sun. Venice Beach has a bohemian vibe with street performers, skateparks and eclectic shops, while Santa Monica is a lively spot with a bustling pier. The official finishing point of Route 66 is at the end of this pier, so make sure you mosey down and get a photo next to the famous 'End of the Trail' sign.

All that exploring/shopping/surfing/sunbathing/posing is thirsty work. Hit up Death & Co and The Roger Room cocktail bars, the latter of which serves cocktails with faces – such as Hello Kitty and Marilyn Monroe – on the foam. Allow the party in your mouth to continue with world-class Japanese fare at Nobu Malibu, or succulent sustainable seafood at Providence. Work off all that delicious food and drink at the 160-acre Runyon Canyon Park, where the hiking trails offer up amazing views of the city's skyline and beyond (on a clear day, you can see from Santa Catalina Island to the Santa Monica Mountains) and, very often, celebrity sightings. If watching people exercise rather than actually sweating yourself is more your thing, get tickets for a courtside LA Lakers basketball game, which is also a top spot for celeb spotting. Jack Nicholson, Kim Kardashian, Adele, Leonardo DiCaprio and Adam Sandler have all been papped here.

Los Angeles also has a thriving arts and culture scene. The Getty Center is home to centuries of artworks, from medieval times to modern day, while the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) boasts more than 147,000 objects for your perusing pleasure. For contemporary pieces that will get you thinking, head to The Broad, where the building is a work of art in itself.

BELOW The Santa Monica Pier – the official end point of Route 66 and the perfect place to reflect on your trip

Lights, Camera, Action!

Get the red-carpet treatment with a private tour around Tinseltown. As well as swinging by celebrities' abodes, you'll also be taken to fun landmarks like the Hollywood Walk of Fame. VIP tours around film studios will also satisfy any film buff. And why not get a closer look at the legendary Hollywood sign? Hike one of the scenic trails in Griffith Park, or take a helicopter tour above the Hollywood Hills.

© Getty

Côte d'Azur

WHEN IT COMES TO EFFORTLESS GLAMOUR AND LUXURY, IT'S HARD TO BEAT THE CÔTE D'AZUR

— WORDS **KATE PUTTICK** —

The French Riviera, or Côte d'Azur, has been a byword for relaxation, sophistication and glamour for centuries. From the moment that the doors of the Nice-Ville train station opened to travellers from across Europe in 1864, top flight nobility from Queen Victoria to the tsars of Russia have been flocking to this shimmering capital of all things luxe to receive the noted health benefits, sample its haute cuisine and generally enjoy the good life. But the French Riviera's reputation was truly turbo-charged a century later when Grace Kelly's wedding to Prince Rainier of Monaco was televised in 1956.

In this guide we'll whisk you from the well used helicopter pads at Nice Côte d'Azur Airport, on the short hop to Monaco, before working our way back westerly down the coast to St Tropez. But of course, if you're travelling by yacht you'll be in good company – of the list of the world's 100 largest superyachts, roughly a quarter will harbour here yearly at some point too.

BELOW Live your best life on the Côte d'Azur

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Monaco

HIGH-CLASS CASINOS, THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS CAR RALLY – IN MONACO YOU'LL EXPERIENCE LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

From the moment you land in Monaco, you'll see plenty of high rollers (and Rollers) wherever you look. Historically, the conveniently distinct gambling and taxation laws in this tiny, but nonetheless mighty, principality played a big hand when it came to boosting its tourism economy. It's estimated that a staggering 30 per cent of residents here get to call themselves millionaires, and you can almost smell the money wafting in on the Mistral winds.

CASINOS

Leave your gym shoes at home if you want to go beyond the admittedly exquisitely decked-out foyer of the world famous Casino de Monte-Carlo – because this den of high-class hedonism has a strict no trainers rule. After all, this is not just any old casino. Built in 1856 by a prince, it has gone on to host more than a few individuals with royal blood. You could settle for a game or two in a salon privé (private salon), but play your cards right and you could bag an invite to the members' only salon super privé. Interesting fact about the casinos in Monaco – residents are banned from entering them!

CARS

The Monaco Grand Prix is not just any old car race. It's one of the Triple Crown trifecta of internationally elite motorsport races, and when planning a trip around it, your first thought, of course, should be obtaining the best viewing spot. Luckily, many establishments will offer luxury packages. Lilly's Club at the Fairmont offers a package that includes VIP lounge access, personal butler, and a hotline to a private jet fleet when you've tired of all the racing drama. The terrace of the Paddock Club suite at the Hotel de Paris is known for offering the best view of the race in the most opulent surroundings. But why be a land lover when you could enjoy one of the many yacht-based packages? The Amber Lounge yacht offers the most luxurious floating pitstop position – and you'll likely be rubbing shoulders with a driver or two after the race, too.

ABOVE Even when it's not hosting the Grand Prix, the streets of Monaco are stunning

St Tropez

MONACO MAY OFFER TURBO-CHARGED MACHO THRILLS, BUT ST TROPEZ IS WHERE TO HEAD FOR BEAUTY, BRONZING – AND SHOWERS OF BUBBLY

© Adobe Stock

ABOVE St Tropez is a haven for shopping, nightlife and wellness

This stop on our tour of the French Riviera is yet another byword for pleasure, parties and la plage. The once-quiet fishing settlement entered its heyday when this already seductive region featured as the main character – alongside Brigitte Bardot – in the global hit film, *And God Created Woman*.

DAYTIME DELIGHTS

The town, as is the case with the rest of the region, has long-established links with the luxury goods and wellness industries, and you won't be surprised to hear that in preparation for your grand entrance onto some of the sexiest beach clubs in the world, you're spoiled for choice in terms of pre-party pampering. While traditional or local shops remain, it's true that the label is quietly king here. So you can pick up some threads from boutique sellers like Dior and Armani on Rue François Sibilli, but the brand names don't stop there. The LVMH group (aka Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE) has its fingerprint on everything from hotels to sunloungers. Speaking of which, Cheval Blanc Hotel's spa bears the name of luxury cosmetics brand, Guerlain. You can shed off your everyday cares there with a Riviera Cruise treatment – featuring a sound bath alongside your massage – before heading out to top up your tan on the terrace.

NIGHT-TIME FROLICS

St Tropez offers some of the best nightlife (although with the beach clubs and free-flowing champagne, the line between night and day is often blurred). In St Tropez town itself, you're well placed to head to A-list favourite, The VIP Room, before instructing your chauffeur to dispatch you to Les Caves Du Roy at the famous Hotel Byblos. After a few rounds of Moët & Chandon, you're ready to hail another car to take you deeper into millionaire postcodes towards Ramatuelle and – if the influencers don't cramp your style – watch the sun rise over Pampelonne Beach.

Heaven Scents

You might not be ready to co-sign a distribution deal with Chanel after just one factory tour, but you'll get one step closer by attending a private haute couture perfumery workshop at the Galimard Fragrance Studio in Grasse. A VIP package will get you a diploma of perfumery, an exclusive formula registered in its confidential database – and a glass of champagne. Obviously.

Cannes

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A FILM BUFF TO JOIN THE PARTY AT CANNES

The small city of Cannes west of Nice, is worth a visit all-year-round. You'll find gorgeous views across the bay to the Esterel mountains, a quaint old town quarter in the form of Le Suquet, and world-class luxury brand shopping on La Croisette. The Lérins Islands across the water make for a tranquil retreat on a yacht trip, passing by the underwater sculpture park and stunning monastery buildings. But let's not kid ourselves – the main event, naturally, is the Cannes Film Festival, held in May each year since 1946, at the Palais des Festivals et Des Congres.

Now, it will come as no surprise that tickets to such an exclusive event – and its many satellite galas, parties and junkets – are not bookable by the public. But find the right luxe travel agent and you could be enjoying events such as the Vanity Fair party, yacht parties held by the likes of Moët & Chandon or even bidding for the chance to have dinner with a celebrity at a charity auction event.

BELOW Soak in the atmosphere of Cannes marina

Dripping with Diamonds

A rundown of who wore what ice at Cannes is fashion mag gold. Get your specialist travel agent to book you a place at the Annual Dinner held by Chopard – the jewellers behind the stunning Palme d'Or trophy itself – to truly bask in the glow of all that sparkle.

Where to Stay

The iconic Carlton Cannes is a star of the silver screen in its own right. Its imposing frontage has featured in films such as Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief* starring Cary Grant. Keeping on a film theme, many of its ultra-expensive suites feature names of legendary Hollywood actors who have stayed there, such as Kirk Douglas, Sean Connery and more.

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Italy

LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL IN IDYLLIC ITALY

— WORDS **KATE PUTTICK** —

From the Enlightenment period onwards, The Grand Tour of Europe was a rite of passage for aristocratic youngsters – and Italy was hailed as the jewel in its crown. In that vein, over the next few pages we will trace our own tour, arriving in our yacht into Salerno, moving up the coast through UNESCO-protected coastal towns, taking in the vineyards and fine art of Tuscany and Florence, fashion capital Milan, glitzy Alpine views and wellness in the Lakes, before setting sail for the lagoons of Venice. But this is far from an interrailing tour – we'll sample only the best culinary delights, deck ourselves out in the finest garbs and generally enjoy La Dolce Vita as it was intended.

BELOW Enjoy Italy through the ages by visiting historic sites

© Getty

> You'll find Byzantine architecture alongside Belle Époque hotels

Amalfi

VISTAS AND VITALITY ON THIS PICTURE PERFECT COASTLINE

The UNESCO-protected Amalfi Coast comprises several big-hitter destination names. From the docks of Salerno, past Positano (a filming location for *The Talented Mr Ripley* – 1999 version), Sorrento and over to the isle of Capri, the place names will evoke dreamlike sights, sounds and even fragrances. Once a maritime republic, you'll find Byzantine architecture alongside belle epoque hotels but the common factor along this peninsula is, as ever, good food, good wine and good air. Notable produce includes limoncello, the famous Capri salad, seafood aplenty and Neapolitan pizza.

BACK TO BASICS

When it comes to food, Italian tradition notably favours tradition and quality over showmanship. But the Quattro Passi restaurant in Sorrento has pulled off both – earning it the coveted full three Michelin stars.

FAMOUS HAUNTS

When it comes to accommodation, try the Hostel Santa Caterina, set back along a cliff face with tumbling gardens, exquisite flooring and an infinity pool par excellence. Celebrities like the Kardashians can't get enough.

Rome

YOU'LL MAKE LIFELONG MEMORIES IN THE ETERNAL CITY

They say all roads lead to Rome – but with everyone seeming to converge there, its ancient history, stunning architecture and religious significance can end up feeling frantic and overwhelming. Luckily, you can rise above the hoi polloi if you know who to book with. Special after-hours tours of the Vatican and Villa Borghese will let you experience these hallowed places in blessed tranquillity. And while a ride on the back of a Vespa may be tricky in your chicest shoes, a tour in a sidecar is still pretty authentic.

After all of this sightseeing, you'll probably be feeling peckish. La Pergola is another rare Michelin three-star restaurant, boasting jaw-dropping views of the city and of course, sumptuous dining.

WHERE TO STAY

For historical prestige, book into the ultra-stylish Hotel Hassler with its sensational views across the city. It hosts a suite whose sumptuous decor is preserved from the time when Audrey Hepburn temporarily called it home.

BELOW The Amalfi Coast never fails to stun with its views

© Adobe Stock

Tuscany

ENJOY CHIANTI, TRUFFLES AND TRANQUILLITY IN TUSCANY

Travel up from Rome to land in Tuscany, beloved of figures like Galileo, Dante Alighieri… and Sting. Here you'll be able to take your fill of unsurpassed fine art in cities like Florence and Pisa, alongside rustic environs with a distinctly luxe twist. Imagine yourself exploring vineyards nestling in rolling hills, with a castello or a borgo to be found in every wooded clearing. And the gastronomic delight goes beyond what is served in the outstanding restaurants, with truffle-hunting experiences, cookery classes and more.

As you would no doubt expect, the region has luxury accommodation to spare, but Castel Monastero ticks the most Tuscan boxes of the lot: a medieval setting, a glorious wine cellar, truffle excursions, a Gordon Ramsay-helmed restaurant (run by an award-winning Italian team)… oh and a feted detox spa for when you need to work off all of the above.

BELOW A typical Tuscan sunrise

Milan

MONEY CAN BUY HAPPINESS IN THIS FASHIONISTA'S PARADISE

Milan might not be able to boast the stunning natural visuals of other Italian locales but there are few places in the world where it's as much fun to splash your cash. A night out? There are worse nightspots than the famous opera house, La Scala, frequented by Verdi, Toscanini, Puccini and Maria Callas. Want to see fine art? The city's Pinacoteca di Brera houses a little painting called *The Last Supper*. Looking to relax in some luxury digs? Try the Bvlgari or Armani hotels for both brand recognition and sublime comfort.

FASHION WEEK

Milan's legendary style credentials are in evidence year round. The omnipresent fashionistas. The shopping malls that look like art galleries (see the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Quadrilatero d'Oro or Rinascimento department store). The smell of good quality leather, crafted into handbags, shoes and tight tight trousers. That's why each year, the fashion industry pours into these streets for Milan's Fashion Week. A specialist luxury travel agent can find you seats for the most talked-about shows, arrange private in-boutique trunk shows, and fix you up with a paparazzo-baiting chauffeur-driven entrance to everything.

THE DRIVE OF YOUR LIFE

If you love cars, Italy is the place for you. Piemonte and the northwest is the home of two of the greatest icons: the Alfa Romeo and the venerable Fiat. And even if a trip to a museum doesn't float your boat, renting a classic car is a must. Do as the hard-working Milanese do and pick up a stylish Alfa Romeo 33 Stradale – or even a quirkily cool Fiat 500 – from one of the specialist classic rental firms dotted around Milan. Then head up the highway to the Italian Lakes to leave city stress behind you.

© Getty

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Venice

NAVIGATE THE LAGOONS IN LUXURY STYLE

Bucket-list-level gastronomy, galleries and gondolas: the island archipelago of Venice – aka La Serenissima – needs little intro. But fame of this level attracts swarms of crowds. So how do you rise above them?

BOATS, BALLS AND BACALLÀ

Soak in the sights on a gondola tour with a difference. Handsome gondoliers are a given, but for extra euros there's also – somehow – room on the vessel for a private onboard chef, photographer, operatic tenor or violinist. Such packages are recommended for those hoping to get down on one knee – just don't lose your balance!

Venice's cultural mainstays – the Arsenale, Giardini and St Mark's Square – can be enjoyed year round, but the glamour factor shoots up a notch during the world famous Biennale festival of fine art. The Venice Film Festival period is another great time to visit, hosted on the more relaxed Lido island.

MASKS AND MYSTERY

Another great time to visit is during the Venice Carnival – a time when the famous masked balls get into full sexy, oddball swing. Tickets can be purchased from many private agents.

ABOVE Basilica di Santa Maria della Salute, Venice

The Italian Lakes

WEALTH AND WELLNESS GETS AN ALPINE TWIST

Whether you love swimming, hiking, boating, fine dining, or just a good lungful of clean Alpine air, Lakes Como, Maggiore and Garda offer you a holiday to remember. This region's charms have worked on Madonna, Gianni Versace, George Clooney and countless celebrities before them. That's why the shoreline is littered with villas but for true old world style, try the Grand Hotel Tremezzo or Mandarin Oriental in Lake Como, both of whose swimming pools feature in Condé Nast's best in the world list. For an excursion, why not charter a boat to Isola Bella on Lake Maggiore? This private island has a villa so stunningly opulent and disarming, it historically hosted world peace summits – suggesting it's hard to stay belligerent in such tranquillity.

Spain

EMBRACE THE GOOD LIFE – A TRIP TO SPAIN OFFERS BUCKETFULS OF FUN, GOOD FOOD AND AN AWE-INSPIRING CULTURE

— WORDS **KATE PUTTICK** —

The Iberian Peninsula and Spain has long been an affordable, accessible mecca for those from Northern European climes. But sheltered away from the tourist hubs of Benidorm and Torremolinos, in hidden coves, in quaint inland villages and the most prestigious districts of the area's cosmopolitan cities, lies a long tradition of refined taste and luxury, fantastical aristocratic mansions versus shimmering new-build havens. Over the next few pages, we'll shine to spotlight on some of the regions offering the best travel experiences money can buy: from the gastronomical delights of the bourgeois hotspots in the Basque Country, the groundbreaking fine art of Barcelona, to near-tropical white sand and beach party experiences in the Balearics.

BELOW Barcelona has everything you could need – history, culture, views and amazing food

© Getty

Basque Country

EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY IN THIS CORNER OF SPAIN

This lush, mountainous corner of the Iberian Peninsula has a fascinating, mysterious history, pre-dating almost all others in Europe. There is a particular cultural energy to the region, following the earlier attempted repression of its language and culture as recently as the 1970s.
Yet its current, defiant incarnation is one of a buzzing, cosmopolitan, glamorous region boasting some of the world's greatest fine art collections, a film festival that attracts swarms of Hollywood stars and an exhilarating, gourmet culture that is renowned worldwide. Even if the stacked itinerary of a luxury tour in the region's main sites of San Sebastián, Bilbao, Pamplona and Biarritz knock you for six, there's also time for relaxation.

EATING

Pintxos is almost an elevated version of tapas – more of a small, delicate, bread-mounted piece of art than a small dish. The creativity that goes into these may well be one example of why the region is home to one of the highest numbers of three-Michelin-starred eateries per capita in the world.

DRINKING

Another Basque big hitter is the protected wine appellation of Rioja and the Rioja Alavesa is considered the most prestigious variety. The Bodegas de los Herederos del Marques de Riscal holds the current title of world's best vineyard, named by *Decanter* magazine. And where better to enjoy the surroundings and tastings than at the adjoining Luxury Collection Marriot hotel?

ARTFUL LIVING

Picasso's *Guernica*, named for the Basque town, may be housed in Madrid, but there's plenty of top tier culture remaining in the region. Bilbao's Guggenheim hosts work by Rothko, Magritte and Klein, San Sebastian is home to the stunning neon-lit Kursaal Centre and over in Biarritz is the Musée Asiatica. Fashion fans will drool over the collection at the Cristobal Balenciaga museum.

RIGHT Venture outside of the cities and you'll discover treats like clifftop chapel in Bakio

© Getty

The Balearic Islands

NAUTICAL TOURS, NIGHTLIFE AND BOHEMIAN BEAUTY

© Getty

ABOVE With stunning views like these, it's impossible not to fall in love with the Balearic Islands

The Balearic isles of Majorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera could be said to occupy a dimension of their own. That's partially why this autonomous territory of Spain garnered its bohemian reputation; Ibiza and Formentera in particular attracted legions of hippies in the 60s. We'll focus on these two latter islands as these are the places where you'll find *the* most VIP-friendly experiences, lodgings and nightlife, but the whole archipelago offers vacationing at its most visitor-centric.

LAND AHOY!

The Balearics is a yachting dream destination thanks to its abundance of calas, the local word meaning 'natural harbour'. These fjord-like ravines offer wonderful locales for sailors – and their glamorous guests – to sashay off, sample the local culture and then move onto the next hotspot. Agencies for chartering yachts are situated across the islands. All of the islands are within hopping distance, making this the perfect capsule cruising break.

WELLNESS AND WHITE SANDS

The flipside of all of the Balearics' bacchanalia is that the wellness industry is thriving. On the island of Ibiza, the name that tops the lists is the Six Senses hotel. The technologically-backed treatments such as cryotherapy, bio-hacking and more are enjoyed by its silk-kimono clad clientele. But perhaps the most luxury experience of all can be found among the natural wonders of Formentera. Beaches and coves here are routinely ranked as the best in Spain, offering clear waters, pristine sands and little overdevelopment to overshadow them. Villas and hotel accommodation is costly – but worth it.

NIGHTLIFE

UK and European folks, until recent years, held a somewhat unfairly jaded view of what a holiday in the Balearics, particularly Ibiza, looked like. But justice won out, as in recent years, a more international A-list crowd has restored the islands' crown. There are still 'messy' times to be had, but if you like your stilettos to remain clean, seek out the guestlist at chic areas like Cala Jondal, home to the famous Blue Marlin and Tropicana Beach Club or Ses Salines beach, where VIP sightings are at a high year-round. And if you're looking for appropriate attire, seek out Marina Ibiza – described as Sloane Square on Sea – for luxury brand shopping. And for the parties themselves: Ushuaïa Ibiza Beach Hotel is the modern hedonists' choice, but try Pikes Hotel – the location for Wham's video for 'Club Tropicana' – for a uniquely Ibizan experience that's still luxe.

Catalonia

WHITE SANDS, WINE AND WONKY BUILDINGS DELIGHT THE SENSES IN THIS ANCIENT PROVINCE

Fiercely independent and offbeat, Catalonian capital Barcelona's architectural skyline defies trends and sometimes the laws of physics – see the Sagrada Familia. Its streets, like the stylish Passeig De Gracia, are packed with some of the world's finest boutiques, bars and restaurants and its galleries boast names like Picasso on their very doors. Head north of the city, and you'll find the sweeping coastline of Costa Brava full of heavenly beach hotspots. Head to the glamorous playgrounds of modern-day patricians, S'Agaro and Sitge, embrace the sumptuous madness of Dali's home near Cadaqués, and explore *Game of Thrones* filming locations in Girona.

WHERE TO EAT

Try and nab a table at Disfrutar, Barcelona, considered by some as the world's current number one. But if that doesn't work out, don't be alarmed. The Michelin list of other gourmet eateries is as long as your arm. And a VIP tapas crawl is never anyone's sloppy second choice.

WHERE TO STAY

For true modernist fairytale style, try the Casa Fuster – designed by one of Barcelona's most famous architectural sons, Domènech i Montaner – or the all-suite, mansion affair of El Palauet in the prestigious Eixample quarter.

BELOW It doesn't matter where you look in Barcelona – you will always be greeted by stunning architecture

© Getty

Grape Escapes

Top 5 Winery Retreats in South America

SOUTH AMERICA OFFERS PLENTY OF OPTIONS FOR WINE LOVERS IN SEARCH OF A LUXURIOUS GETAWAY

— WORDS **AMANDA BARNES** —

South America used to be the domain of backpackers on their gap year. That isn't the case any more. There's been an increase in luxury adventure tourism across the Southern Cone, with five-star hotels nestled into the desert plains of the Atacama and down to the glacier lakes of Patagonia. In the wine regions, you can also experience the wilderness of the landscapes and the soul of the local culture while sleeping on high threadcount cotton sheets and sipping the finest wines.

RIGHT Combine your love of travel with your love of wine to end up with the best kind of holiday

© Getty

© Getty

Viña Vik

— CACHAPOAL, CHILE —

When Norwegian billionaire Alexander Vik built his wine estate in Chile, he spared no expense: 4,500 hectares of virgin land planted with more than 300 hectares of vines, following 4,000 soil studies. But that wasn't the end of it. He also created a state-of-the-art winery and a hotel constructed with some of the greatest architectural prowess in South America. The swooping titanium roof shimmers gold and purple in the sunshine and is the crown atop this eccentric art hotel. Each of the suites is decorated by different artists from around the globe and unique in design. Guests will have the opportunity to try Vik wines during a tasting at the winery and while enjoying dinner at the fantastic restaurant (one of Chile's finest), which is all included in your full-board stay, along with horse riding and use of the fabulous pool and spa area. Spa treatments are not included; if you're feeling flush try the vinotherapy bath, where an entire bottle of Vik's wine is poured into your tub for good measure.

BEST FOR Design lovers

ABOVE The lounge from the Vik hotel provides far-reaching views over the vineyards

Cavas Wine Lodge

— LUJÁN DE CUYO, ARGENTINA —

The first luxury wine resort in Argentina and still reigning supreme, the charm of Cavas is in its personalised detail. Each villa offers complete privacy, from the rooftop terrace to the personal plunge pool under the pergola. You can interact as much, or as little, as you like – which explains why demure celebs hire the master villa with a personal chef.

Owners Cecilia Diaz Chuit and Martín Rigal offer an array of safari-inspired activities, including horseback riding to nearby wineries and afternoon cookouts at the barbecue. Evening cellar tastings provide a wine tour of Argentina; then choose a bottle from the award-winning wine list to enjoy with dinner at the excellent restaurant upstairs.

BEST FOR Honeymooners

Hotel & Restaurante Garzón

— GARZÓN, URUGUAY —

When you see the enormity of the investment in Alejandro Bulgheroni's Garzón winery, it might surprise you that he is also co-owner of a rather unassuming hotel in the nearby village of Garzón. Five rooms in the historic house are each decorated in a homely fashion, reflecting the eclectic taste of the hotel's other owner: Francis Mallmann. If that name doesn't ring any bells, then this hotel clearly isn't for you. Hotel & Restaurante Garzón commands its high prices precisely because it belongs to Argentina's biggest celebrity chef. There's no shortage of glamorous hotels in the nearby beach town, Punta del Este, but Garzón, in its peaceful, sedate Maldonado setting, offers a stay of elegance.

BEST FOR Travellers with deep pockets and lots of guests

Hotel & Spa do Vinho, Autograph Collection

— VALE DOS VINHEDOS, BRAZIL —

When you reach the top of the tree-lined driveway, the landscape of rolling hillsides carpeted with lush green vineyards could be the view from a castello in Tuscany. This is, after all, the inspiration for the hotel that lies in the middle of Brazil's main wine region, Vale dos Vinhedos, known for its strong Italian traditions rooted in the thousands of immigrants who settled here.

Although you might hear old-Italian dialects spoken, this is still Brazil and hotels – like food portions and parties – come big. Each of the rooms has an antiquated, regal decor of draping curtains and fabric lampshades, and there's an old-school charm to the silver service restaurant, which houses one of the country's largest wine cellars. That, and a glass of local bubbly on arrival, remind you that this is the heart of Brazilian wine country, with two of the region's top producers, Miolo and Lidio Carraro, on your doorstep.

BEST FOR Groups

Lapostolle Residence

— COLCHAGUA, CHILE —

These private chalets offer an exclusive place to rest your head in the hillsides of Apalta. They were originally built as a comfy place for the family of winery owner Alexandra Marnier Lapostolle to stay over. However visitors kept asking to stay the night, so the family residence was converted into one of the most chic boutique hotels in Chile.

The chef here works with ingredients from the estate's own biodynamic garden and if you stay full board, you'll enjoy an exclusive dinner paired with Lapostolle's biodynamic wines and a smooth pisco sour made with the company's own double-distilled Kappa pisco.

BEST FOR Biodynamic lifestyle

BELOW Hotel & Spa do Vinho offers a hint of Italian charm in the heart of Brazil's wine country

© Alamy

The High Life

FROM SNOWY SLOPES TO SOOTHING SPAS, ELEVATE YOUR VACATION AT THE MOST LUXURIOUS RESORTS IN THE ALPS

— WORDS **KATHERINE BEBO** —

Sky-skimming mountains… Crystal-clear lakes… Positively pristine valleys… Mother Nature cordially invites you to explore one of her most impressive playgrounds: the Alps. Measuring 1,200 kilometres in length, this mountain range spans eight countries across Europe, so whether you're seeking exhilaration, relaxation or cheese fondue, you won't be disappointed. Although the winter sports – skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing – in this corner of the world are outstanding, the spring and summer months bring equal amounts of beauty, adventure and opportunities for fun. Hiking through flower-filled meadows, mountain biking down thrilling tracks and kayaking in flowing rivers are just a few activities to tick off the extensive to-do list.

Each Alpine retreat – whether in the premier peaks of Austria, the serene Dolomite mountains of Italy, the storybook Swiss countryside or the chic French pistes – has its own unique beauty, culture, traditions, cuisine and charm. What they all share, however, is their ability to accommodate their guests in the lap of luxury. The resorts in the Alps ooze opulence, combining whatever-you-desire service with you'll-never-want-to-leave accommodations. And the spas? To die for! A sanctuary for those wanting to feel revived, restored and rejuvenated, the Alps is home to countless world-class spas offering thermal pools, nature-infused therapies, detoxifying steam baths and oh-so-relaxing treatments – all with a mountain vista as the backdrop. The phrase 'it doesn't get any better than this' was created for such scenarios.

Explore our handpicked resorts and experiences to plan your high-altitude holiday. Whether you're looking for thrilling or chilling, we've highlighted the best of the best. From carving down fresh-powder slopes to unwinding in a hot tub with a glass of wine in hand, tucking into mouth-watering fare to whirring through the sky on a helicopter tour. Whatever you decide, we can promise you one thing: for the duration of your trip, your head will remain firmly in the clouds. Reality can wait.

> "Each Alpine retreat has its own unique beauty, culture, traditions, cuisine and charm

Crème de la Crème

UNLEASH YOUR JOIE DE VIVRE IN THE FRENCH ALPS

Part of Les Trois Vallées (The Three Valleys) – the largest interconnected ski area in the world – Courchevel offers up more than 150 kilometres of varied terrain to suit all skiing abilities. Private ski guides are available, who can lead you to hidden powder pockets and secret trails. For expert skiers, heliskiing is a blood-pumping way to explore untouched snow. Other wow-factor adventures on offer are helicopter tours, hot air balloon rides and ice driving, where you can test your skills on a purpose-built ice track. Pedal to the metal!

For a more sedate experience, there are plenty of calming, five-star spas to choose from. Venture inside Les Airelles Spa by La Mer and you'll find a stunning snow cave, bubbling waterfalls, sensorial showers and your own inner calm. Spa L'Apogée by La Prairie invites guests to indulge in one of its 'skincare ceremonies', some of which use caviar extracts.

Pinkies Up!

For après-ski with a difference, tuck into a delicious afternoon tea by the crackling fire at Les Airelles Bar. The finger sandwiches, delectable pastries, sweet nibbles – washed down with a hot drink or glass of bubbly – will go down a treat after a day on the slopes.

BELOW A visit to the Alps will awaken all of your senses and make you feel on top of the world!

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Lord (or Lady) of the Rings

THE STAFF AT THE AWESOME ARULA CHALETS WILL DO ALL THE HEAVY LIFTING

© Getty

ABOVE Austria has plenty of locations that typify the natural beauty of an Alpine village and plenty that will steal your heart

Skiing can be hard work. Staying at one of the two opulent Arula Chalets in the Arlberg ski region of Lech, Austria, is not. The team of butlers, chefs, housekeepers, chauffeurs, spa therapists and concierge are all on hand to ensure that you won't have to trouble yourself with anything more taxing than pulling on your ski boots; deciding between taking a dip in your private indoor pool, relaxing in the sauna, chilling in the steam bath or hitting the hot tub; sipping a glass of wine from your chalet's wine cellar, selected by a sommelier; choosing which movie to watch in your own cinema; lying down for a massage in the treatment room; debating whether to go 'all in' at the casino table; potting the correct balls on the pool table; or gliding around on your own private ice rink.

The Arula complex has two chalets – one that sleeps 22 guests, and one that sleeps eight. They can be booked separately or together to accommodate larger groups. Both are located in a prime spot above the village, and enjoy ski-in/ski-out access to some of Austria's finest pistes, such as Schlosskopf, which leads straight down into the centre of Lech. When the snow melts, the area transforms into a lush playground for hikers and mountain bikers, with many thrilling downhill tracks. More than 320 kilometres of marked trails lead you through wildflower meadows, tranquil forests and picturesque valleys. The Green Ring is a popular route, which is the summer equivalent of the epic ski circuit, The White Ring.

Mountain Mindfulness

For something 'a bit different', head to Skyspace Lech, an installation that blends art with nature. Sit a while in the observatory and gaze at the ever-changing Alpine sky for a relaxing, meditative experience.

Sloping Off

A CELEBRITY HOTSPOT SINCE THE 1950S, CORTINA D'AMPEZZO ROLLS OUT THE RED CARPET FOR ITS GUESTS

Known as the 'Queen of the Dolomites', Cortina d'Ampezzo became famous after hosting the 1956 Winter Olympics and has been hosting the rich and famous ever since, including celebrities such as Audrey Hepburn, Frank Sinatra, Tina Turner and, more recently, George Clooney. It's also been featured in several Hollywood movies, including *For Your Eyes Only*, *Cliffhanger* and *The Pink Panther*.

So, what makes this Italian resort so special? Firstly, the world-class skiing. Part of the Dolomiti Superski area, Cortina d'Ampezzo has around 120 kilometres of beautifully groomed pistes just waiting to be explored. Other places to explore include Michelin-starred restaurants (Ristorante Tivoli Cortina, Tilia Restaurant), luxurious spas (Cristallo Spa, Grand Hotel Savoia Spa) and high-end boutiques (Moncler for chic fashion, Bartorelli for sparkling jewellery).

Upscale mountain huts like Baita Pié Tofana, Rifugio Averau and Rifugio Lagazuoi are also well worth a visit for a cool combination of rustic charm, gourmet food and the most beautiful panoramic views of snow-capped peaks. Access them via snowcat or private snowmobile transfers for an added touch of adventure.

BELOW Cortina d'Ampezzo combines world-class skiing with effortless elegance

Making Memories

How would you like to be taken to the best photography spots at sunrise and sunset? Or to an extraordinary waterfall? Or attend a cocktail-making class? Or nip along the mountain roads in a snazzy electric Audi? The concierge at the Rosapetra Spa Resort will be able to arrange all this – and more – for you.

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Swiss Bliss

YOU'LL FEEL ANYTHING BUT NEUTRAL AFTER A SENSATIONAL SOJOURN IN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland: the land of Toblerone, fondue, Rolex watches… and seriously spectacular Alpine resorts. Whether you're looking for a serene lakeside retreat, a top-class ski resort or a place to indulge in some particularly pleasing pampering, this high-altitude paradise offers a wealth of high-end experiences.

GLAMOROUS GENEVA

The cosmopolitan city of Geneva is not to be missed. Stay at the Hotel d'Angleterre or the Four Seasons Hotel des Bergues, both offering ludicrously lovely lakefront views and personalised service. Explore the city's luxury boutiques along Rue du Rhône, or indulge in fine dining at the Michelin-starred Domaine de Châteauvieux. If Lake Geneva is calling you, charter a private yacht for a peaceful cruise, stopping at the scenic village of Montreux or the medieval Chillon Castle. Pair this with wine tasting in the Lavaux Vineyards, a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its terraced vineyards and exquisite Swiss wines.

ABOVE In addition to boasting the birthplace of Alpine winter tourism and endless options for luxurious treats, Switzerland will floor you with its vistas

BEAUTIFUL BERN

Another UNESCO-listed site you'll want to explore in Switzerland is the Old City of Bern, the country's capital. Stand in front of the Zytglogge clock tower as it strikes the hour and watch the mini mechanical bears, dancing jester, golden rooster and Cronos (the Greek god of time) put on a show for enthralled visitors. Stay at the Hotel Schweizerhof Bern & Spa, a five-star property with lavish rooms, a rooftop terrace overlooking the city, and a state-of-the-art spa. It's also home to Jack's Brasserie, which has become known for its Wiener Schnitzel.

HORSING AROUND

Known as the birthplace of Alpine winter tourism, St Moritz was the first real ski resort in the Alps. It has become one of the glitziest resorts in Europe, and this reputation is not unfounded. Not only does it offer what you'd expect from a grand mountain destination: exceptional skiing, top-notch cuisine, indulgent spa

treatments, designer shopping… it also hosts some of the most fabulously fancy annual events, daaahling. The two main ones are White Turf, where horse racing, trotting (horse racing with carts) and skikjöring (the jockey is pulled behind the horse on skis) takes place on the frozen-over Lake Saint Moritz; and Snow Polo World Cup, where polo players swing their sticks on a pitch make entirely from ice and snow (their steeds are equipped with special shoes). The VIP enclosures at such events serve free-flowing champagne and all-you-can-eat buffets of caviar, sushi, oysters, pastries and cakes.

The oldest and largest of St Moritz's luxury hotels, the majestic Grand Hotel des Bains Kempinski has been welcoming well-heeled guests since 1864. If relaxing in one of the spa's seven saunas sounds like an exercise for wimps, book a three-minute session in the Life Cube cryotherapy chamber. The -116°C environment (brr!) promises to increase energy levels, improve sleep and boost your body's recovery processes. Another Swiss resort that is synonymous with exclusivity is Gstaad. While quieter than St Moritz, it's equally glamorous – having welcomed the likes of Madonna, Julie Andrews, Quentin Tarantino and Anne Hathaway – and charms its visitors with its chalet-style architecture, designer boutiques and the Gstaad Palace hotel, perched on a hill overlooking the picture-perfect village.

Cloud Nine Awaits

After a rigorous day on the slopes, your body needs some downtime. The Immune Recovery Body Ritual at the Tschuggen Grand Hotel in Arosa will oblige. The deluxe treatment combines aromatherapy with deep-tissue and lymphatic-drainage massage. Pure pleasure.

Living the Dream

As you're bubbling away in a hot whirlpool with a view of the mammoth Matterhorn, you may have a pinch-me moment. In fact, you may have several pinch-me moments when you stay at The Omnia mountain lodge, set above the village of Zermatt. Positively dreamy.

Branch Out

Overlooking Lake Lucerne, the Bürgenstock Hotel & Alpine Spa is the epitome of Swiss sophistication. For a unique dining experience here, savour the Signature Forest Dinner, a bespoke four-course meal (with wine pairings) set in a secluded garden bedecked with fairy lights and candles. Deliciously elegant.

Green Getaway

Hotel Chetzeron was once a gondola station, now it's an exclusive retreat. Accessible via snowcat or hiking trails, this eco-friendly hotel offers panoramic views of the Rhône Valley and the Alps. Its minimalist design, gourmet cuisine and tranquil surroundings make it an off-the-beaten-track treasure.

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Beautiful British Columbia

FROM SHOPPING AND SPORTS, TO TRAIN JOURNEYS THROUGH THE CLOUDS, BRITISH COLUMBIA HAS IT ALL

— WORDS **KATHERINE BEBO** —

Statistics Canada shows that BC has the highest cost of living in Canada, so a holiday here isn't going to be cheap, but if you have the cash, they can certainly show you a luxurious time.

Packing for a holiday is always a nightmare. Will you need a jacket? Will you need formal clothes (almost certainly)? What if you forget something vital? If money is no issue, then the answer is simple… don't pack at all! When your first-class flight touches down, head straight for Alberni Street, known internationally as Vancouver's 'Luxury Row', and pick up everything you need from one of the many designer stores. When the holiday comes to an end, you can donate them to a charity on your way to the airport.

When it comes to travel insurance, the high-status traveller requires a unique package as personalised as the trip itself. Affluent holidaymakers demand tailored insurance solutions and, should they need to make a claim, it has to be a streamlined process. High net worth travel insurance should keep you, your loved ones and all your assets safe no matter how remote or adventurous your trip to British Columbia gets.

If all this planning is too much like hard work, send a detailed wish list to a luxury travel agent who will ensure all your holiday dreams come true. Agents such as Abercrombie & Kent promise to tailor-make a trip to BC that will exceed all expectations and, for the fees it charges, your expectations should be high. Grab your golden passport and let's go!

BELOW The vast expanse of the Canadian Rockies make a trip to B.C. perfect for adventure seekers and nature lovers alike

© Getty

Vancouver Island Heli-Hiking

THE ULTIMATE PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

If you want amazing vista and mountain-top photo opportunities without the treacherous climb, why not take a bespoke heli-hiking experience? Have your private helicopter drop you off at any number of remote and hard-to-reach locations; secluded lakes, hidden forests, magical waterfalls and, of course, the breathtaking mountain peaks. The Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge on Vancouver Island will provide you with hiking boots if you intend to explore and, when the hunger pangs strike, a magnificent picnic for the ultimate al fresco dining experience.

The day can be tailored to your own particular needs. The Bell Jet Ranger heli can fly you to the very top of Ursus Mountain, where you can enjoy signature drinks and charcuterie while taking in awe-inspiring 360-degree views – the perfect place to propose or celebrate a special anniversary.

Alternatively, if you fancy something a little more adventurous, you can explore ancient fern gardens, or hike across the mountain ridges without the fear of bumping into other tourists. After an exhausting trek, the helicopter will take you back to your exclusive lodge for fine dining and a soak in the jacuzzi.

BELOW Take a helicopter for the ultimate mountain adventure

Wellness Retreats

HOW ABOUT A LITTLE ME TIME?

British Columbia offers unique luxury retreats in some magnificent locations. Take advantage of the natural surroundings to lower your heart rate with some forest bathing among the old-growth trees of Vancouver Island, or alternate between the hot baths and the cold waterfalls in Whistler if you need to improve your circulation. Should you wish to switch your brain to standby, take a morning row across the Salish Sea to the Hollyhock Cob Sanctuary for a meditation session.

For wellness with a touch of glamour, discerning travellers can visit the Sparkling Hill Resort in Vernon, where it is possible to float in a saltwater pool, listening to the underwater music, beneath a Swarovski crystal ceiling.

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Wildlife Adventures

WHERE NATURE AND COMFORT MEET

Canada is simply bursting with natural wonders but if the idea of soggy tents, basic food and uncomfortable sleeping arrangements don't appeal, there are some amazingly luxurious alternatives available.

The -35-degree temperatures might be a shock but the thrill of seeing polar bears in the wilderness should warm you up. A trip away from BC with Natural World Safaris to Arctic Canada will give you the opportunity to snorkel with narwhals, track polar bears across the ice and watch the beluga whales as they migrate to Hudson Bay. The specialist bespoke tours will ensure you see exactly what you came for and, at the end of the day, you can relax in the lap of luxury at one of the stunning lodges where you will find a roaring fire and gourmet food waiting for you.

If you fancy something warmer, head back to BC for the deluxe Nimmo Bay Wilderness Resort. It promises absolute comfort surrounded by nature in the heart of grizzly bear territory. Here, you can customise your wildlife experience to include elk, wolves, beavers and cougars or take a private birdwatching tour to watch the eagles and osprey.

> "Curated packages enable you to personalise your journey with optional visits to Las Vegas or Salt Lake City and the Gold Leaf package ensure the utmost service

The Rocky Mountaineer Train

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE CLOUDS

A ride on the Rocky Mountaineer Train is an unforgettable experience, especially if you choose the Gold Leaf world-class service. You can take in the stunning views through the bi-level glass dome panoramic windows or catch the fresh air on your personal outdoor viewing platform.

You can choose from four routes, all of which offer legendary journeys. The 'First Passage to the West' route will take you from Vancouver to Banff, via Kamloops. 'Journey Through the Clouds' will speed you from Vancouver to Jasper, taking in Pyramid Falls and Hell's Gate along the way. 'Rainforest to Gold Rush' will take you to Mount Robson while the onboard host regales you with tales from the Gold Rush. Finally, 'Rockies to the Red Rocks' will take you from Moab to Denver, through deserts and canyons.

Curated packages enable you to personalise your journey with optional visits to Las Vegas or Salt Lake City and the Gold Leaf service ensures you receive the utmost attention and fine dining throughout your trip. If you want to experience an elevated train ride, then this is it.

ABOVE The train will take you through the stunning Banff National Park, Alberta

Daredevil Holidays

OPTIONS FOR THE AFFLUENT ADVENTURER

If your nerves and stamina happen to match your bank balance, British Columbia offers some exciting bespoke adventures. The ten mountain ranges provide outstanding hiking opportunities but if you want a real adrenaline rush, how about ziplining in the Kootenay Rockies, kite surfing in Tofino or bungee jumping in Whistler? Luxury tour operators will happily organise a private helicopter flight over the waterfalls at Tumbler Ridge, which is a UNESCO Global Geopark, and you can even take a circuit of shipwreck sites with an additional scuba-diving opportunity.

BELOW Skiing is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to outdoor sports in BC

Skiing holidays abound here and there are plenty of deluxe options. If you want complete privacy, Northern Escape offers thrilling heli-skiing and snowboarding adventures with your own personal guides, helicopters, staff and chef. The boutique experience means you can stay in your own private chalet, so no annoying tourists to get in the way of your adventure. With certified ski instructors and state-of-the-art avalanche safety equipment, you can feel secure at all times. Alternatively, at the Wedge Mountain Lodge, your personal chauffeur will whisk you to your chosen world-class skiing location.

One for the Sports Fans

If you want to catch an ice hockey match in style, a bespoke VIP Canucks Game Experience promises just that. Watch the action from the Executive Legends Suite, avoid the queues, have your chosen snacks delivered to you and take home a jersey, which just happens to be autographed by your favourite player.

The Great Bear Rainforest

Reconnect with the wild in BC's Coastal Rainforest and spot the bears in their natural environment. Arrive by seaplane or sail in on your own private yacht and stay in a luxurious cabin with en-suite bathrooms, queen-size beds and floating sauna. It's the perfect combination of opulence and wilderness adventure.

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Iceland
Land of Fire and Ice

THE NORTH ATLANTIC'S GEOTHERMAL GEM IS A WONDER TO BEHOLD

— WORDS **PHILIP S KAY** —

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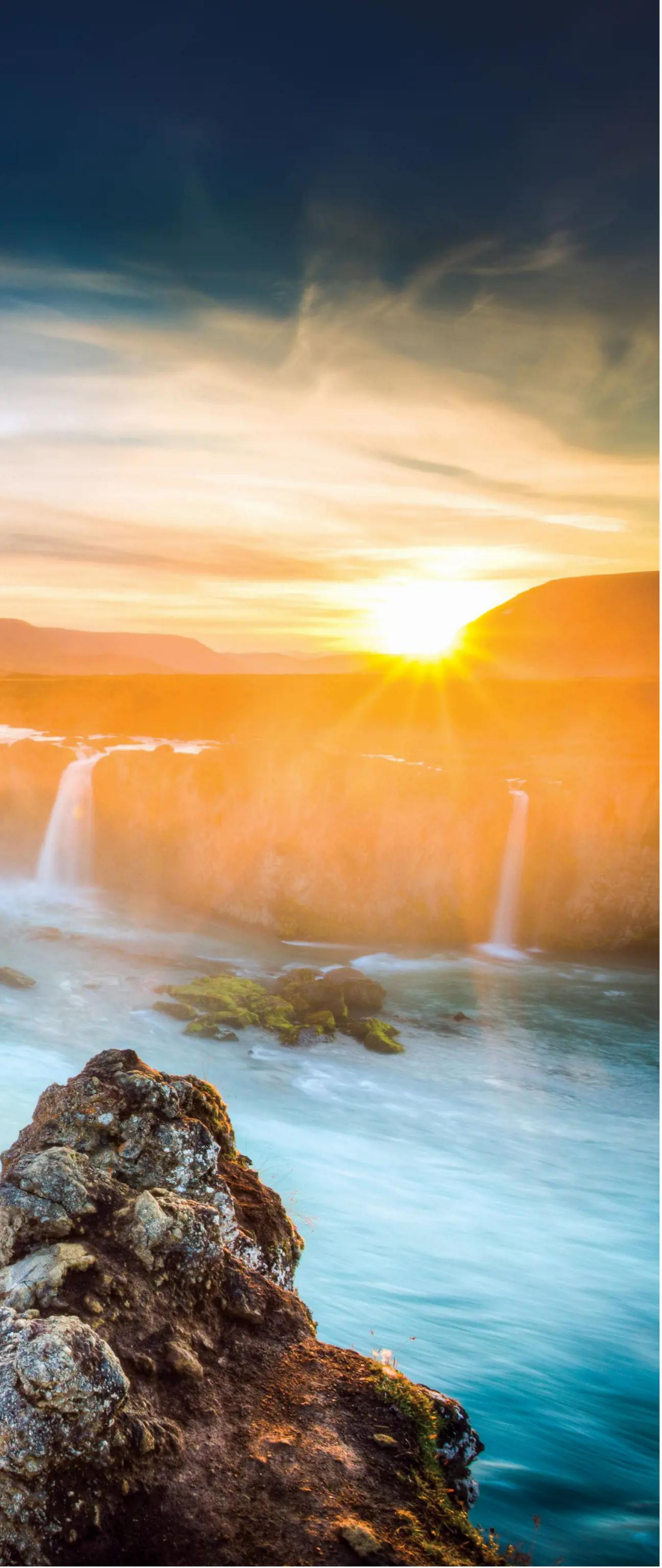

A vast wilderness located just south of the Arctic Circle might not seem like the most obvious destination for a luxury holiday, but with its spectacular geography and geology, and a burgeoning tourist industry, a visit to Iceland will allow you to embark on your own epic saga of adventures and experiences that will forge memories to last a lifetime.

Torn asunder by volcanoes and glacial activity, Iceland's tundra is the perfect place to experience the awesome power of nature. With a small population that pales in comparison to its landmass, it offers visitors plenty of space to appreciate the energy and exquisite beauty of Mother Earth. It is a place that both amazes and inspires. With some of the most dramatic scenery to be found on the planet, it is not surprising that the Nordic island has been a regular location for the filming of Hollywood blockbusters. It has provided the otherworldly setting for some of the most visually stunning movies of recent years, ranging from Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* to *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

Iceland offers much more than just dramatic locales, though; its impressive infrastructure ensures that those who visit its shores are going to be spoilt for choice when it comes to things to do. Whether you want to unwind in a luxurious wellness resort, take to the slopes to ski or explore the gargantuan craters that lead off to a horizon crowned by the northern lights, Iceland won't leave you feeling disappointed.

REYKJAVIK: YOUR GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE

Iceland's diminutive capital city punches above its weight when it comes to offering visitors an exceptional array of accommodation options. From opulent international chain hotels to intimate boutique establishments, the island's entry point knows how to welcome guests with its own special brand of Nordic hospitality. For the pinnacle of five-star perfection, stay in the Reykjavik EDITION. The rooms and suites are decorated with cosy rugs and throws, and the delectable dishes available at the hotel's signature restaurant, Tides, are created by award-winning chef, Gunnar Karl Gíslason.

REMOTE AND RELAXING RETREATS

To the southwest of Reykjavik is one of Iceland's most famous sightseeing spots – the Blue Lagoon. The geothermal spa sits in a seismically active lava field that sometimes bursts to life in a flurry of red-hot magma, occasionally affecting access. It is these same elemental processes that gift the lagoon its warming waters, which

LEFT From waterfalls to volcanic vistas, Iceland has it all

© Getty

ABOVE It's hard to capture the beauty of the northern lights in a photo – you need to see them for yourself

RIGHT If you have a hankering for adventure, why not explore one of the country's ice caves?

have – not surprisingly – given birth to a luxury spa and wellness sanctuary.

The Retreat at Blue Lagoon is a multifaceted facility that pampers its guests with a private lagoon-bathing experience, Michelin-starred cuisine and a choice of 60 premium suites. Its Retreat Spa hides a subterranean wellness utopia that offers a smorgasbord of revitalising treatment plans and meditative massages.

With fantastic access to heli-skiing, snowshoeing, whale watching and a bevy of other exhilarating outdoor pursuits, the wild, mountainous Troll Peninsula beckons to those searching for something more adventurous. Situated between two majestic fjords, its enchanting isolation ensures a level of hushed tranquillity that is seldom experienced.

Eleven Deplar Farm is a luxury lodge nestled in the peninsula's magical Fljot Valley that, despite its humble name, has been recognised as one of the best hotels in the world. With its heavenly hot tubs, salubrious saunas and an enticing menu rich with fresh produce and local delicacies, Deplar Farm is an exclusive escape for discerning high-end travellers who like their exciting activities and soul-touching serenity to be served in equal measures. Contemplating the ethereal beauty of the surrounding terrain after emerging from a rejuvenating session in one of the hotel's zen-inducing flotation pods is a transformative experience.

VOLCANO VIEWING

The pockmarked nature of Iceland's lunar-like landscape is startling evidence of the incredible tectonic forces at work in the fiery furnace beneath the ground. The destruction caused when it unleashes its formidable power can be calamitous, but Iceland's seismic shifts have also helped create the country's identity. Taking the time to explore its unique geological character is one of the most rewarding things to do during a visit.

To get the best overview of the captivating calderas, charter a helicopter with an expert pilot and guide. Nordurflug Helicopter Tours offers a number of adventurous packages, including luxury private excursions that can be customised to take in any part of the rugged island. Flights over such sensational sights as the Eyjafjallajokull volcano ice cap and the craters that remain following its 2010 eruption reveal the awesome scale of Iceland's breathtaking environment.

If you want to get up close and personal, how about a romantic dinner or private opera inside the heart of the Earth? After hiking or helicoptering to the dormant volcano Thrihnukagigur, visitors can access its ancient lava chamber by descending in a special open-cage elevator. The company in charge of the site's tours operates from May to October, and its plan includes professional guides, safety equipment and satisfying refreshments.

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ICELAND'S HYPNOTIC HIGHLIGHT

SKIING IN ICELAND

HIT THE SLOPES OR HEAD OUT TO THE BACKCOUNTRY

Iceland might not be as synonymous with skiing as some other European countries, but during winter, resorts and tour companies provide access to experiences that are difficult to find elsewhere.

Blafjoll is the largest of Iceland's ski resorts, and its close proximity to Reykjavik and the Blue Lagoon makes it a convenient option to combine with trips to other interesting places and sights. Visitors have the rare opportunity to ski or snowboard down the slopes of a volcanic mountain range that offers a view of the open ocean.

Hlidarfjall, in the north of the island near the town of Akureyri, is a resort that gets some of Iceland's best snow. In addition to its 23 alpine slopes, it possesses a variety of cross-country skiing trails, and has one of the country's longest fjords as a glorious backdrop.

For experts who want to get away from the resorts and try something more challenging, guided off-piste skiing and heli-skiing activities that take adventurous souls to more remote areas of the island are available from various operators when the weather and conditions permit.

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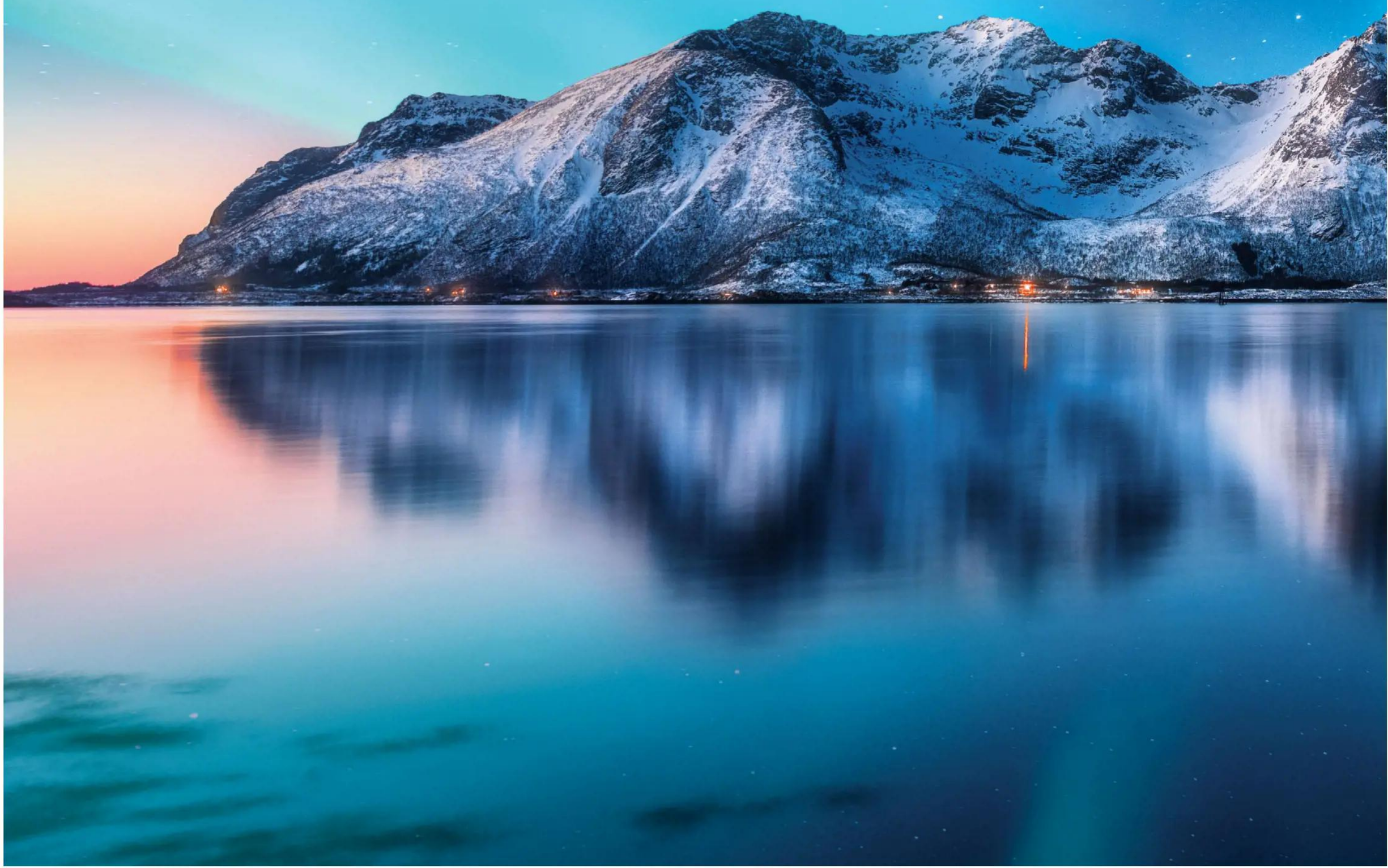
Into the Wild

IF YOU LIKE YOUR WILDERNESS A LITTLE MORE SANITISED, THERE ARE MANY LUXURIOUS OPTIONS AVAILABLE

— WORDS **DR JOANNA ELPHICK** —



Most of us enjoy watching nature, whether it be via nature programmes on the television or going for a leisurely walk in the woods, but if you want something a little more exotic than a squirrel or a passing seagull, you might wish to consider a safari in some far-flung location. Whether you crave dangerous mammals, tropical fish or rare plants, there really is a package for everyone. If you are a forever fan of the snow and ice, then head for the Arctic. If you prefer a little more heat, then you should consider an African Savanna safari.

The only problem with the wilderness is… it's a little bit wild! But there's no reason to let that stop you from having the holiday experience of a lifetime. Luxury travel agents, specialising in glamorous adventures without the grime and restorative mud baths without the muck, ensure that you get the great outdoors without compromising on your home comforts.

If you have the money, there are plenty of opportunities for you to rub shoulders with Mother Nature while remaining in the lap of luxury. If your monstrously large carbon footprint is keeping you up at night, you can always set things right by supporting the locals who are regularly employed to hand-carve the furniture to be found in the exquisite lodges where you can rest your head after that first-class flight half way round the world.

All you need to do is write your wish list of nature's wonders and let Scott Dunn, Wild Frontiers, Abercrombie & Kent, or some other equally expensive specialist travel agent do the hard work. After all, that's precisely what you're paying them for.

BELOW Maybe your ideal wild adventure is immersing yourself in a frozen wonderland

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The Komodo Island

WHERE OPULENCE AND MONSTERS COLLIDE

If you want to explore Indonesia's fascinating archipelago in style, why not charter a private yacht? With a highly trained full crew on board, there's no need to worry about where to go or how to get there. Couples can sail in a boutique-style two-cabin vessel while large parties can travel on a custom-built Phinisi yacht. Expert guides can show you the secrets of the Indonesian islands and create experiences tailored to your requirements: romantic hidden inlets, wellness retreats with yoga on the sandy shoreline, underwater snorkelling adventures and exotic wildlife encounters.

Of course, those who want a really adventurous wildlife experience will head for UNESCO-protected Komodo Island. Here, you can walk along the pink sand beaches and over the volcanic hills until you come face to face with the terrifying Komodo dragons.

The exclusive Komodo Resort & Diving Club will ensure you are given the best diving equipment and staying in one of the deluxe beach bungalows means you can spend the night on the mysterious island before heading back to the yacht.

> "The long hike up and down the mountain ranges can be exhausting but your own personal guide will drive you most of the way, enabling you to sightsee in comfort

Patagonia

EXPLORING CHILE AND ARGENTINA IN STYLE

There is a little bit of everything to be found in Patagonia. Governed by Chile and Argentina, the area boasts mountain ranges, grassy plains, glaciers and vast lakes. So, whether you are interested in the flora, the fauna, or the topography, there is something to interest you. A bespoke visit to the area will ensure that you get exactly what you came for and, for most, that includes the Torres del Paine National Park in Chile. The long hike up and down the mountain ranges can be exhausting but, for those with limitless funds, your own personal guide will drive you most of the way, enabling you to sightsee in comfort. If you choose to venture south, you can sail across the fjords of southern Chile aboard a luxury cruise ship, passing enormous icebergs and colonies of penguins along the way.

Savvy travellers stay at Tierra Chiloé, an architectural masterpiece located on the Rilán Peninsula in Chile, overlooking the ocean. The hotel is known for its luxurious qualities despite the rugged wilderness outside.

The Argentinian part of Patagonia also has a sublime hiking and climbing destination – Los Glaciares National Park. Its collection of glacial lakes, such as Laguna Torre, is definitely not to be missed.

ABOVE Travellers marvel at the ice blue waters of Laguna Torre, Patagonia, Argentina

> Knowledgeable guides can take you across the islands, showing you the wildlife

A Galapagos Boat Tour

EXPLORE THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS IN STYLE

The best way to visit the Galapagos Islands is by boat. An adventure cruise ensures you see the entire archipelago and the wildlife it has to offer. Tailor-made holidays mean you choose whether to sleep on the boat and hop on and off the islands, or stay in a first-class hotel, such as the Finch Bay hotel down by the beach, and explore the natural wonders in situ. Knowledgeable guides can take you across the islands, showing you the wildlife and geography. You can hike to Tortuga Bay, a prime bird-watching spot; watch the manta rays from the clifftops of South Plaza Island; snorkel with the fish and marine iguanas; and walk among the famous giant tortoises. The wildlife opportunities are endless.

If you base yourself on a luxurious floating hotel, you can end the day in the jacuzzi or take in an on-board talk given by an expert naturalist who can answer any questions.

Vamizi Island

ROMANCING WITH THE SHARKS

If scuba diving is your thing, Mozambique offers the best diving in the world and for sheer luxury and comfort, head for the private island resort of Vamizi Island Lodge. It's a perfect place for honeymooning couples who want to split their time between romantic walks along the beach and thrilling dives among the coral gardens with the grey reef sharks and gigantic potato cod. And when you aren't in the Indian Ocean, there's the beautiful rainforest that hugs the shoreline. Here you can watch the monkeys and coconut crabs before returning to your private luxury beachfront villa. Your own private chef will ensure you never go hungry, whether you fancy a seafood grill or a fish supper under the stars.

BELOW Get on a boat and savour all the Galapagos has to offer

© Getty

The Wonders of South Africa

TAILOR-MAKE YOUR TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA FOR THE PERFECT EXPERIENCE

If you're looking for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to South Africa, there really is only one place to stay. Africa House Royal Malewane is the ultimate bush homestead, nestled in the heart of the Greater Kruger National Park. Here you'll find the pinnacle of private boutique safari lodges and you won't even have to leave your room to watch the elephant herds as they bumble along the riverbed beneath your villa. It is all about families and togetherness here and the experienced staff encourage their pampered guests to reconnect with each other and the nature all around them. A Royal suite will ensure absolute privacy with your own personal deck and pool.

There are no issues with sharing a guide with other large groups. Your personal, highly qualified guide and tracker will take you and your loved ones into the bush when and where you want to go. This is an exclusive, bespoke encounter with nature that promises the Big Five; lions, leopards, buffalos, elephants and black rhinos, along with 140 other mammals that call the largest game reserve in South Africa their home.

If you don't fancy the hot bush walks, you can take one of the daily game drives, or why not treat yourself to a private helicopter patrol flight and view the reserve from the air?

Royal Malewane also offers the ultimate al fresco experience. Surrounded by glowing lanterns, diners can eat in the gloriously decadent Bush Tent, followed by a nightcap under the African stars.

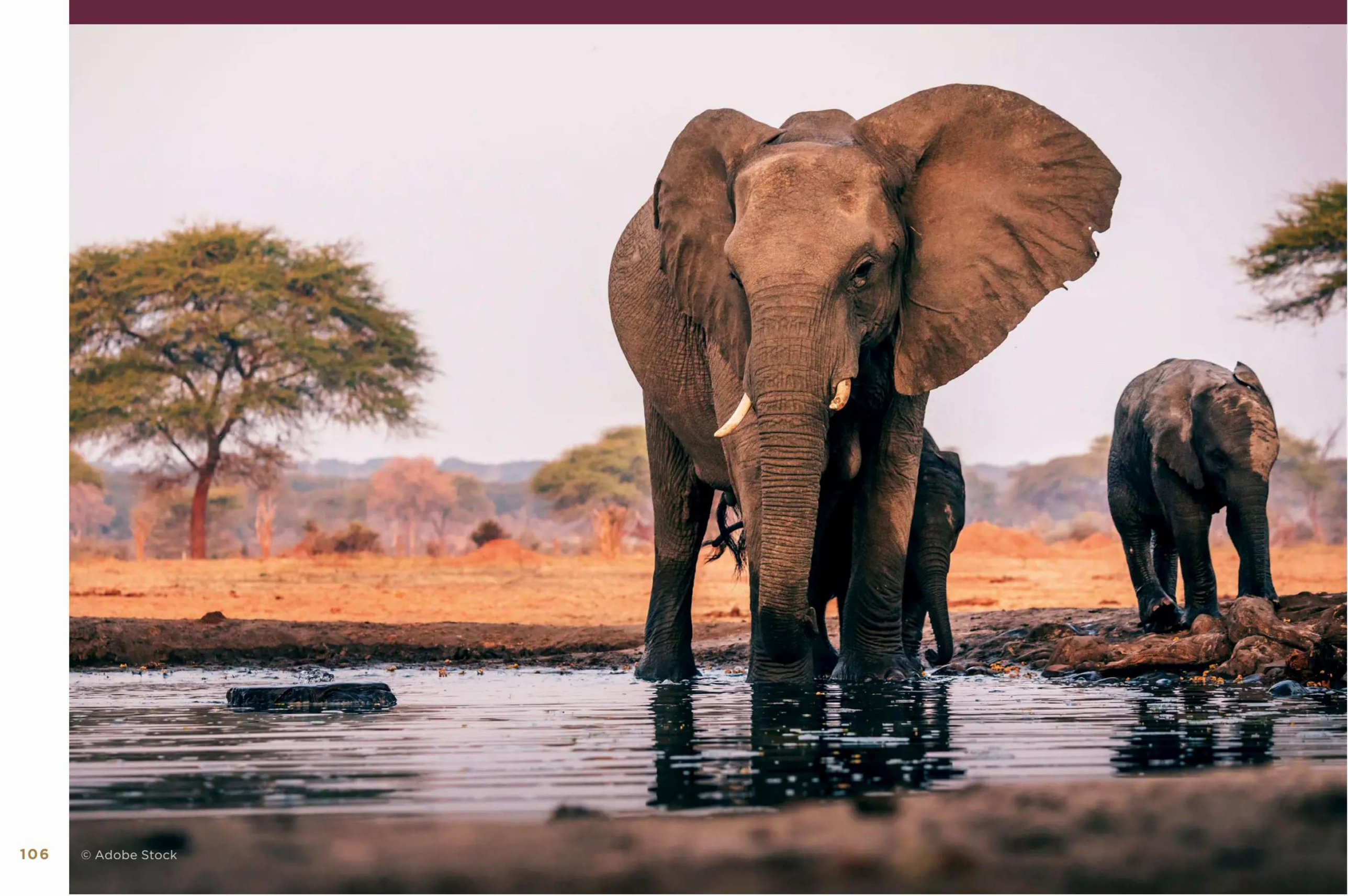
BELOW The waterholes are very popular with the locals

The Sequoia Yacht

DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF RAJA AMPAT

With ten crew and six guests, you'll be waited on hand and foot as you sail across the Indonesian waters in your private charter. The Sequoia is a yacht of the highest quality and, although it looks like a classic vessel, it hides the latest marine technology to ensure you cover the best of Indonesia's coral reef. Whether you are looking to scuba dive, snorkel or simply watch the sea life from the polished wooden deck, you will be able to explore Raja Ampat in absolute luxury.

The yacht supplies kayaks, paddle boards and water skis for active adventures and, when you return to the vessel, you can have a relaxing massage with the onboard master therapist. For a little extra, the Sequoia will provide a professional photographer to capture the highlights of your journey. So if money is no object, let the Sequoia show you the world's highest concentration of sea life in ultimate comfort.



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The Brazilian Amazon

NAVIGATING THE LARGEST RIVER IN THE WORLD

If you want to experience one of the richest biodiversities in the world and immerse yourself in its ecosystem, an Amazon yacht charter will allow you to do just that. Drifting along the Amazon on your own private yacht lets you reach some of the most inaccessible beaches in the world. Simply choose the handful of people you want to spend your time with and say goodbye to the rest of the world for the length of your journey. A floatplane will take you into one of the remotest parts of the Brazilian river system, where you board your luxury yacht and meet your crew, including your own personal chef, expert wildlife guide and an English-speaking host whose sole job is to ensure you have everything you could possibly want.

If your idea of the perfect getaway is to hop from one deserted sparkling white sandy beach to the next then your captain can drop anchor whenever you see somewhere that takes your fancy. Your chef can pack you up a gourmet picnic and away you go. However, should you tire of all that relaxation, your host can arrange some once-in-a-lifetime experiences to get the heart pumping. A spot of jungle survival training can be arranged before a brisk trek through the rainforest. If that sounds a little too energetic, you can always canoe alongside the famous pink dolphins.

Everest

LIVE AMONG THE CLOUDS

Staggering up Mount Everest may not scream opulence, but for a hefty price tag, you can experience the majesty of the most famous mountain in the world without compromising on comfort. Let your personal helicopter take the sting out of the climb from Kathmandu to Phakding, with you hopping off when you fancy a trek. You can stay in a luxury lodge in the lower valley and, once you reach the upper valley, you'll be offered a place in an exclusive luxury camp before the final trek to Everest Base Camp. Having spent the night at Base Camp, another helicopter will take you back down, so you can sit back and take in the breathtaking views. Throughout the journey, you will be accompanied by world-class guides and gourmet chefs. No baked beans over the gas stove on this camping trip.

RIGHT The views are worth the trek

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The Xigera Safari Lodge

OPULENCE IN THE HEART OF BOTSWANA

On the floodplains of the Okavango Delta, 12 elegant suites melt into the breathtaking wilderness of the African bush, hidden among the indigenous trees and overlooking the papyrus wetlands. Discerning travellers can watch the varied wildlife from their own lodge, raised on stilts for safety and, of course, panoramic views. With both indoor and outdoor showers, you can choose just how 'wild' you want to get.

When you have had your fill of spa treatments and private dining, you can explore the magnificent UNESCO World Heritage Site in a multitude of ways. Helicopter safaris take off right outside your door and enable you to witness the bush from above. If you are a keen photographer, the photo safari, with its specially designed vehicles with moveable armrests, allow guests to get in the perfect position for that once-in-a-lifetime shot. Your personal guide will tailor the safari to your particular wish list. Bespoke safaris also offer boat trips where you can drift past the hippos and basking crocodiles.

A Laikipia Plateau Safari

A DIFFERENT SAFARI EXPERIENCE

If you have tried the usual African safaris, a trip to the Laikipia Plateau in Kenya will provide something new. Not only will you see rare species, such as giraffe gazelles and sitatungas, you can enjoy guided bush walks across the plains, giving access to the minibeasts and small birds overlooked on the big game drives.

At the Loisaba Wilderness Conservancy, you can sleep in a four poster bed on a raised platform, directly under the stars. There are two types of 'Starbeds' available, some overlooking the Kiboko waterhole and some alongside the Ewaso Ng'iro River. Having spent the day tracking footprints with your personal guide, you can take a hot shower and watch the African stars until you fall asleep in your sumptuous bed.

ABOVE The gerenuk is known as giraffe gazelle because of its long neck

Svalbard Luxury Cruises

TAKE A GLAMOROUS SHIP TO THE 'LAND OF THE POLAR BEAR'

For those with a taste for the cold, why not explore the remote islands of Svalbard on an exclusive super yacht and travel in decadent style? You can stay in your own glamorous suite and experience the ultimate in fine dining, before taking one of the onboard fleet of snowmobiles to speed you along on your Arctic adventure. Expert guides will show you where to head to spot the polar bears, Arctic foxes and native reindeer. If you want to kayak into the hidden coves, snorkel, or even dive beneath the glaciers, a luxury travel agent will be able to curate the perfect Arctic itinerary just for you.

> All mod cons can be found inside with USB charging ports and electric lights

The Magic Camps of Oman

GLAMPING FOR THE SUPER RICH

Whether you want a romantic tryst or family fun, glamping in the Arabian Desert can be a luxury option. If you've watched *Lawrence of Arabia* and find the Bedouin lifestyle too exotic to resist but balk at the notion of a drafty tent, Magic Camps can meet your needs. This is far from your average camp site, with up to four beautiful triple-bed rooms and private en-suite shower rooms clustered together to make your own exclusive glamp site. Each tent has its own toilet, so no queuing up for the loo with a bunch of strangers. The beds have proper mattresses with soft cotton pillows and cozy duvets. All mod cons can be found inside with USB charging ports and glowing electric lights. Should you wish to do a spot of stargazing, you can curl up in one of the comfy armchairs set up outside your tent and call upon the nearby staff for any drinks or nibbles that you might require. As for dining, just say the word and your personal chef will prepare your favourite meal.

Shinta Mani Wild

A SANCTUARY IN THE JUNGLE

Once you have arrived at your secluded canvas-roofed tent down by the river, with its elegant interior and private outdoor bath, you can leave the unpacking to one of the butlers and start your Cambodian jungle adventure. A 400-metre zipline over the canopy should set the mood for this wild holiday. Once you've crossed the Raging Big Sisters Falls, you arrive at the Landing Bar where you can have a drink, something you'll almost certainly need after the 50 km/ph experience!

Expedition boats can take you along the jungle backwaters with kayaks available should you wish to explore the secret mangroves. You can even join the conservation rangers on an anti-poaching patrol. The wild is really 'wild' in the jungle but there is no compromise on luxury and comfort.

BELOW It's the perfect place to see the Milky Way

© Getty

Tanzania and the Great Migration

WATCH ONE OF NATURE'S MOST SPECTACULAR EVENTS IN ULTIMATE COMFORT

The Great Migration across the Serengeti has to be the jewel in the crown of when it comes to nature events and the good news is that it takes place all year. A first-class agent, such as Yellow Zebra Safaris, will ensure that you travel to the right area at the perfect time for what it is you are interested in and, if you get bored of the endless wildebeest, you can look out for the animals following in their wake.

Take your family in February and you can witness the calving season. If you fancy something a little more bloodthirsty, take a trip in July when the herds attempt to cross the Mara River, teeming with hungry crocodiles.

The discerning traveller will want to stay at the exclusive Singita Faru Faru Lodge, overlooking a bustling watering hole and, when you're tired of trekking across the plains, staff will arrange a hot air balloon ride.

Top the holiday off with an exquisite Maasai banquet where the Masai staff cater to your every whim as you dine al fresco, under Africa's starry skies. It is the perfect romantic honeymoon destination for the adventurous couple.

"Take your family in February and you can witness the calving season. If you fancy something a little more bloodthirsty, take a trip in July when the herds attempt to cross the Mara River, teeming with hungry crocodiles

BELOW Zebras are just one species that can be spotted in the Serengeti

© Adobe Stock

An Antarctic Getaway

TIME TO PACK THOSE CASHMERE JUMPERS

If the cold doesn't bother you then consider an adventure in the white desert of Antarctica, the most remote continent on the planet. With limited places available, you will certainly have space to yourself. Having taken the epic voyage via luxury cruiseliner, you can settle into your state-of-the-art pod with floor-to-ceiling windows and space age technology, before embarking on your personalised adventures. If you want to capture some amazing wildlife photography, you are only minutes away from the 28,000 emperor penguin colony. If marine life is of interest, expert guides can show you the unique marine ecosystem of the water harbour. Here you can spot dragonfish and the Antarctic toothfish. Meanwhile, fearless holidaymakers can go kayaking with the humpback and minke whales.

For the adventurer, there are options to abseil, rock climb and you can't leave without some kite-skiing. Having worked up an appetite, you can sample your personally customised gourmet menu, surrounded by the breathtaking panoramic view.

If your idea of a luxurious cruise doesn't include stepping off the ship, you can gaze at the magical views and watch the wildlife from your personal cabin verandah.

RIGHT Sail the Southern Ocean in absolute style aboard the L'Austral Cruise Ship

Sweden's Arctic Baths

A GLACIAL RETREAT

This is not your ordinary cabin in the snow. It's an architectural masterpiece positioned alongside the Lule River, surrounded by the history of the Nordic people who have been fishing and logging here since the Stone Age. Whether you want a cosy Water Cabin for two or a Land Cabin for a family getaway, Arctic Baths can accommodate you and ensure you stay in the lap of luxury. The wellness retreat offers a high-end spa, sauna, hot tubs and plunge pool, but it's the other activities available to visitors that sets this facility apart.

During the summer months it's possible to take a long swim under the midnight sun, while in winter, you can dine beneath the Northern Lights. If you start craving a little more action, the owner will tailor an activity package to suit your needs. Fancy going on a husky hike or a moose safari? If you have the cash, it can be arranged.

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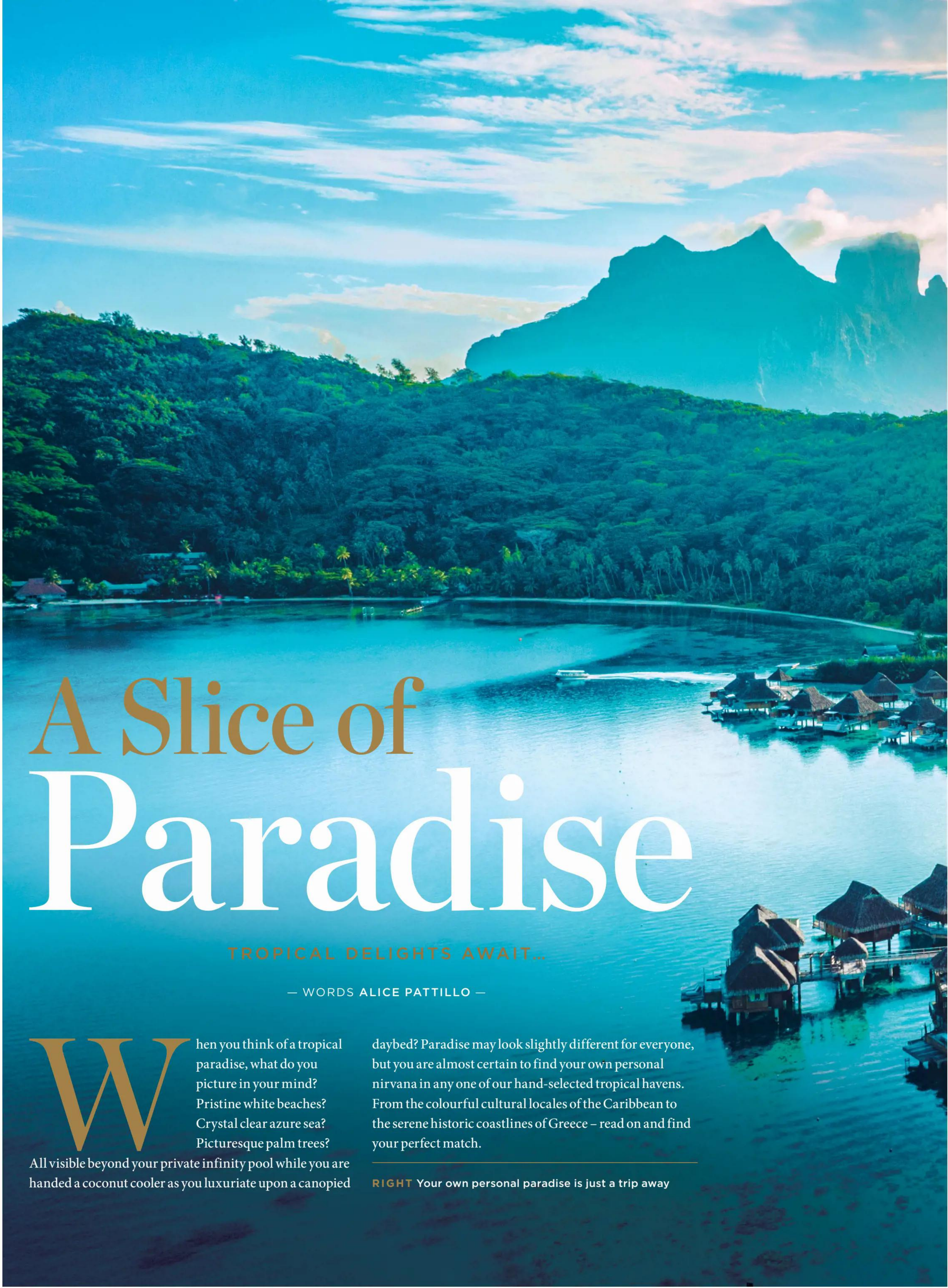

A Slice of Paradise

TROPICAL DELIGHTS AWAIT...

— WORDS **ALICE PATTILLO** —

When you think of a tropical paradise, what do you picture in your mind? Pristine white beaches? Crystal clear azure sea? Picturesque palm trees? All visible beyond your private infinity pool while you are handed a coconut cooler as you luxuriate upon a canopied daybed? Paradise may look slightly different for everyone, but you are almost certain to find your own personal nirvana in any one of our hand-selected tropical havens. From the colourful cultural locales of the Caribbean to the serene historic coastlines of Greece – read on and find your perfect match.

RIGHT Your own personal paradise is just a trip away

© Getty

The Caribbean

EXPLORE THE WATERS OF THE CARIBBEAN, AS YOU EMBARK ON THE ULTIMATE, OPULENT ISLAND-HOPPING EXPERIENCE

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

With enticing sandy beaches and crystal blue waters full of beautiful and diverse marine and wildlife, the islands of the Caribbean offer visitors long, lazy days beneath blue skies. In the place where dreams become reality, you can wander under waterfalls or swim with the most exotic fish imaginable, before relaxing in a resort where your own personal butler takes care of your every need, from luxury spa experiences to gourmet cuisine cooked by world-class chefs.

BELOW The islands of the Caribbean

© Getty

© Getty

St Barths

Enjoy the millionaire lifestyle with a stay at Eden Rock, the place to be seen in this playground for the rich and famous, or go all out and rent the Palmier Royal Estate with its own pirate beach. Spend your days shopping in designer stores or on board a private yacht, with your own guide and a full staff who will introduce you to the wonders of St Barths. The island is celebrated for its stunning cuisine and the truffle ceviche at Bonito Saint Barth isn't to be missed.

British Virgin Islands (Necker Island)

Though the public can visit Necker Island on very select dates, the best way to experience this slice of paradise is to hire the whole island to enjoy at your leisure. Every moment of your stay is tailored exclusively to you and the household staff will meet your every need, from guided tours of the island to arranging treasure hunts for the kids. During your stay, don't miss the opportunity to charter the Necker Belle, a 32-m(105-ft) catamaran on which you can take your dream trip around the Caribbean. With a choice of destinations, it's the only way to experience these magnificent islands.

ABOVE On Necker Island, nothing is too much trouble

Barbados

The luxury boutique surroundings of the Coral Reef Club are the perfect base to explore Barbados. While you're on the island, enjoy a private, all-inclusive tour and tasting at the Mount Gay Rum Distillery, sampling some of the most celebrated rums in the world. Clear your head with a visit to the stunning Animal Flower Cave, surrounded by beautiful corals amid the backdrop of a dramatic sea cave; to be sure you capture the moment, your own private photographer will accompany you on the trip.

St Lucia

St Lucia is the ideal destination for honeymooners and Windjammer Landing offers the happy couple an unparalleled experience. Whether you're relaxing over a candlelit dinner on the private beach or enjoying a pamper in the spa, you'll be making memories that start with a chauffeur-driven car from the airport straight to the resort. Or, BodyHoliday is your secluded sanctuary in the mountain forests, where your every wellness need will be met. Enjoy yoga, spa treatments and the ultimate in luxurious rooms as you relax.

Turks and Caicos - Ambergris Cay Private Island

Experience bespoke luxury on Ambergris Cay, a private island in Turks and Caicos. Lose yourself in 1,100 acres of untouched grounds while enjoying the most premium experience you can imagine. Naturally there's a private chef, but you'll also be able to take private fishing and snorkelling expeditions, or even enjoy tennis lessons with a pro. Relax on the private beaches or strike out on a private guided nature walk, complete with experts in local wildlife and birdlife to really enhance the experience. As the sun sets, don't miss the opportunity to spot the giants of the ocean from Whale Watchers Point.

The Bahamas

PARADISE REALLY IS A PLACE ON EARTH AND YOU CAN FIND IT IN THE BAHAMAS

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

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From beautiful beaches to a designer shopping scene to rival Rodeo Drive, the Bahamas has it all for the luxury traveller. Offering idyllic, secluded landscapes and stunning hotels where all you need to do is sit back and enjoy the view, the islands of the Bahamas really are paradise. Whether you're a foodie in search of the best the islands can offer or want to lose yourself in laid-back luxury, you'll find your sanctuary here. There's little wonder the Bahamas is the A-list choice.

ABOVE Lose yourself in the luxury of the Bahamas

Harbour Island

Harbour Island is the place billionaires come to play and where luxury comes as standard. This romantic haven offers breathtaking and uncrowded beaches where unique pink sand and endless turquoise oceans invite you to relax.

Not far off the shoreline lie beautiful reefs rich with sea life, so why not charter a boat and guide, who will take you to the best dive spots?

Alternatively, if you want to explore the island, book a private chauffeured tour and get to know the intimate streets and natural beauty of the Bahamas.

The Landing – Harbour Island

Owned and designed by India Hicks, the goddaughter of King Charles III, the Landing is a historic property dating back to 1800. Overlooking the harbour and a short walk from the pink sand beach, the hotel offers just 13 rooms, each designed by Hicks in a classic Caribbean style. Guests can dine in the world-class restaurant and enjoy a wine cellar stocked with the best there is, before returning to a beautifully-appointed room, with unmatched views of the harbour.

Fiji

A JEWEL IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN, THE ISLANDS OF FIJI ARE A HAVEN OF OPULENCE.

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

Fiji is an archipelago in the South Pacific, made of over 300 islands. In this idyllic nation you'll find endless stretches of golden sand fringed with palm trees, awe-inspiring coral reefs, crystal-clear lagoons and rugged, dramatic vistas that will tempt you into the mountainous interior of the islands. Beloved by celebrities for its relaxed atmosphere, it offers a place to unwind away from the bustle of real life. In this welcoming land you'll hear the traditional greeting of "bula" everywhere you go and once you've enjoyed the welcome that Fiji has to offer, you might find that you don't want to leave.

BELOW As beautiful as it is friendly, Fiji is a must-see destination for any traveller

Nanuku Resort Fiji

Just a short flight from Nadi, Nanuku Resort offers a unique, A-list dining experience that's perfect for romance. On a platform nestled high in the branches of a flourishing, 70-year old dilo tree, you'll find a candlelit table for two waiting for you. As you relax and listen to the ocean lapping against the shore beneath you, your private executive chef will prepare a personalised tasting menu that celebrates the very best cuisine that Fiji can offer, from freshly-caught seafood to local delicacies that you'll find nowhere else, all accompanied by the finest, handpicked wines.

Hilltop Villa

To make sure your stay in Fiji is one that you'll never forget, treat yourself to the three-bedroomed Hilltop Villa at COMO Laucala Island Fiji. For more (probably a lot more) than what most people make in a year, you'll enjoy panoramic views of the island and benefit from a full household staff, including a private chef, butler, nanny, and even your very own chauffeur to whisk you to your next adventure. The resort offers a wealth of leisure activities, from a full golf course to tennis courts and coaches, as well as a spa where you can let yourself have the pamper session you deserve.

© Getty

French Polynesia

FAR FROM THE BUSTLE OF THE WORLD OUTSIDE, FRENCH POLYNESIA IS A TRUE HIDDEN GEM

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

Thousand of kilometres from the nearest mainland, French Polynesia is made up of five archipelagos. Though its remote position makes it difficult and expensive to visit, it does mean you're guaranteed an exclusive visit, well away from the hassles of modern life. This haven in the South Seas is the very definition of unspoiled, offering stunning native wildlife, traditional cultural experiences and stretches of secluded beaches and rainforest, where private guides can take you on the adventure of a lifetime. French Polynesia has it all.

BELOW French Polynesia is a haven away from the world

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Bora Bora

The island group of Bora Bora is famed for its selection of accommodation, from five-star hotels to private villas, offering unbeatable views over the lagoons and mountains of this tropical paradise. Some of the most premium accommodation even comes with glass-bottomed terraces and viewing decks, so you can enjoy a private audience with the colourful marine life.

Don't miss the opportunity to take a private trip to the turquoise lagoon, where a bespoke diving experience can be crafted to your party's needs. If snorkelling isn't your scene, take a two-person submarine scooter to mingle with the underwater inhabitants. Away from the lagoon, a chartered whale watching tour will take you and your guests into the heart of humpback territory.

For unrivalled views of Bora Bora's magnificent interior, a private helicopter tour of the island is difficult to beat. As you sip champagne, your pilot and guide will give you an unforgettable chance to marvel at Mount Otemanu, which towers over Bora Bora, as well as the secluded lagoons and deepest rainforests.

The Tetiaroa Atoll

Once owned by Hollywood legend Marlon Brando, the island of Tetiaroa is a secluded atoll just 48 kilometres (30 miles) from Tahiti. Though it's now exclusively owned by French luxury brand Pacific Beachcomber, Tetiaroa continues to be an important centre for wildlife and guests on the island can enjoy private tours of the animal and birdlife to be found there.

You don't need to be staying on Tetiaroa to take a trip to the island, but the option of arriving by air is reserved for guests at The Brando. However, a yacht will deliver you in style in just under three hours.

Though there are some commercial tours available, some operators offer a truly luxury experience, tailor made for you. Tetiaroa is a wildlife lover's dream and on your privately escorted tour of the island and its waters you'll meet coconut crabs, black tip sharks and so much more.

The Brando

The Brando resort is one of the most sought-after accommodations in the world, where you'll enjoy your own private pool, butler and a comprehensive range of amenities, ranging from sporting facilities to spa services. Accessible only by private plane, the Tetiaroa island it's on offers a true taste of exclusivity and it's no wonder that it's a favourite of everyone from Hollywood stars to former presidents, with President Obama choosing The Brando when he needed somewhere quiet to work on his memoirs.

Dining at The Brando gives guests the chance to enjoy a menu of local ingredients, but there is a serious purpose to the island beyond luxury. In keeping with Marlon Brando's wishes, this is an eco-resort, devoted to protecting and conserving the beautiful region in which it can be found. The resort works alongside the Tetiaroa Society to monitor the wildlife and birdlife, while the nearby Bird Island is home to several species of avians who are protected by rangers. The resort itself is cooled by seawater and waste is recycled and composted; The Brando really is leading the way in sustainable tourism.

THE FOUR SEASONS

LIVE LIFE IN LUXURY

When you stay at the Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora, you can expect opulence all the way. From a selection of incredible restaurants to stunningly-appointed over-water bungalows, it's the perfect mix of seclusion and service for the discerning traveller who demands the best.

The Seychelles

SYNONYMOUS WITH IDYLLIC LUXURY, THE SEYCHELLES IS WAITING TO WELCOME YOU

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

Nestled in the sapphire blue waters of the Indian Ocean, the Seychelles might be made up of 115 islands, but it's still the smallest country in Africa, with over half of its islands being uninhabited. The Seychelles has long been a tempting haven for travellers seeking paradise, thanks to its small population, its lush vegetation, stunning and secluded beaches and diverse aquatic life. Boasting one of the world's most beautiful beaches, made famous in everything from Bacardi ads to the movie *Castaway*, and some very personable tortoises, the Seychelles is perfect for romantic honeymoons and family getaways. Add in five-star resorts and it's the ideal place to get away from it all.

BELOW Perfect for families or romance, the Seychelles is a taste of paradise

© Getty

> “You’ll find a romantic paradise like no other

North Island

As soon as you step off your private helicopter on the ultra-exclusive North Island, you’ll know you’ve entered a world of opulence. In the place where the Prince and Princess of Wales spent their honeymoon, you’ll find a romantic paradise like no other, where privacy and service are the watchwords. This private island offers 11 villas, each secluded in its own grounds, dedicated to the resort’s ethos of ‘Barefoot Luxury’. However, make sure that you book a stay in Villa 11, which sits on a granite cliff at the edge of the eastern beach. This palatial villa is accessed by a hidden entrance and to reach your personal beach, you’ll wander through a coconut grove and pass your very own waterfall; paradise indeed!

North Island is a conservation centre too, offering a sustainable, eco-option for the discerning traveller and you might even meet local resident, Brutus the turtle! For the ultimate in celebrations, you can book the whole island and enjoy a tropical hideaway with no distractions. Even better, the staff and resources will be at your exclusive disposal, with every experience, meal and moment tailored to meet your every wish.

Anse Source d’Argent

Considered by those in the know to be the world’s most beautiful beach, no trip to the Seychelles is complete without a relaxing day spent at Anse Source d’Argent. Found on the popular island of La Digue, where beautiful beaches aren’t in short supply, it’s become famed for its awe-inspiring granite rock formations, coconut palms, pristine beach of white sand and crystal-clear, perfectly warm waters. La Digue is accessible only by boat and if you find Anse Source d’Argent a little too busy for your liking, a private boat charter will take you on a tour of the island’s perimeter, where there are plenty more secluded spots to enjoy. It’s a great way to see the island on your own terms, with your own dedicated, knowledgeable guide.

Bird Island

A visit to Bird Island is an opportunity to relax and unwind among some of the most diverse, beautiful and unspoiled landscape in the Seychelles. As you approach the private island by light aircraft, you’ll catch your first glimpse of the coral cay surrounded by white sandy beaches, with a rich, green interior offering a tantalising promise of the animal and plant life to be found there.

The pace of life on Bird Island is wonderfully slow and the dedicated team there will be your guides on personalised nature trails and bird-watching trips. Children will love getting to know the giant Aldabra tortoises who roam the island and Esmerelda, the oldest tortoise resident, is always happy to meet new friends. While you’re there, don’t miss the opportunity to take a dip into the unspoiled ocean. You’ll swim with the marine life and, if you’re lucky, maybe even get to see juvenile green turtles feeding contentedly on the thalassia (turtle grass) sea beds. For a family getaway you’ll remember forever, Bird Island is the perfect choice.

BELOW Follow in the footsteps of royalty with a stay on North Island

© Alamy

The Maldives

PARTY ON A PRIVATE ISLAND OR EXPERIENCE AN UNDERWATER PARADISE; IT'S YOUR CHOICE!

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

Situated southwest of Sri Lanka and India, the Maldives is a string of beautiful coral islands that is a real jewel in the Indian Ocean. And even though it may be the smallest country in Southern Asia, the warm welcome and wonderful experiences that you'll enjoy there more than make up for the lack of real estate!

The Maldives is celebrated for its white sandy beaches and turquoise lagoons, which are filled with diverse marine life. There is dining to rival any major city and resorts that will take your breath away. What are you waiting for?

BELOW From nights on the beach to beds under the sea, the Maldives is a world of adventure

> "The Maldives is celebrated for its white sandy beaches and turquoise lagoons

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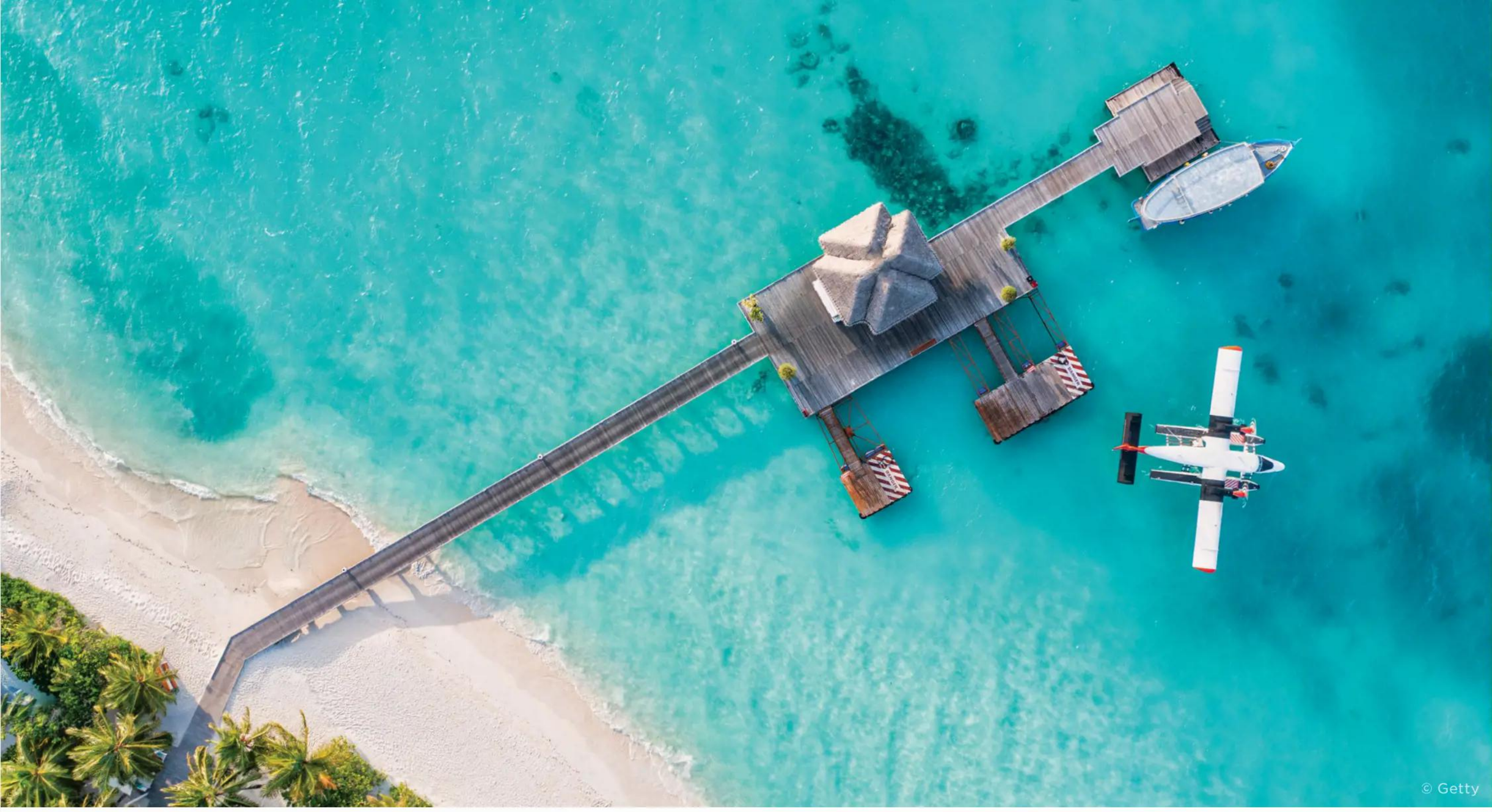

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The Muraka

If you're looking for the true pinnacle of Maldives hospitality, then the Muraka, at the Conrad Maldives Rangali Island resort, is waiting to welcome you. You'll enjoy a one-of-a-kind split-level luxury residence that has everything you would expect from a hotel of this class, with a private pool and dedicated butler service on call. What you won't expect is the bedroom, which is situated below sea level and boasts 180-degree dome walls and ceiling, meaning that you are entirely surrounded by the world beneath the ocean. With unmatched views and privacy, it's in a class of its own.

Emperor Explorer

Get away from it all in true luxury with a trip on the Emperor Explorer, a five-star hotel experience at sea. The Emperor Explorer is a world-class vessel that can be chartered for a private party of up to 26, who will settle into spacious accommodation that's as stylish as it is contemporary. Offering personalised seven- or ten-night trips,your dive guides will lead up to four dives a day, showcasing the stunning world beneath the waves. When your diving is done, you can dine under the stars or relax in the fully air-conditioned saloon, before enjoying one of the services on offer at the private on-board spa. Of course, the Emperor Explorer offers a full crew, including your very own gourmet chef!

DUAL DESTINATIONS

FORGET PACKAGE TOURS,MAKE IT PRIVATE!

If adventure is what you're after, there's little to beat chartering your own private plane to fly you from the Maldives to the Indian Himalayas. If money is no object, then why not make it a trip of a lifetime?

BE CASTAWAY IN STYLE

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SHIPWRECKED TO ENJOY A SANDBANK EXPERIENCE

Chill out in a Bedouin-style tent (with en-suite facilities and high-end toiletries) for a night under the Maldivian stars. Enjoy the premium castaway experience with a candlelit dinner served by waiters and live a more simple life for one lavish night.

Niyama Private Islands

If you really come alive when the sun goes down, you'll love the A-list experience on offer at Niyama Private Islands. Accessible by private seaplane to pre-booked guests only, the experience is split between two islands, one named Play and the other named Chill, and you can hop between the two to your heart's content. When night falls, however, there's only one place to go and that's in search of the chilled champagne at the exclusive underwater bar of Subsix, which can only be reached by private speedboat. Once you've finished soaking up the vibes, head up to Farenheit, the rooftop bar offering stunning views of the surrounding islands, and relax, ready to enjoy another day in paradise tomorrow.

ABOVE Use seaplanes to get a sense of the terrain

The Philippines

A TRIP TO THE PHILIPPINES IS A TRIP INTO THE EXOTIC

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

The Philippines is an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, situated between the glittering waters of the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. In the relaxed atmosphere of the Philippines, you'll find a world of wonderful contrasts and warm welcomes. In a land where smoking volcanoes rub shoulders with lush emerald rice fields and vast cities offer the epitome of modern living, you'll also experience diverse wildlife, secluded beaches and a place that is as bewitching as it is beautiful.

BELOW Take time to explore Palawan, a stunning natural paradise

Banwa Private Island

For the ultimate wedding venue, Banwa Private Island in Palawan could be the location of your dreams. Accessible only by helicopter or seaplane, this intimate island offers everything you could wish for. Whether you take your vows on the beach in a coconut grove or the secret and secluded mangrove venue, the island's dedicated team will plan every last detail. Set in the heart of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the resort promises guests that they will be in harmony with nature, with no tourists, no cars and no pollution. It even guarantees that your stay will be mosquito free!

A Culinary Extravaganza

Located in Manila, the Blackbird Makati is the place to be seen when dining out in the Philippines. This Art Deco restaurant is in the Nielson Tower, once part of the country's first commercial airport. The best tables are often booked months in advance and you can expect a menu blending contemporary gourmet tastes with traditional Filipino dishes. For the ultimate experience, enjoy private dining in the exclusive dining Cabin.

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Indonesia

WHETHER YOU SEEK CULTURE, ADVENTURE OR JUST RELAXATION, INDONESIA OFFERS THE LOT

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

As the world's largest archipelago, Indonesia is made up of more than 17,000 islands, including five major islands. Its diverse landscape offers everything from volcanoes to rainforests and idyllic beaches, while the islands provide a melting pot of cultural traditions and cuisines. With a population known for its hospitality and a selection of luxury resorts and exclusive experiences, it really is the perfect place to unwind.

ABOVE Make plenty of memories in the stunning land of Indonesia

Bali

After a day spent in a private luxury helicopter, viewing Bali's dramatic volcanoes, you might want to slow the pace with a romantic evening for two. Though Bali's Tanah Lot Temple is a tourist hotspot, you can enjoy a private sunset tour to soak in the history of this magical location as the sun slowly sinks into the ocean. As night falls, you'll then be whisked by private car to the luxury Hotel Tugu Bali, to enjoy a dining experience fit for royalty, with a menu made up of traditional Indonesian delicacies that date back to the days of the Majapahit Empire.

WHERE TO STAY

LUXURY IS STANDARD, ON LAND OR AT SEA

A stay at the Misool Eco Resort in Raja Ampat is the perfect opportunity to explore the reef that sits off this exclusive dive and conservation centre. If you'd prefer a life at sea, charter the Mutiara Laut, a seven-cabin luxury yacht that will take you on a bespoke tour of the islands. Built to the highest specifications, this vessel comes complete with a full roster of staff. Little can compare with eating a candlelit meal on deck, as you cruise the Indonesian archipelago!

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Mexico

FROM GOLF COURSES TO SCUBA PARADISES AND ANCIENT RUINS, MEXICO HAS SOMETHING FOR EVERY TRAVELLER

— WORDS **CATHERINE CURZON** —

Whether you're looking to immerse yourself in vibrant city living, want to while away your days on a secluded beach, or maybe you want an adventure in the deep rainforest, Mexico's diverse cocktail of landscapes, resorts and experiences has long made it a popular choice for the discerning traveller. From the Mesoamerican Reef to the Mayan ruins, artisanal markets and famed cuisine, it's a place like no other. Mexico is a favourite with tourists from all over the world, but for those who want a truly A-list experience, there's so much to choose from.

BELOW In Mexico, you'll have an experience like no other.

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Cabo

When you reserve the signature four-bedroom Villa Cortez at the One&Only Palmilla, you'll be following in the footsteps of some of Hollywood's biggest names. Situated on the sun-kissed shores of Los Cabos, while you're a guest at the villa you'll enjoy unparalleled views, your own gym and spa, a cinema for you and your guests, and an infinity pool. This vast villa is like having a private resort and of course, you'll have direct access to your own beach enclave, complete with full premium service to indulge your every wish.

ABOVE Relax and enjoy the scenery at One&Only Palmilla

The Gulf of Mexico and the Yucatan

The stunning Chablé Maroma is nestled on the palm-fringed beaches of Punta Maroma. If golf is your game, rub shoulders with the professionals at the nearby PGA Championship course, El Camaleon. If exploring the historic ruins and lush landscapes is more your style, book a chauffeur-escorted tour out to Chichen Itza and Valladolid. As the heat builds, plunge into the cooling waters of Cenote San Lorenzo Oxman. When you get back to your hotel the jewel of the resort awaits: its rejuvenating spa.

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

IT'S DESIGNER ALL THE WAY ON AVENIDA PRESIDENTE MASARYK

If shopping is your thing, you'll find brands including Gucci, Cartier and Chanel lining Mexico City's Avenida Presidente Masaryk. Known as the Mexican Fifth Avenue, it's also home to award-winning restaurants, so you can give yourself and your credit cards a rest.

THE ULTIMATE CONCIERGE

YOUR HOLIDAY, YOUR WAY

Luxury travel companies, such as Elegant Mexico, offer the ultimate concierge experience, arranging everything from private whale-watching tours to bespoke sea cruises or even putting Mexico's most famous chefs at your personal beck and call. Even better, they promise full discretion so the famous can relax, knowing the paparazzi won't come calling.

Yäan Healing Sanctuary, Be Tulum Hotel

Famed for its party scene and nightlife as much as for its beaches, Tulum might not seem like an obvious location to experience an ancient wellness ceremony; at Yäan Healing Sanctuary, part of Be Tulum Hotel, however, that's exactly what you can expect. While the spa holds shared temazcal ceremonies, you can book a private appointment for yourself and your guests, where the Yäan's Mayan healer will lead you through this pre-Hispanic ritual, which will leave you feeling purified, rejuvenated and ready to face the world with a new outlook. Guided by your healer, you will experience a traditional sweat lodge ceremony that many participants have described as a rebirth, leaving them with a sense of inner peace and a new, clearer outlook on life.

The Greek Islands

THE AEGEAN IS A DREAMY SETTING FOR A HIGH-END ESCAPE, WITH EACH ISLE OFFERING A DIFFERENT FLAVOUR

— WORDS **EMILY BROWN** —

Say 'kalimera' to Greece, a nation of more than 6,000 islands. It's a favourite of the well-heeled, with glittering blue seas ripe for boating and secluded beaches perfect for soaking up summer sunshine. Greece isn't short on blue skies, ancient history and hospitable locals, but it's the opulent accommodation to be found on Santorini, Mykonos, Crete and Rhodes that makes the islands a cut above the rest.

Wherever it is that you choose to stay on your Hellenic hideaway, you'll find something to float your boat at these four islands.

BELOW Greece has some of the finest vistas in the world

© Getty

© Getty

Rhodes

Rhodes' coastlines are lined with five-star resorts: some cater to families with on-site waterparks and private beaches, while others are exclusively for grown-ups and offer cosy cabanas on the sand. The Lindos Blu Hotel and Suites even has butler-service villas with a view of the ancient Acropolis of Lindos.

In Rhodes' main town, Ottoman architecture reigns supreme, but history lovers will enjoy the medieval Palace of the Grand Masters of the Knights of Rhodes – originally built by crusaders in the 14th century.

For a real treat, charter a private boat trip to Kalithea Springs at sunset for a swim and snorkel in a glass-clear cove, followed by a cool cocktail at the exclusive Art Deco beach bar.

Santorini

Santorini is postcard Greece. Though it draws huge crowds to its multi-stepped villages and sunset-watching spots, those looking for a touch more privacy can pick out their very own luxe suite, some of which are built inside a cave.

Canaves Oia has hosted guests from Jennifer Lawrence to some of the world's top influencers. The three-bedroom Canaves Villa offers pure Grecian luxury, with a long infinity pool, hot tub and two verandas to spread out upon.

Exploring Santorini without others getting in the way can be tricky, but top-end hotels make sure their guests enjoy a slice of paradise to themselves: most offer private yachting trips to coves and candlelit, caldera-view terrace dining just for two.

Crete

Greece's largest island, Crete is like a separate country and the island's luxury hotels are in a league of their own. For a boutique, edge-of-the-world retreat, book into the cliff-clinging Acro Suites. Those interested in Cretan history should check out the Domes Noruz – the palatial all-inclusive hotel is designed to look like a Venetian shipyards in the nearby city of Chania.

Cretans treat all their guests like VIPs, but those looking to splash a little cash can book onto an array of exclusive tours to get to know the island better. Delve into Crete's rich viticulture with a sommelier tour for two by Chania Wine Tours, where guide and sommelier Vasiliki takes guests to her village to learn about how Crete's iconic three products are made – wine, honey and olive oil.

Mykonos

Known for its sugar-cube houses, crochet aesthetic and legendary nightlife, Mykonos should be the first stop on any luxe-tripper's Greece itinerary – think all-afternoon lounging at the beach, before partying until the sun comes up. For high-rolling nightlife, book a private table or area with bottle service in Cavo Paradiso Mykonos – the open-air dancefloor and party pool have been serenaded by DJs David Guetta and Steve Aoki.

Jacqueline Kennedy first brought her understated glam to Mykonos in 1961, staying in the Mykonos Theoxenia hotel. Follow in her kitten-heeled footsteps and check yourself into a sea view suite with a private pool: they're the ideal place to immerse yourself in endless Aegean views under the shade of date palms.

LUXURY HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS

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