

AUTUMN/WINTER 2017

SUNDOWNER

Brooklyn born

A LOCAL'S VIEW OF WILLIAMSBURG

WILDERNESS WANDERERS

GO OFF THE GRID IN
SUDAN AND THE ARCTIC

DARK HORSE

UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES
IN THE IBERÁ WETLANDS

Abercrombie & Kent

OU **R**FORTE IS REVEALING HIDDEN GEMS



THE SECRET GARDEN, HOTEL DE RUSSIE, ROME.

An intimate restaurant treasured by the locals.
A little-known gallery full of delights. Nothing gives
us greater pleasure than sharing our knowledge.

Helping our guests live well is our life's work.
Let us introduce you to the experiences we have gained
in four generations of hospitality.



ROCCO FORTE
HOTELS

HOTEL DE ROME Berlin, HOTEL AMIGO Brussels, THE BALMORAL Edinburgh, HOTEL SAVOY Florence,
VILLA KENNEDY Frankfurt, ASSILA HOTEL Jeddah, BROWN'S HOTEL London, THE CHARLES HOTEL Munich,
HOTEL DE RUSSIE Rome, VERDURA RESORT Sicily, HOTEL ASTORIA St Petersburg. Future openings: Rome, Shanghai



DEAR TRAVELLER

Abercrombie & Kent's 55th year has been no less busy than our first, back in 1962. We've launched two new websites, of which we are very proud. These mobile-first sites are not only beautiful, but we've put the customer at the heart of how they work – making it easier for you to find your next villa or tailor-made holiday.

We've also launched a new Small Group Journeys product range for 2018. This line features 14 new, exciting tours that cover diverse destinations all over the globe. From page 54 to 59, you'll find details of two of these tours – one that delves into an ancient civilisation in Sudan, and another that will take a small group of travellers to one of the world's most remote reaches in the Arctic Circle.

On the following pages of this magazine, you'll discover the coolest places in Cape Town; that Oman is the perfect family holiday destination; that it's possible to swim with horses on the gaucho trail in Argentina... and that's just a snapshot.

Whether you decide to join one of my Inspiring Expeditions this year or opt to stay in one of my favourite villas from the collection, as always, we wish you happy travels...



Geoffrey Kent

Founder, Chairman and CEO
Abercrombie & Kent Group
Follow me on Instagram
[@geoffrey_kent](#)



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AKP is transforming maternal health in Nakatindi, Zambia



in the KNOW

Here's our scoop on the most exciting new hotel openings



AMANYANGYUN, CHINA

Not all heroes wear capes. When an ancient forest of thousands of millennia-old camphor trees and Ming and Qing dynasty buildings from 30 villages were threatened in Fuzhou, in China's Jiangxi province, by the construction of a dam, entrepreneur and philanthropist Ma Dadong decided to save them. This young multimillionaire, demonstrating a genuine emotional investment in his home province and its vanishing past, assembled a 100-plus-strong team of botanists, engineers, architects and master craftsmen to relocate the 10,000 trees and 50 houses to the outskirts of Shanghai, 700km away. Saving the landscape of his childhood took a decade but ultimately the efforts were successful, with approximately 80 per cent of the trees surviving the move. Among this new fairytale forest, some of the meticulously reconstructed Ming and Qing buildings will have a new lease of life and become an Aman resort, Amanyangyun, scheduled to open this autumn. Here, bisecting ornamental lakes, brick paths lead to traditional stone buildings, full of ornate wooden furniture, elaborate bamboo screens and modern conveniences – comfortable, beautiful and authentic. The showpiece of the architecture collection is named after the royal reading pavilion in Beijing's Forbidden City, Nan Shufang, and will play host to traditional Chinese cultural activities such as tea ceremonies and calligraphy. Now that's something to write home about.



DEPLAR FARM, ICELAND

Pioneering adventure outfit Eleven Experience has opened its sixth outpost in the far north of Iceland, on the whimsically named Troll Peninsula. Deplar Farm is a former sheep station turned remote retreat and has been transformed into a chic take on mid-century modern meets New England. There's a geothermally heated indoor/outdoor pool; spa complete with floatation pods; and a hardcore gym for the fitness fanatic types that gravitate here. This is also heli-skiing world central. Adrenaline junkies looking for a no holds barred snow experience come here to cut up the untracked interior of the peninsula during peak season (April and May). Runs average nearly one vertical kilometre on the Arctic Maritime snowpack and will likely never have been skied before. Olympic skier Aaron Blunch said: "Getting off the plane and hopping in the heli was the coolest thing I've ever done." But that's not all: Deplar Farm also offers sea-kayaking in the fjords; Icelandic horse-riding; whale-watching; surfing; and salmon and trout fishing on some of the best-stocked rivers in all of Europe. With all that on the cards, you'll be tired. Night-times are a little different in Iceland thanks to the region's Northern Lights and the rarely setting Arctic sun. Rooms are equipped with blackout blinds, cloud-like beds lined with the cosiest linens and curated playlists that will ensure you drift off into the soundest slumber. And wake up ready for your next day's adventure.



Deplar Farm, Iceland



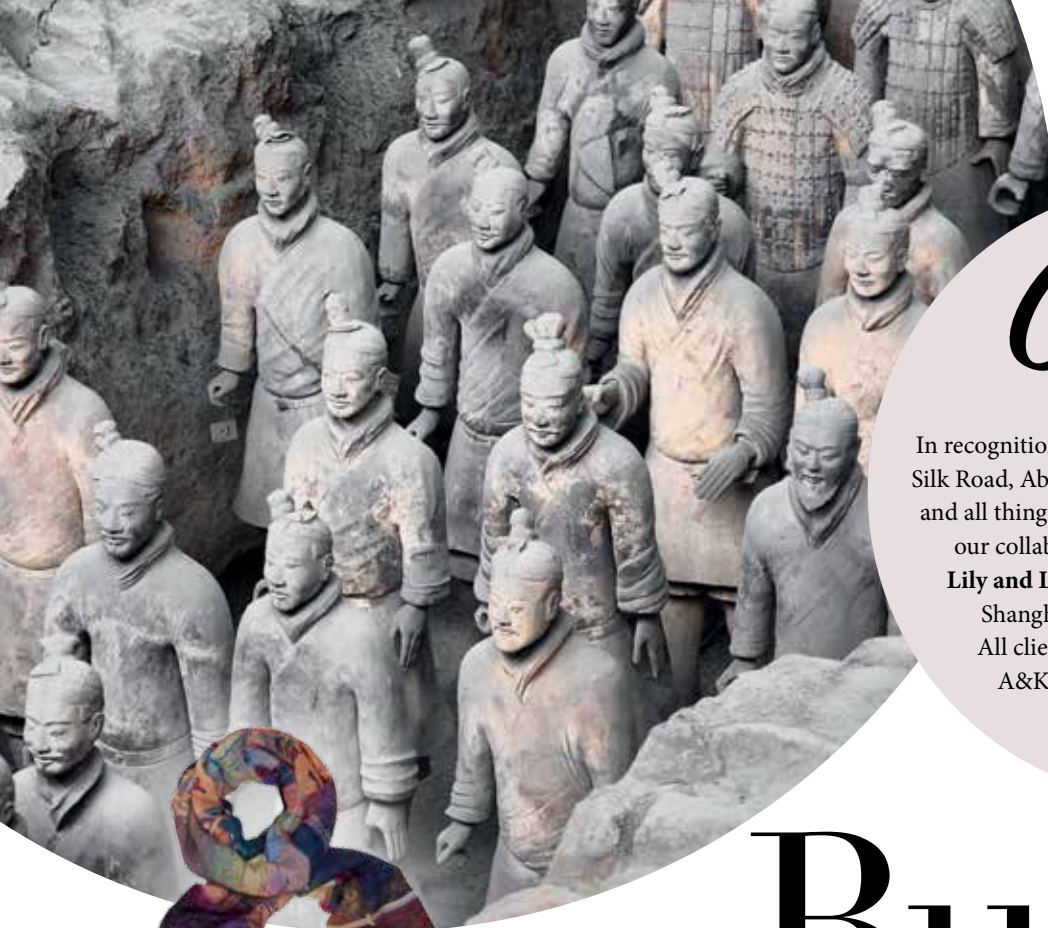
MACQ 01, HOBART, TASMANIA

Hats off to the taste-making team behind luxury hotel Saffire Freycinet, which set new standards when it opened on Tasmania's east coast in June, 2010. Seven years later, to the month, their new hotel MACQ 01 opened its doors on Hobart's waterfront and instantly made its mark on the city. The hotel sits on one of the earliest European-settlement sites in Hobart. This plot of prime Macquarie Wharf real estate is now surrounded by cafés, bars and art galleries. If you feel like taking to the water, MONA – the Museum of Old and New Art – is a 25-minute ferry ride away. MACQ 01's 114 rooms tell the story of Tasmania's fascinating past. Each room is named after a local influencer – from native people, explorers and heroes to inventors and convicts – and bears a plaque on the door. Resident 'storytellers' run regular tours around both the hotel's halls and the waterfront and Wapping district. Inside the pared-down, modern-chic rooms, by boutique agency Pike Withers, you'll find lots of leather and wood, with pops of bright colour. Standout pieces include the bedheads by local artist Troy Ruffels and the waste-material lighting by legally blind lighting designer Duncan Meerding.



OTHER OPENINGS IN 2017 THAT ARE ON OUR RADAR

Over the summer, Wilderness Safaris opened **Bisate Lodge**. Six luxurious forest villas, next to Rwanda's renowned Volcanoes National Park, offering gorilla tracking and eco-luxe all in one. This autumn **Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Andamans** will open on the picturesque Radhanagar beach on Havelock Island. The 12-hectare property will be comprised of 75 villas, inspired by indigenous Jarawa huts for a touch of authenticity. There's a new 310-room, 77-residence hotel opening in Muscat this winter. The **Kempinski Hotel Muscat's** five and a half kilometre stretch of coastline will ensure long views over a brighter than gold sandy beach. The **St Regis Cairo** will offer butler service to all guests when it opens in late 2017. The 39-storey hotel sits on the banks of the Nile, at the heart of old Cairo. **LUX* North Male Atoll** will turn the typical Maldivian trope on its head when it opens. Forget wood and thatch, instead there are space age-style white-pod villas, each featuring a spacious, fun 'reef terrace'.



China IN STYLE

In recognition of travellers' increased interest in the Silk Road, Abercrombie & Kent's Silk Road itinerary and all things China, we are delighted to announce our collaboration with specialist scarf brand **Lily and Lionel** on the creation of a run of 50 Shanghai skyline silk gifts (below, left). All clients booking travel to China with A&K will receive a gift of a limited-edition scarf, while stocks last.



Bush TELEGRAPH

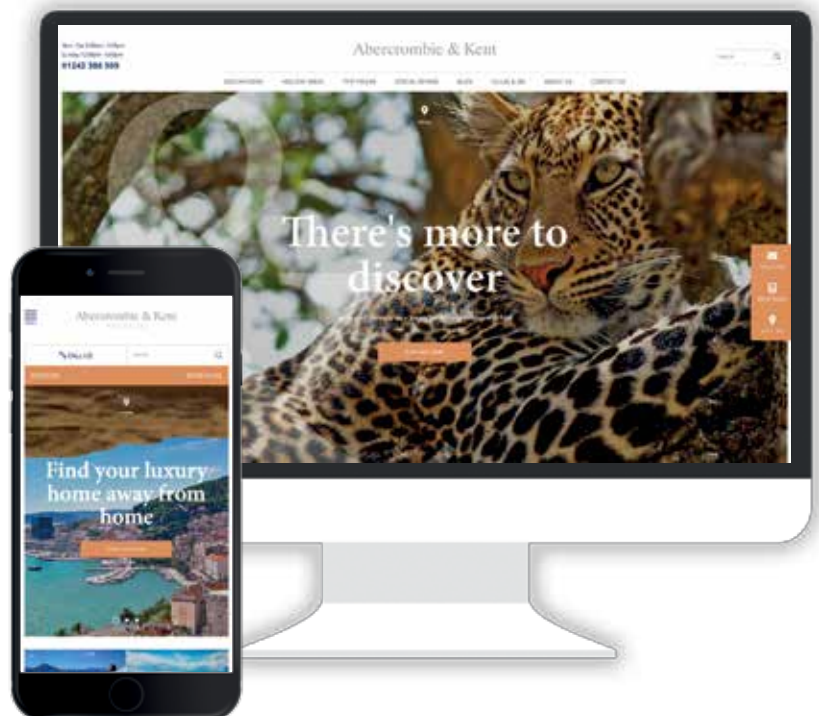
NEWS FROM A&K AND THE WIDE WORLD OF TRAVEL

A&K'S NEW WEBSITES **ARE LIVE**

Beautifully designed and featuring our favourite holiday ideas, travel tips, special offers and news, our new websites make it easy to choose your next tailor-made trip or villa holiday with A&K.

Built with mobile devices in mind, the websites adapt to fit your screen – whatever the size. Whether you're browsing on your home computer or using your smartphone on the train, we've worked tirelessly to make sure you get the same seamless experience.

Our destinations are brought to life through stunning images and video, and our handy Trip Finder tool allows you to find your perfect holiday or villa with ease. Our teams of specialists will be sharing their top tips, travel ideas and the latest news on our blog. We'll also be keeping the websites up to date with the best money-saving offers from our favourite hotels and villas around the world. Log on to **abercrombiekent.co.uk** or **akvillas.com** to start exploring for yourself.



INDIAN INSPIRATION

This autumn, we are delighted to be teaming up with leading homeware brand **Cox & Cox** to offer you the chance to win a sensational seven-night holiday to India and an amazing £1,500-worth of Cox & Cox vouchers. Bring your love of travel into your home. You'll be inspired by India's patterns, textures and vibrant colours during seven nights in New Delhi, Agra (right), Jaipur and Udaipur, and when you return home, you'll be able to shake off the post-holiday blues with a shopping spree at Cox & Cox – you'll spot nods to India in the A/W collection as well as Scandi and Moroccan-inspired designs.

Visit abercrombiekent.co.uk/competition/coxandcox and enter before 31 October.



NEW ROUTES & ADDITIONAL SERVICES



BRITISH AIRWAYS has partnered with luxury lifestyle brand The White Company to provide bedding and amenity kits for Club World passengers. These will debut on flights from London Heathrow to New York JFK and then be rolled out across the fleet throughout 2018.

From December, **BA** will also offer a weekly service from Manchester to Salzburg.

EMIRATES has launched new services from Dubai to Phnom Penh, touching down in Yangon, and direct from Dubai to Hanoi.

From the end of October, **EMIRATES** will operate a second daily A380 service from Birmingham to Dubai.

QATAR AIRWAYS has launched their new QSuite business class seating on flights between London Heathrow and Doha – providing a new level of luxury and privacy for travellers.



ON THE *big screen*

Agatha Christie was a passionate traveller. She especially loved the Orient Express, using the leading Paris-Istanbul service on numerous occasions en route to the Middle East – either to stay with friends in Iraq or join her husband on his archaeological digs. Describing it as “the train of her dreams”, she found nothing sinister on board. Inspired by a snowbound journey and headlines from the day chronicling the Lindbergh case, she used the train to stage one of the most famous thrillers of the 20th century, *Murder on the Orient Express*, published in 1934. The famous whodunit is coming again to the big screen. Kenneth Branagh (below) directs and takes on the role of Poirot in this star-studded version. Johnny Depp, Michelle Pfeiffer (below, left) and Penélope Cruz also feature as passengers stuck on a train in a blizzard. The Orient Express these days is called the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. Its main business is traversing between Paris and Venice, but the train does journey to Istanbul from Paris once a year (Christie's route in reverse). Book now for 2018, and for added Christie-esque luxury, stay in a new en suite Grand Suite. *Murder on the Orient Express* is in cinemas from 3 November.

Its main business is traversing between Paris and Venice, but the train does journey to Istanbul from Paris once a year (Christie's route in reverse). Book now for 2018, and for added Christie-esque luxury, stay in a new en suite Grand Suite. *Murder on the Orient Express* is in cinemas from 3 November.





HALF-TERM

— HERO —

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A SUNNY ESCAPE WITH
A PRACTICAL FLIGHT TIME, OMAN OFFERS SEA,
SAND, INCREDIBLE SIGHTS - AND A WHOLE LOT OF
SURPRISES, AS GEORGINA BLASKEY DISCOVERS





Sprinting on the sand dunes

Oman delights in springing the unexpected on a first-time visitor. An almost alien landscape that demands your attention, from moonscape to sand dunes, canyons to coral reefs, it's a land of contrast and culture, with an old soul and a new outlook. For heat-seekers like us who wanted a half-term break with guaranteed sunshine and a reasonable flight time, Oman promised to tick every box – sun, sea, sand, scenery and sights – but would it deliver?

What I hadn't put on my list was surprises, but within days I could have added it as my children unwittingly pushed their mental and physical limits. Seeing my eight-year-old son suspended perilously over a 1,000m-canyon edge, two kilometres above sea level, with a harness and hard hat his only protection, was a heart-stopping moment so thrilling I could barely look up to admire the scenery. And watching my at times hesitant 10-year-old daughter confidently leading our camel caravan up sand dunes to view the sunset beyond was lump in the throat pride-inducing. What started as a luxe yet typical family holiday quickly morphed into a journey of self-discovery for us all.

First stop was Muscat and the Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort and Spa, at the foot of the golden Hajar mountains. With 198 sea-facing rooms, Al Bandar is the central of three hotels that make up the resort, five minutes walk from all the restaurants, the kids' club, water sports and splash park. The numerous pools interconnect so you can swim through the resort, but if that feels too much like hard work, jump on an inflatable ring and let the lazy river waft you between activities. Sited on a secluded bay that is also a protected turtle nesting site, the hotel has a dedicated turtle ranger. One night after a fabulous meal at the Bait al Bahr seafood restaurant, our phone rang. It was Mohamed

the ranger, who told us: "There's a turtle on the beach laying her eggs." Springing out of bed, we ran, pyjama-clad, down to the sea to watch a majestic female hawksbill laying – a deeply moving moment to witness.

The desire among Omanis to preserve their country and culture while embracing tourism and future-proofing their nation's appeal was evident throughout our trip. Our first excursion with our Abercrombie & Kent guide and driver Quais was to Nizwa to see the historic fort. The oldest part was built in the 9th century, but the majority of what you see today was

“WHAT STARTED AS A LUXE YET TYPICAL FAMILY HOLIDAY QUICKLY MORPHED INTO A JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY”

created during renovations in the 1600s. It resembles a giant sandcastle and boasts all kinds of gruesome defence mechanisms, such as pitfalls, date-oil traps and arrow-slit windows. From there we drove through lush date plantations, past the pretty hillside village of Birkat Al-Mawz, before embarking on the 36-kilometre winding road to Jebel Akhdar, the green jewel of the Al Hajar mountain range.

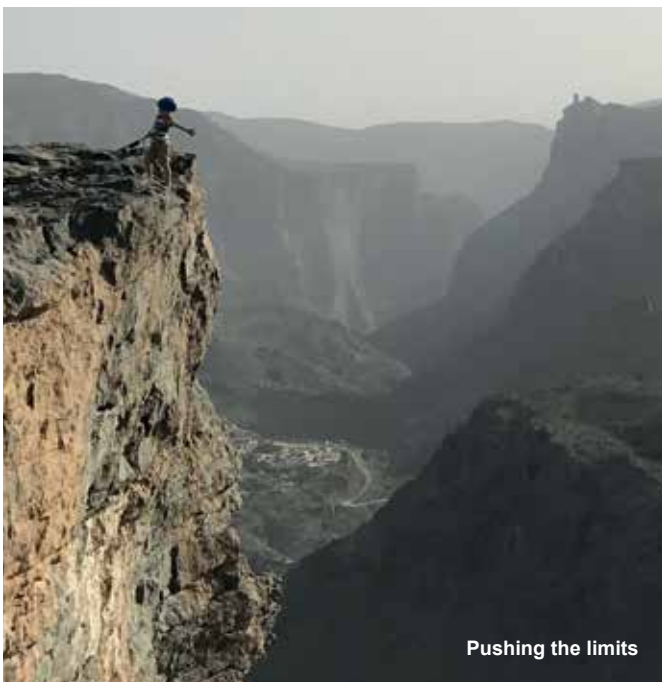
Perched on the curving rim of a great canyon, Anantara Al Jabal Akhdar Resort is an extraordinary location for a luxury hotel, where dramatic gorges, peaks, terraced fields and wadis

pepper the view. Contemporary Arabian rooms, some with private infinity pools, emphasise the splendour of Omani design and floor to ceiling windows maximise the vista. Activities include climbing and abseiling along the *via ferrata* route, where we could experience the thrill of dangling over the canyon's sheer drop, a first for my son and the birth of a new passion. With sunrise yoga on a suspended platform, guided hikes through ancient villages, mountain biking, archery and a cookery school including a spice-buying trip to Nizwa souk, this is a resort of fascinating experiences authentic to a unique location.

Following a comfortable night in the cool mountain climate, we set off to Al Sharqiyah Sands. More thrills awaited as Quais let the tyres down and took us dune bashing. Skidding and sliding up and down, the children shrieked with delight as we tumbled around. After a revitalising lunch at the Desert Nights Camp, a collection of semi-permanent tented suites, we mounted our camels (daughter at the helm!) and made the half-hour trek to our secluded tent in time to watch the sunset, a truly magical family moment for the memory bank. Canvas Club offers bespoke luxury camping in solitary locations and our tent was a spacious haven, decked with ornate rugs and high-quality bed linen, with a separate bathroom tent housing a hot water shower, basin and toilet. Our hosts, Sam and Jan, prepared a Middle Eastern feast which we ate in the three-sided dining pavilion, the stars our backdrop and wild camels our visual entertainment.

Just when we thought there was nothing in our stay that could top everything we'd seen and done so far, a boat trip revealed yet another side to this Middle Eastern marvel. A catamaran with Oman Sail to the Daymaniyat Islands opened up an underwater world of vibrant coral reefs, technicolour fish and more turtles. Jumping off paddleboards to swim and snorkel among the sea's bounty, it felt a far cry from climbing the canyon days earlier.

Mountains to coast, desert to ocean, nothing could have prepared us for the sites and surprises of Oman. As a family holiday that combines luxury hotels in ancient destinations with warm-hearted people and captivating history, Oman delivers with grace and style. ☺



Pushing the limits



History lessons made fun



Finding an oasis in the desert

| OMAN |

A&K's seven-night Classic Oman itinerary starts at £2,220 per person (based on two sharing, includes flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 703.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist



A&K VILLAS MAKING A SPLASH

THESE GORGEOUS VILLA POOLS ARE AWASH WITH STYLE, AND REDEFINING COOL OUTDOOR SPACES



Villa Paradiso, Sardinia, Italy

The beautiful pool at this island villa is carved into a mountainside in northern Sardinia's Costa Smeralda. The coastline is famous for its white sand beaches and some of the best saltwater swimming in the Med. The villa sits in a huge estate and is made up of six separate, roughly hewn stone buildings, some connected by glass walkways, some solo units. It's part *Flintstones*, part interiors magazine fodder. There is little not to love about the showpiece 25-metre infinity pool, where wide-reaching views of the wild surrounding hills make 20 laps feel effortless. Hop out and you can dry off in Sardinia's balmy heat on wooden sun loungers. Evening cocktails in the cosy grotto at the pool's edge are *de rigueur* and the perfect opportunity to breathe in the sunshine-tinted mountain air.

VILLA PARADISO, POA
FOUR BEDROOMS (SLEEPS 8)

Villa Kamy, Crete

The stuff of dreams, Villa Kamy's seemingly never-ending infinity pool stretches out to the sea. By day the views of the Mediterranean are bluer than blue. By night, with townscapes glittering in the distance, you can light up the deck with twinkling candles for a different take on Cretan perfection. The pool is as clean-lined and striking as the rest of the house. Villa Kamy is a thoroughly modern holiday home – all angles, white wall panels and horizontal windows in view-catching positions. It's the perfect jumping off point for exploring the charming town of Chania. Or simply laze around the pool, watching yachts idly tacking past – whatever floats your boat. Be sure to baggy the bedroom closest to the pool for both the kudos and easy bed-to-pool access.

VILLA KAMY, FROM £4,066 PER WEEK
FOUR BEDROOMS (SLEEPS 8+2)





The Caldera Estate, Santorini, Greece

The clifftop pool is a literal stone's throw from the Aegean at this super-chic villa in the southwest of Santorini, the most famous of the Greek islands. In this heavenly place, you can wander unhindered from indoor to outdoor leisure areas, from all-white, pristine interiors to multiple sleek stone terraces and chill out areas. Take the plunge in the pool or lounge on a daybed and enjoy the oranges and purples of the legendary Santorini sunsets over the famed caldera. These views make good eye candy for your Instagram feed, which we guarantee will be jam-packed in no time: #travelgoals.

**THE CALDERA ESTATE, FROM £27,848 PER WEEK
FIVE BEDROOMS (SLEEPS 10)**

Villa Almadera, Ibiza

Stretch out beside the alluring pool at Villa Almadera and admire a view that has been captivating A-listers, hedonists and sun-seekers for decades. Ibiza's natural beauty is present in all its glory here: native Sabina-pinetree forests and translucent azure sea. The villa itself is a magazine shoot-worthy mix of mid-century modern, Moroccan and contemporary Spanish. It's a tranquil retreat away from the White Isle's buzzing club scene. With the sunshine sparkling on the water, a dip will never have felt so peaceful.

**VILLA ALMADERA, FROM £11,017 PER WEEK
SIX BEDROOMS (SLEEPS 12)**



Can Masta, Mallorca

For a swim you won't forget in a hurry, dive into the pool at this show-stopping hilltop villa in Mallorca. Once an olive mill (in fact, the area's oldest), these days it's a lot less industrial and a lot more restful. The interior is a beautiful blend of modern and traditional, comfort and luxury. From the pool area's loungers, daybeds and hammocks, local towns set among tree-lined hills will feel a world away. If you absolutely must leave the pool – perhaps due to skin pruning – the villa isn't far from Puig de Maria, a picturesque former monastery, which has been leading pilgrimage-tourists along a winding route for centuries.

**CAN MASTA, FROM £5,481 PER WEEK
FIVE BEDROOMS (SLEEPS 10)**

For all villa holidays, we advise early booking. For more information or to discuss a 2018 reservation, call our villas specialists on 01242 547 705.

A full-page photograph of a tropical beach in the Maldives. A long wooden pier extends from a white sandy beach into the turquoise water, leading towards a row of overwater bungalows with thatched roofs. Two palm trees frame the scene on the left and right, their shadows cast on the sand and pier. The sky is a deep blue with a few wispy clouds.

PARADISE FOUND

SEEKING OUT THE BEST EXPERIENCES THE MALDIVES HAS TO OFFER,
THE A&K BEACHES TEAM HAVE BEEN ON LOCATION ON YOUR BEHALF.
HERE THEY MAKE THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WHERE TO STAY
ON THE INDIAN OCEAN'S 'GARLAND OF ISLANDS'

Gili Lankanfushi



Como Cocoa Island

There's one place in the world that always springs to mind when you hear the phrase 'barefoot luxury'. Picture postcard, with white sandy beaches stretching into a kaleidoscope of sea and sky blues. Welcome to the Maldives.

But while the beauty of the beaches is guaranteed, the luxuriousness of your surroundings a given, and peace and relaxation assured, it can be difficult to decide which of the many islands and resorts to choose from.

We recently sent our beaches team to the Maldives with the arduous task of road-testing the resorts – they've dined in the restaurants, relaxed in the spas, snorkelled with the sealife and dozed in the hammocks, all so that they can help find the perfect location for you. Here are just some of their recommendations.

FOR FOODIES: ONE&ONLY REETHI RAH

Trying to summarise in just a few short paragraphs the best food experiences in the Maldives is frankly an impossible assignment. But if we must, then so be it. The winner: One&Only Reethi Rah.

Where to start? Breakfast of course. With views out to North Malé Atoll's most perfect beach, the buffet choice is astonishing. Freshness is assured by a walk-in cold store abounding with fruit, fish and pastries, while a variety of cooking stations prepare hot dishes on demand. If that wasn't enough there is a healthy superfoods section – fresh juice anyone?

Within its Chinese temple-inspired design, Reethi also offers evening fare in the form of an innovative fusion of French, Asian and Italian cuisine, split across three dining areas – Earth, Fire and Aqua. Best described as exquisite.

Venturing further afield, the beautiful outdoor Botanica is laid out under a lantern-lit Banyan tree in the chef's garden. Offering an organic 'food to fork' experience, the menu promises to be fresh, healthy and bursting with an extravagance of taste.

Too much? Dial it down a notch at Tapasake, sampling modern Japanese cuisine while the reef sharks swish through the water beneath your feet. And did we mention the hotel's bars and private dining options? Simply put, the Reethi Rah offers an abundance of dining choices without equal in the Maldives.

"We had dinner in Tapasake and I have never seen a sharing platter like it. It was incredible, with so much variety and creativity. The dessert sharing platter was to die-for – an amazing display of fresh fruit, ice creams and macaroons"

KATIE NIBLETT

FOR HONEYMOONERS: COMO COCOA ISLAND

The sliver of a private island that is Makunufushi is home to the intimate charm of the COMO Cocoa Island resort.

Understated, it whispers rather than screams that it's the place for newly-weds to enjoy an upscale romantic honeymoon. Its 33 over-water villas, inspired by the traditional *dhoni* (Maldivian fishing boat), with their own private decks facing the Indian Ocean, are simply but elegantly furnished to create a soothing haven for peaceful, laid-back reflection.

Eschewing the multitude of activities boasted by other hotels, the resort's deft design helps the island feel unoccupied, further enhancing the sense of personal privacy and quiet.

Begin the day with yoga practice in the open-air pavilion on the sunrise side of the island. Then, after a hard day's snorkelling, reef watching or scuba diving (which is world class), pamper yourself at the COMO Shambhala spa.

Choose between private in-villa dining, watching the sunset, or put on your glad rags to experience fine dining at the Ufaa restaurant. Simply a wonderful place for the ultimate romantic honeymoon.

"I loved how personal, private and peaceful this resort was – we felt like the only people on the island most of the time. The quality of service is excellent and it feels as though nothing is too much trouble. If you want to escape everyday life and enjoy some 'you and me' time this is the place"

DANIELLE NAIRNE

FOR FAMILIES: SONEVA FUSHI

The 16-hectare Soneva Fushi is one of the original Maldivian fantasy hideaways. Comprised of 65 multi-bedroom luxury villas and private residences, it's hidden beneath a dense canopy of tropical foliage on the stunning Baa Atoll archipelago, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

Not content with pioneering eco-chic, the owners wanted to create an island of dreams – for all ages – so when you're searching for a Robinson Crusoe family experience, look no further. Managing to provide activities and experiences that foster an inclusive approach to families holidaying and enjoying their time together, there's even a slot in the schedule dedicated to 'Time with Mum & Dad'.

We'll gloss over activities such as the family picnic with guided snorkelling or the alfresco movie theatre Cinema Paradiso, and let's momentarily ignore the observatory where the only certified



Soneva Fushi



One&Only Reethi Rah



Huvafen Fushi



Gili Lankanfushi



astronomer in the country will help you roam the galaxy.

Instead let's go straight to the Den. The largest all-age children's zone in the Indian Ocean is accessed via a secret tunnel. It's a kids' wonderland featuring a pirate ship, LEGO room, jungle zip-line, water slide, trampolines and more. Older children will love the mocktail bar, the music room with instruments and DJ corner as well as arts and crafts and a hands-on kitchen for cooking classes.

If they're famished after all of that, there's an ice-cream parlour and a treetop, Swiss Family Robinson-style restaurant reached by a wobbly rope bridge. What more could any family need?

"One of our most popular hotels in the Maldives – and I can now see why. Two days in this resort and I had regressed back to my own childhood. There are just far too many fun things to do and the staff really know how to make sure kids have a ball"

SAM JACKSON

FOR ECO-WARRIORS: GILI LANKANFUSHI

Long gone are the days when being environmentally conscious ensured a rustic and distinctly basic holiday experience. At Gili Lankanfushi 'no news, no shoes' is the concept and 'leave your worries at home' is the rule. Combining environmental consciousness and conservation with the epitome of barefoot luxury, this may be one of the few places in the world where being good to our planet feels like a guilty pleasure.

The hotel itself is built from sustainable materials including responsibly harvested wood and the over-water villas blend serenely into their surroundings. Here, there's no need to worry about the 100-mile diet. This hotel has its own organic garden providing the majority of vegetables and herbs which the chefs blend with local delicacies guaranteed to give your taste buds a holiday all of their own.

Throw in some time with the on-site marine biologists and activities as varied as dolphin cruises, coral planting and extraordinary blue light night snorkelling, and it's impossible to not want to help preserve this piece of paradise.

"Make sure you visit the underground wine cellar where they produce their own chocolate and cheese – the long dining table in the centre is made from an old tree trunk that was washed up onto the shore of the island from the tsunami. And for afternoon relaxation there's nothing quite like whiling away the hours in one of the over-water hammocks scattered around the island lagoon"

LAURA FORDYCE

FOR CELEBRATIONS: FOUR SEASONS PRIVATE ISLAND RESORT AT VOAVAH

If you're looking for the ultimate place to celebrate in grand style, then we'd recommend the seven-bedroom Four Seasons Private Island Resort at Voavah. Located on the Baa Atoll, it comes with its own luxury yacht and exclusive marine territory.

Why do we rate it? Because there are no neighbours, no prying eyes and no limits.

Imagine creating your own mini Glastonbury or having a full-blown beach party with DJs spinning the music into the night. Or keep it cultural with string quartets and Maldivian dance troupes. The place is yours to do with what you will and The Four Seasons team claim they can organise anyone and anything as requested.

If you prefer food and wine to be the focal point of your merrymaking then let the Four Seasons team sate your appetite. From cocktails on



Gili Lankanfushi

board your 19m private yacht to tailored beach barbecues and lobster tandoor extravaganzas poolside, nothing is impossible. Hedonism at its finest...

"The beauty of this place is that the island is fairly untouched and feels completely natural and private as a result. It's like your own private jungle where you move through the leaves and branches as you walk around the island"

KATIE NIBLETT

FOR SPA & WELLNESS: HUVAFEN FUSHI

The Maldives is one of the world's ultimate destinations to get away from everything and everyone, and relax.

Huvafen Fushi offers it all. From crystal clear water to a paradisiacal snorkelling reef, gorgeous private powder-soft white sand beaches and stunning dining options, who could wish for anything more?

How about the world's very first underwater spa? Even those very well-travelled will be forced to admit that the Lime Spa is just a little bit special.

Imagine being pampered to your heart's desire with world-class treatments from renowned beauticians and consultants in a cocooned world of azure blue. It's impossible not to relax as you sink into your surroundings, floating on the spa beds lined with water, listening to the ambient wave music surrounding you and taking in the 360 real-life ocean view. If you avoid falling into a blissful sleep, marvel at all the marine activity from the secrecy of your relaxation pod. A serene heaven.

They say that life shouldn't be too hard. In the Lime Spa, it most certainly isn't.

"One of the highlights of my trip was feeding and swimming with the stingrays off the beach – and then seeing those same stingrays underwater while relaxing in the Lime Spa. The proximity and immersion with the sealife around you is quite simply breathtaking"

LAURA FORDYCE

| THE MALDIVES |

A&K seven-night Maldives holidays start at £5,155 per person (based on two adults sharing on a bed and breakfast basis, includes flights and transfers*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 708.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist

48 HOURS IN AMMAN

A&K'S OPERATIONS MANAGER IN JORDAN, **SALAM SHAQDEEH** SHARES HER INSIDER KNOWLEDGE ON WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'VE GOT TWO DAYS TO GET TO KNOW JORDAN'S CAPITAL

Ammann is a delightful mix of history and modern manners. Cool cafés and shops complement the city's ancient allure, sitting alongside exotic souks, medieval mosques and Roman ruins. No mere gateway to Petra, this unique Middle Eastern city is ready to surprise you.

Known as Philadelphia to the Romans, it languished until it became the kingdom's capital as recently as 1921. Originally built on seven hills, the metropolis sprawled in the 1920s and a tale of two cities began. The east is traditional and centred on Downtown while the west is more modern, complete with glass and steel buildings.

DAY 1 09.00

Start your day in Amman's Downtown at Jafra's restaurant. Enjoy a cup of coffee or tea with a slice of freshly cooked *manakeesh* (a flatbread topped with herbs and cheese or meat) at this cosy café. Located in the jumble of buzzing backstreets, this little gem is very popular with locals.

10.30

After breakfast, wander around the Citadel. This ancient complex is comprised of ruins from the Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad (661-750AD) periods. The columns of what was once the Temple of Hercules make a great spot for a keepsake photo. Located on one of Amman's seven original hilltops, the 360-degree views stretching all the way to the desert, alone, are worth the climb. Don't miss the small but perfectly formed Archaeological Museum. Its display includes pottery and statues that date back to the Palaeolithic period. The archaeological site also overlooks the Roman Theatre, which dominates the heart of Downtown.

12.00

From the Citadel, head downhill to the Roman Theatre. Built between 169 and 177AD, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, this theatre held around 6,000 of Philadelphia's residents. The *scaenae frons* (stage front) is relatively well preserved with two freestanding Corinthian columns from base to capital remaining in situ. The theatre is still in use as a cultural venue – the Amman International Book Fair is held here.

13.00

For a classic Levantine lunch, it's off to Kan Zaman restaurant. It's out of the way, on the outskirts of Amman on the route to the airport, but it's a firm favourite with locals and tourists alike. With excellent food and above-par service, you'll quickly realise why. Try the *kanafeh*, a cheese-based pudding covered in sweet syrup, and a pale ale from a Jordanian craft brewery.



15.00

A cave may be an unusual place to house a museum, but this afternoon visit the Asi Cave. At 2,000 square metres, the underground vault contains a fascinating collection of antiquities with pottery jars dating from the Bronze Age to the Byzantine era. There are many other curios on display to marvel at – everything from wine presses and statues to column fragments.

18.00

Rainbow Street is a cobbled road lined with modish shops and cool cafés. This thoroughfare is the city's most vibrant and is where Amman's residents hang out after a busy day. Grab a falafel sandwich from renowned Al-Quds restaurant before heading to Cantaloupe Gastro Pub for a drink on the bar's rooftop, while admiring views of the Citadel.

DAY 2

08.30

Animal lovers and racing fanatics will appreciate a trip to Jordan's Royal Stables. Arabian horses can be distinguished from other breeds by their proud necks, arched tails, pricked ears and large oval nostrils. The stable houses 250-plus horses. Considered national treasures, most of the occupants descend from seven mares owned by King Abdullah I. Tour the facility with the stables manager and visit the museum, then indulge with a special Champagne breakfast in the gardens of the Royal Stables, while watching a display performed by the occupants.

10.30

The Jordan Museum in Ras al-Ayn opened in 2014 and houses the country's most important archaeological finds – Jordan's share of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the lime plaster and reed Ain Ghazal statues, which date to 7,200-6,500BC, making them some of the earliest ever found. Afterwards head to Downtown's souks – packed with bargain-hunters searching the artisan and merchant stalls.

13.00

Fakhr El Din restaurant is a classy lunch choice. Set in the impressive ex-residence of a former prime minister, this Lebanese eatery is one of the best in Amman. Recommended dishes include the *galayet bandora* (a sautéed onion stew), *kibbeh neyyeh* (minced raw meat), and *mutabal* (a roasted aubergine dip).

15.00

Located in King Hussein Park, the Royal Automobile Museum is a must for petrolheads. The display of over 70 classic cars and motorbikes tells the tale of Jordan in modern times. All exhibits are from the personal collection of car-loving King Hussein, who ruled from 1956 to 1999. With any time left over, tour the west of the city – the distinctly modern side of Amman.

17.00

Jabal al-Weibdeh may be one of the oldest neighbourhoods in Amman, but it's also one of the trendiest. Its labyrinthine streets are where the city's foodies go. Have a Jordanian beer at never-empty Café de Paris and then head to Rakwet Arab café for a bite.

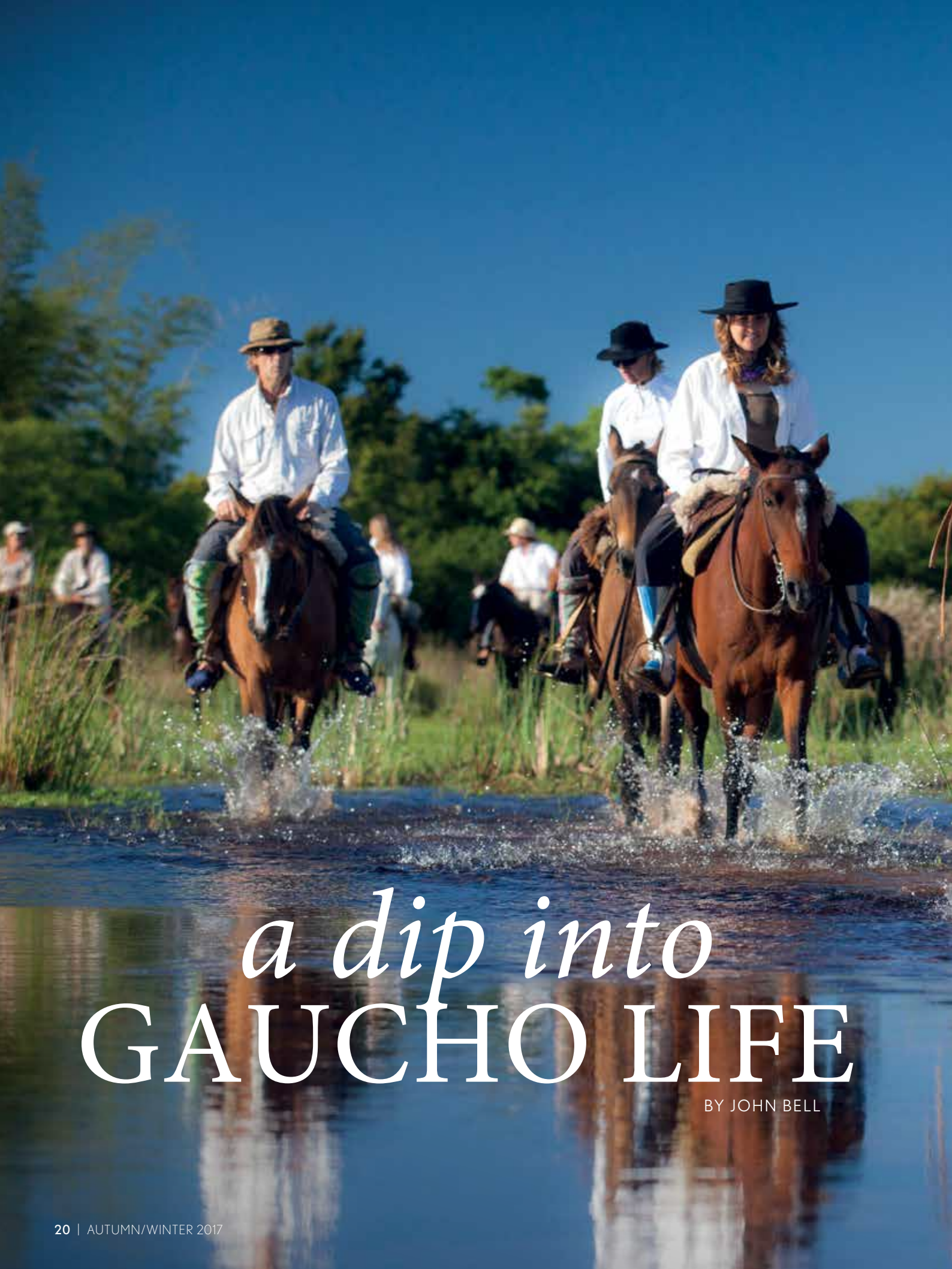
| AMMAN |

A&K's six-night
Classic Jordan
itinerary starts at
£1,695 per person,

a saving of £550 each (based on two sharing, flights included*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 703.



*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist



a dip into
GAUCHO LIFE

BY JOHN BELL



Bareback riding, canoeing with caiman and dinner cooked in an oil drum are just a few of the traditional experiences on Argentina's gaucho trail

It is, hands down, the most stylish swim of my life. I'm riding bareback and barefoot on a muscular chestnut horse as she forges into a deep channel in the sun-stroked Argentinian wilderness. As my mount begins an elegant equine paddle, I slip into the water, cling onto her mane and attempt to keep up.

Horse swimming is the climax of a recently launched gaucho experience across northeast Argentina's vast Esteros del Iberá. It's some backdrop for an adventure: the second biggest wetlands on Earth – a tangle of channels, lakes, pool and marshes covering an area of Corrientes Province equal to the size of Belgium.

Funded by the Conservation Land Trust (CLT) – a dynamic NGO founded by Doug Tompkins, the late conservation philanthropist who made his fortune with the North Face and Esprit empires – the trip harnesses the knowledge and skills of local Guaraní gauchos from three different *paraje* (hamlets). They unveil their remote world with horseback rides, canoe trips and plunges in the crystal-clear water.

It's pioneering stuff. While ecotourism is well established in Iberá's east, it's still in its infancy in the west, where the trip is part of a drive to provide an alternative income to hunting alongside a new appreciation of the wetlands and its wildlife. This is a rare opportunity to be an early visitor to a spectacular and untarnished world.

After a night in one of Concepción's three rustic-chic boutique hotels, we drive along dirt roads to El Transito, the *estancia* (private estate) bought by CLT as a protective buffer for the wetlands and new entry point to the lush interior. In the weather-hardened hands of Carlito Leiva from Yahaveré – a *paraje* on one of Iberá's forested islands – we set off under a sweeping cyan sky. It's instant immersion in a natural wonderland with ostrich-like giant rhea, sheep-sized capybara and sharp-snouted caiman.

“

AS MY MOUNT BEGINS AN ELEGANT EQUINE PADDLE, I SLIP INTO THE WATER, CLING ONTO HER MANE AND ATTEMPT TO KEEP UP

”

And then there are the birds. Incredible birds. The wetlands are home to 350 species and within a short time, we've spotted the great kiskadee's bright yellow chest and black eye band, ringed kingfisher's gorgeous blue head and savannah hawk's copper plumage. This is twitcher heaven.

Although there's a fair amount of saddle time, you needn't be an experienced rider. Carlito assesses my standard – lamentable – and matches me with the calm, sure-footed Alazana. After a couple of hours at a stately *passo* pace, we're passed to Carlito's brother, Rodolfo, for a serene canoe ride. Using a long bamboo

pole, he glides us within breathtaking proximity of a two-metre caiman and directly above pancake flat raya fish with their serrated tails and upturned noses.

The operation appears seamless. A picnic lunch and we're ready for new horses courtesy of Omar Rojas from the second *paraje* of Ñu Puy. Our target is a thatched mud-floored straw shelter for a night on a traditional camp bed. Forget high-thread count Egyptian linen – this is the luxury of authenticity. As we watch a molten gold sunset, Omar unsheathes his foot-long blade. “Around here,” he growls, “a man without a machete is like a policeman without a gun.”

Given such sentiments, it's unsurprising to find he prepares a red-blooded supper: a slab of pork, tyre of chorizo and rack of ribs. Eleven hours later I join him for breakfast: a slab of pork, tyre of chorizo and rack of ribs. I could get used to this.

It's high-octane fuel. We have another two-hour ride and three-kilometre canoe trip to reach the island for swimming – the traditional method of moving cattle off the wetlands – where I'm passed to Chopé, a gaucho from the third and final *paraje* of Carambola. As I swim alongside my new horse next to Jorge Mazzochi, the wetland naturalist and trip coordinator, Chopé canoes behind: a timeless Iberán scene.

With thick reeds to one side, snorting, rasping filly to the other – swimming horses are anything but quiet – I glance underwater to watch the cycling motion of her powerful legs. It's simply mesmerising. A kilometre and 20 minutes later we reach shallower water where my mount stands and I pull myself onto her back. One of the strangest, most exhilarating dips of my life is over.

On our final evening, Jorge somehow conjures up a gourmet meal on a small wood fire inside an oil drum. It's fabulous fun but things are about to get a lot more luxurious. On the other side of the wetlands I spend two nights in the CLT's Rincón del Socorro. The gloriously restored, late-19th century *estancia* sits on the conservation frontline, its cattle removed, its land transformed into a nearly 30,000-hectare reserve – home to the largest rewilding programme in the Americas. In the hands of expert guides, I watch pampas deer and tapir in the lengthy process of being reintroduced into Iberá's wilderness.

It just leaves a spectacular drive through Misiones Province, crossing into Brazil where Belmond's elegant Hotel das Cataratas overlooks the widescreen grandeur of Iguazu Falls: the final drops of a magnificently wild, watery trip. ☺

| ARGENTINA |

A&K's five-night Horseback Swimming in the Wetlands itinerary starts at £1,565 per person (based on two sharing, includes flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 701.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist



Equine waterway



Riding skills are not essential



A traditional canoe



The real deal





Mountain HIGH

BHUTAN MAY HAVE SHUNNED THE OUTSIDE WORLD
FOR 400 YEARS, BUT IT'S NOW EMBRACING TOURISM.
BRANDON CLEMENTS HEADS TO THE HILLS TO UNCOVER
THE CHARMS OF THIS HIDDEN HIMALAYAN KINGDOM

Taktsang Palphug Monastery, the 'Tiger's Nest'

In the vertiginous mountains of the Himalaya lies a small independent kingdom that shunned the outside world for centuries before its borders were opened by a progressive young king in 1952. Suspended in time before tourists started trickling in during the 1970s, Bhutan is a land of devout Buddhism and stunning natural beauty. Cradled on the mountain range's southeastern slopes, the peaks have acted as a natural barrier against modernity, but times, they are a-changing in Bhutan.

Adventurous souls have had the country in their sights for some time, but a visit by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge last year raised the country's international profile. The royal patronage put Bhutan on many a bucket list.

Getting to the country requires a little effort. There are no direct flights from Europe, so an overnight stopover is required. As a lover of all things Indian, I opted for a night in Delhi. The early morning flight to Paro International Airport is one of the most scenic you can take – soaring over peaks including Everest, Lhotse and Makalu before skirting past India's highest mountain, Kanchenjunga.

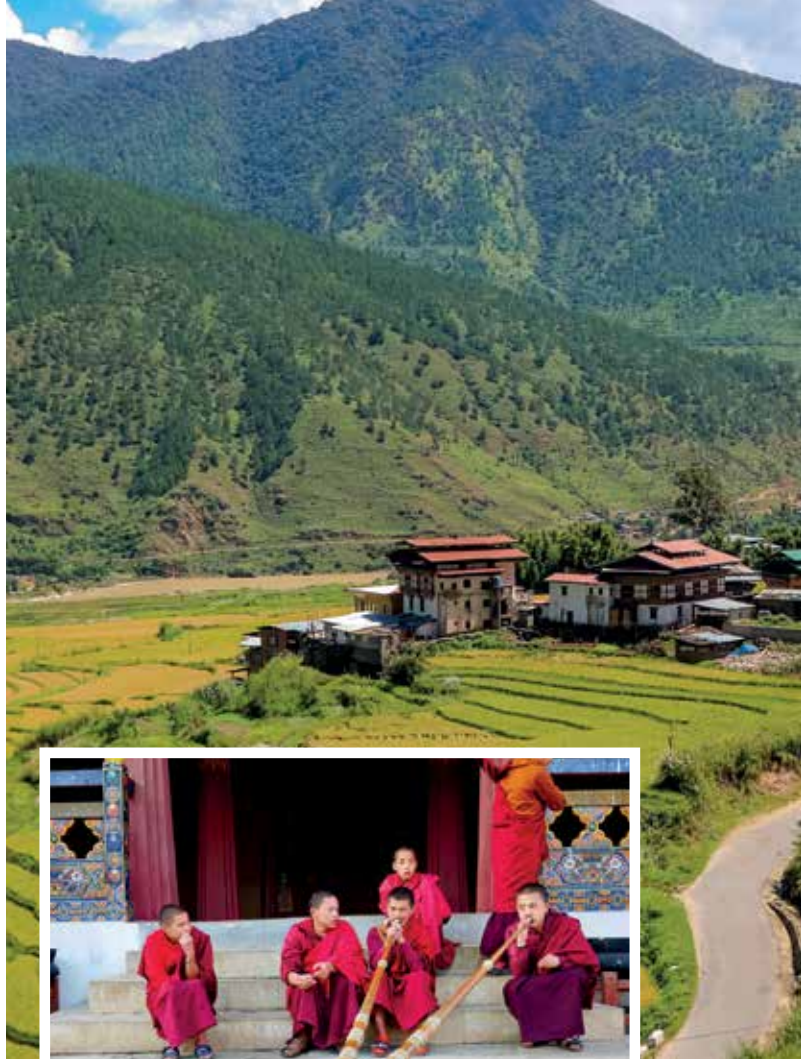
Bhutan is a country like no other. That much is obvious right away. Most Bhutanese wear traditional dress – *gho* for men and *kira* for women. The air is crisp and fresh. The airport is more hilltop manor house than commercial airfield. The surrounding valley is sparsely populated with densely forested hills.

Thimphu may be Bhutan's biggest city but it seems more like a large village or small town. There are no real crowds to speak of, hardly any cars on the road, and a lone policeman with white gloves and a whistle directing the cars and bikes at the 'busiest' junction. This is the only capital in the world without traffic lights. Vehicles stop for pedestrians to cross the road and everyone drives at a stately pace – all very civilised. Memorial Chorten, also known as The National Monument, is the city's most prominent landmark, with its bright golden stupa visible from most of central Thimphu. Pilgrims come in the morning, daytime and evening to walk around the central stupa reciting their mantras and tightly grasping their *malas* (Buddhist prayer beads).

“BHUTAN IS A COUNTRY LIKE NO OTHER. THAT MUCH IS OBVIOUS RIGHT AWAY”

Less than four and a half hours from Thimphu lies the town of Gangtey. Nearby is the 17th-century Gangtey Monastery – a vision in gold, white and red. This is Bhutan's largest *Nyingmapa* (school of Buddhism). Maybe I shouldn't admit to having a favourite monastery (is it bad karma?), but this is mine. It's not the biggest, it's not the most impressive, but the ambience is simply unrivalled.

In a typical scene, little novice monks were playing mischievously outside the large wooden doors of the entrance. As we walked through the main courtyard, a small group of older monks casually chatted and practised playing Tibetan



Monks playing Tibetan horns

horns. Their deep and haunting sound reverberated around the monastery grounds.

The next morning, I donned my walking boots to hike through the valley below. A blanket of mist covered most of the valley but as the sun rose and burned it away, the valley's pine forests, watercourses, farmhouses and waterwheels became visible. The reward for this early morning hike – a breathtaking view of the Phobjikha Valley. At walk's end, we stopped at the Khewa Lhakhang monastery, its grounds peppered with prayer flags fluttering wildly in the strong wind. Finally, a visit to the crane observation centre run by the RSPN (Royal Society for the Protection of Nature). Black-necked cranes are revered here, celebrated as messengers from heaven and a symbol of peace and longevity. During the winter months, Phobjikha Valley is home to over 400 of these endangered birds.

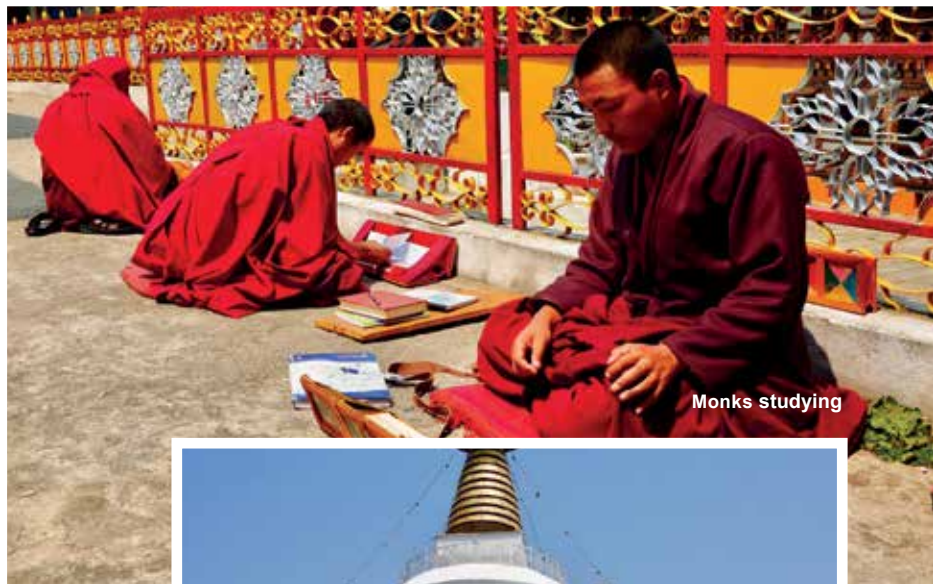
Moving on to Punakha signals a change in climate. The area sits at 1,300 metres above sea level and the weather was positively balmy compared with Gangtey. A big draw for people in Punakha is to visit the Chimi Lhakhang Fertility Temple. To reach this site, you take a dirt road, walk through a wheatfield and cross a babbling brook. En route, as if you couldn't guess why pilgrims flock here, local houses are decorated with fertility symbols on their exterior walls. In the temple's inner sanctum sits an altar of goddesses – garlands and offerings strewn at their feet – with women praying fervently and monks striking them on



Punakha Valley seen from Lobesa



Traditional dance



Monks studying



Memorial Chorten, Thimphu

the head with wooden phalluses. After Chimi, size might matter to you.

Punakha Dzong is second largest *dzong* (fortified monastery) in the country. It's also the second oldest and arguably the most beautiful in Bhutan. It served as the capital of the country from 1637 to 1907, and the first national assembly was hosted here in 1953. In 2011, the William and Kate of the Himalaya got married here when besotted King Jigme wed commoner Jetsun Pema.

Finally I journeyed full circle back to Paro. Although not quite as striking as Gangtey or lush as Punakha, Paro is nonetheless beautiful. The town's focal point is the Paro Rinpung Dzong. At night, it is lit with thousands of lights covering the large buttressed walls that tower over the town below.

The real highlight of a visit to Paro, though, is trekking to arguably the most iconic sight in all of Bhutan, the Taktsang Palphug Monastery, more commonly referred to as the 'Tiger's Nest'. The best way to experience the temple is to make like the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and walk from the valley bottom up to the Tiger's Nest itself. Although not a tough walk, you go from 2,200 to just above 3,000 metres in a short time and the altitude can be felt as you reach the top. Thousands of prayer flags cover the trees and barriers on the trail to the summit and once at the main viewpoint, we marvelled at this magical temple up close. Started in 1692, it is built on the spot where Guru Rinpoche (the second coming of the Buddha) meditated in the second century. He reached this hallowed spot on the back of a flying tigress. I, on the other hand, took shanks' pony. Regardless, it's an extraordinary place – like Bhutan itself. ☺

| BHUTAN |

A&K's nine-night Classic Bhutan itinerary starts at £4,025 per person (based on two sharing, including flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 755.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist

HERE BE DRAGONS

THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO INDONESIA THAN FAMOUS HOLIDAY HOTSPOT BALI. FROM UNESCO-LISTED TEMPLES AND GIANT LIZARDS TO SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST LUXURIOUS HOTELS, WE BRING YOU OUR TOP REASONS TO VISIT THIS VAST ARCHIPELAGO. BY **ALICIA DEVENEY**

Indonesia has it all – azure seas, sun-bleached sands, tropical jungles, a rich cultural heritage and some of the most luxurious accommodation on the planet. The country is synonymous with its tourism hotspot island, Bali, but as the Obama family illustrated when they holidayed here this summer, there's a lot more to discover in this huge archipelago. Indonesia runs across the equator for 5,100 kilometres, from the tip of Aceh in the northwest to the eastern edge of Papua. Made up of 13,466 islands, Indonesia is as diverse as it is enchanting. No two places are the same, so from the temples and art scene in Yogyakarta to the underwater paradise of Raja Ampat, let's dive deep into Indonesia with our favourite reasons to visit...

Yogyakarta and its art scene

Yogyakarta on Java Island is Indonesia's cultural heartland – it is the birthplace of some of the nation's most famed traditional arts, including batik and shadow puppetry. There's a modern thriving arts scene here too, which excites collectors and is worth exploring. Artists such as Nyoman Masriadi and Eko Nugroho are based here. Jogja Art Festival, inaugurated in 2011, has garnered international attention. This year's fair was held in May and June and showcased hundreds of works by 73 local and international artists.

Borobudur

Less than an hour's drive from Yogyakarta, lies UNESCO World Heritage Site Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple. It may be less well known than Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Bagan in Myanmar, but these three temples are Southeast Asia's most spectacular sacred sites. It sat relatively undisturbed under volcanic ash and vegetation for 800(ish)

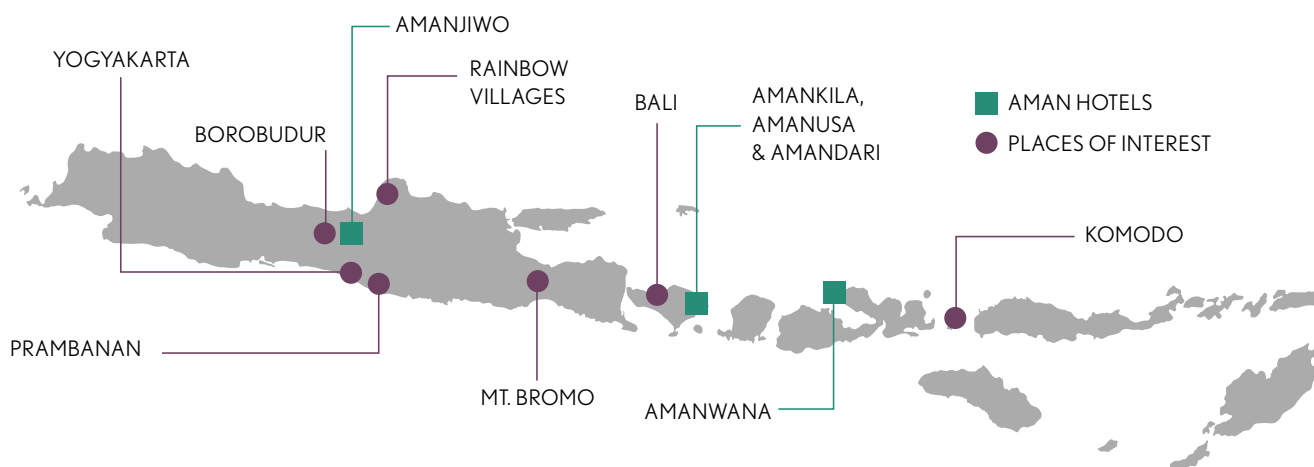
years, until its rediscovery by British lieutenant governor Thomas Stamford Raffles in 1814. Borobudur was constructed between the 8th and 9th centuries, before the majority of the population converted to Islam. This 56,600-square metre temple is a stepped pyramid with three major tiers, each representing a stage on the way to enlightenment. If you join pilgrims at Borobudur walking up the monument to the stupa at the top, your smartwatch will have clocked five kilometres. If you're visiting around May time, Waisak is the holiest day in the Buddhist calendar and at its most spectacular at Borobudur, where thousands of pilgrims and saffron-robed monks arrive on foot to see the full moon rise over the temple.

Prambanan

If you aren't templed out, Hindu site Prambanan is also just outside Yogyakarta. Listed by UNESCO in 1991, Prambanan was built in the 10th century, and is made up of a complex of 240 temples. It is the largest site dedicated to Shiva in the whole of Indonesia and the best remaining example of Java's period of Hindu culture. The overall complex includes Buddhist temples, proof of past religious peaceful cohabitation. There are smaller temples around Yogyakarta too, such as Pawon, Mendut, Plaosan and Kalasan.

Komodo dragons

Nature doesn't come in much stranger packages than the fearsome Komodo dragon, the world's largest lizard. They live on just five Indonesian islands – Flores, Gili Motang, Komodo, Rinca and Padar. Males weigh up to 90kg and possess a toxic bite – Komodo dragons can and will hunt far larger animals. These prehistoric-looking beasts inspired the legends of King Kong's lizard nemesis.



Java's volcanoes

Indonesia might be one of the most populous countries on Earth, but there are plenty of places to escape the hustle and bustle. There are 12 national parks to explore on Java and you can even climb volcanoes, including Mounts Bromo and Merapi. High places are considered holy in Indonesia – the higher you go, the closer you come to nirvana. Mountains in these islands are considered geological stairways to heaven.

The rainbow villages

There is little doubt that Instagram is changing tourism. Now seven years old, the photo-sharing platform has 700 million active users uploading 60 million new photos per day. We have an appetite for imagery and it's influencing our travels. The social media savvy residents of the towns of Kampung Pelangi (formerly known as Kampung Wonosari) in Randusari, Kampung Warna Warni and Kampung Tridi in Malang, and Kampung Kali Code in Yogyakarta have taken note of this phenomenon and are using it to their advantage. These once very ordinary towns are now Instagram sensations. Buildings have been given a colourful makeover – every inch painted in stripes, spots and blocks of colour. While the rainbow villages may never be able to compete with the world's most Instagrammed places, such as the Colosseum in Rome and New York's Brooklyn Bridge, they'll add a riot of colour and touch of whimsy to your Insta-feed.

Raja Ampat

Raja Ampat remains one of the hottest destinations for diving on Earth. It's where those in the know go to scuba, snorkel and surf. Its name means four kings and refers to Waigeo,

Views of Borobudur from Amanjiwo

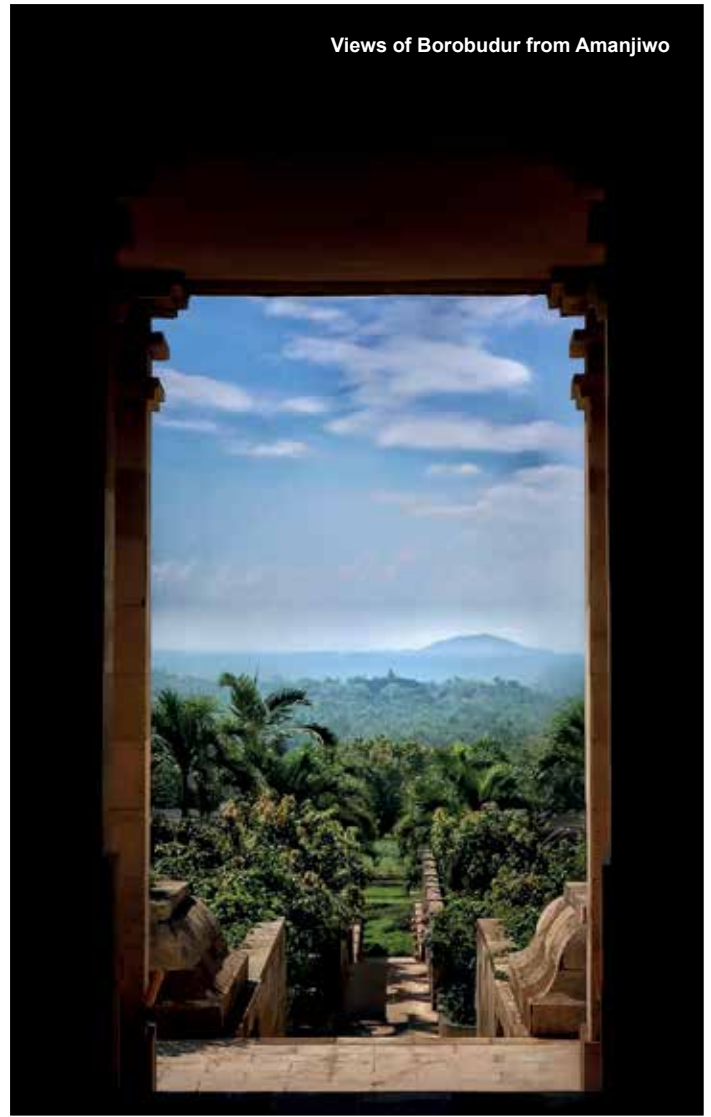


Image: Stephanie Budiman Instagram @stephaniebudiman



Gili Lawa Island



Raja Ampat

Salawati, Batanta and Misool. The region is comprised of these four big islands and over 1,000 small atolls, isles and islets spread across 40,000sqkm just off West Papua. The region has the world's greatest coral-reef biodiversity by area. A veritable El Dorado for divers, these reefs are home to roughly 1,000 known coral species as well as more than 1,200 types of reef fish. The Aman hotel group's 32-metre coastal cruiser, the elegant, black-hulled *Amanikan*, will be plying the waters here from October to December 2017. Meanwhile *Amandira*, a two-year-old, two-masted, 52m phinisi vessel, which was handcrafted by the Konjo tribe, will be exploring the reefs and shoals in late November and December 2017. Both boats can be privately chartered throughout the year.

And, of course, Bali

Even the most world-weary Asiaphile still loves Bali. It's Indonesia's own Island of the Gods. People may go elsewhere – the perennial Southeast Asian question is, where's the next Bali? – but whatever other destinations the cool hunters close in on, Bali always pings on people's radars. It's serene and welcoming. Ubud is the island's artistic hub. Full of galleries, cafés and small temples, its charm and artsy scene were attracting the likes of Noël Coward and Charlie Chaplin over 80 years ago (they were travelling together – just imagine the banter). East Bali is where some of the island's most spectacular views are to be found – surf-pounded black beaches and unspoilt coconut groves abound. Bali's mother mountain Gunung Agung – a three kilometre-high volcano – towers over the region. There's ex-pat-magnet Seminyak, perfectly preserved villages in Tenganan and gorgeous golf courses in Nusa Dua – Bali has something for everyone. ☺

| INDONESIA |

A&K's 11-night Indonesia with Aman itinerary starts at £3,150 per person (based on two sharing, includes flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 895.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist

The amazing Amans

The Aman hotels form, arguably, the most exclusive hotel chain in the world. The company pioneered luxury boutique resorts, the first of which was in Southeast Asia – Thailand to be exact. Devotees of this hotel brand love the space, privacy and service these hotels provide. If you're looking for a transformative experience in an awe-inspiring location, look no further. From Hindu temples to Buddhist shrines, pristine wilderness to protected waters, explore the possibilities at Indonesia's five Aman resorts.

At the heart of central Java, you'll find **Amanjiwo** (meaning peaceful soul). Surrounded by lush forests, volcanoes, rice paddies and lakes, this 36-suite boutique resort is very nearly as impressive as its neighbour, Borobudur.



Amanjiwo



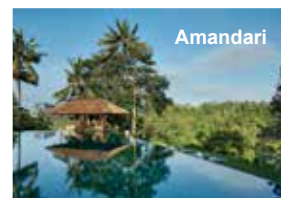
Amankila

In East Bali, cliffside **Amankila** is one of Indonesia's finest resorts. It's balanced on a steep hillside, overlooking the Lombok Strait. 2017 marks the property's 25th anniversary – a celebratory calendar will run until the end of the year to mark this milestone.

Just 10 minutes from the

creative hub of Ubud, **Amandari**

was the original world-class resort on Bali. Designed in the style of a traditional Balinese village, the resort is the perfect base for exploring Bali's culture, and guests are encouraged to venture beyond their loungers. Temple ceremonies, gamelan



Amandari

performances, village festivals and the resort's full moon celebrations are all there to immerse yourself in.



Amanusa

Amanusa is a secluded, frangipani-scented retreat set among the emerald-green rice paddies of Bali's southern peninsula, Nusa Dua. It overlooks the rolling

fairways of Bali's National Golf Club. Guests enjoy priority reservations for tee off on the club's fairways.

The wild hideaway of **Amanwana** is located on Moyo Island, a nature reserve off the coast of Sumbawa.

Take to the water to observe a coral-reef ecosystem teeming with colourful marine life, then head inland to search out a unique mix of jungle wildlife from deer to wild boar to the macaque monkey, and a variety of spectacular bird life.



Amanwana

AMAN

SOMETIMES THE KEY TO THE PERFECT HOLIDAY IS HAVING IT

ALL DONE FOR YOU.

IT'S WHAT UNLOCKS THE DOOR TO

rest and relaxation.

AT OTHER TIMES THOUGH,

**you don't want us
to hold your hand.**

YOU WANT AUTHENTICITY, TO

immerse yourself

IN A DESTINATION. YOU WANT US TO GIVE YOU

THE SPACE AND TIME

TO EXPLORE, ALBEIT WITH OUR

unparalleled access and insider knowledge

BACKING YOU UP.

On the following pages, we've chosen some hot right now destinations and served up a taste of our insider info. Discover where's cool in Cape Town; after-dark rooftop spots in Bangkok; and how to live like a local on the east coast of America. ☺



Cool Cape



BY FRANCISCA KELLETT



As a travel editor, I shouldn't pick a favourite place – it's just not the done thing – but when it comes to Cape Town, I have to stick my hand in the air and say: "Yes! This is it!" Cape Town is, no question, one of the most beautiful – and most fun – cities on the planet. It has wild beauty with its towering mountain and off-the-scale beaches. It has brilliant food and some of the best wines in the world. It has friendly, laid-back locals who welcome you with open arms. And it is having a moment, right now, with a hip arts and foodie scene that's worth crossing the world for. Here's what to see while you're there... ☺

Cape Town in all its glory



Clifton

THE CITY BOWL

Cape Town's city centre, a grid of grand colonial buildings, stretches down from Table Mountain towards the Foreshore. Long Street and Kloof Street have ever been home to its most buzzing bars and restaurants, but top of the current hip list is Bree Street, a colourful drag of Victorian townhouses. Up towards the top end of the road are funky boutiques, including Missibaba (boho-chic handbags), Kirsten Goss (local, handmade jewellery) and Skinny laMinx (bold geometric fabrics). Put up your feet (and down your bags) with a coffee from Jason's Bakery, or go for something stronger at Mother's Ruin – the spot for a pre-dinner gin cocktail. Then sample the organic wines at nearby Publik. For dinner, head down to The Shortmarket Club, the hottest restaurant in town, run by whizz-kid Luke Dale-Roberts, or La Parada, a tapas bar popular with a local crowd.

WOODSTOCK

What used to be a run-down, working-class neighbourhood has transformed into Cape Town's answer to Shoreditch: renovated warehouses are home to cutting-edge art galleries and shops. The day to come is Saturday, for the Neighbourgoods Market held in the Old Biscuit Mill – a bustling food market with long communal tables for shared feasting, as well as craft stalls and boutiques to browse around, and buskers livening things up.



Hiking up Table Mountain



Penguins on Boulders Beach

THE V&A WATERFRONT

Okay, the V&A strip of restaurants, shops and shopping malls is touristy, but the brand-new Silo Hotel and just-opened Zeitz MOCCA (Museum of Contemporary African Art) is jazzing up the southeast corner and making it a destination in its own right. Do have a stroll, and then head to the other end to the Grand Cafe & Beach for cocktails and barefoot dancing in the sand.

“ IT'S THE GREAT OUTDOORS
THAT IS THE HEADLINE ACT
IN CAPE TOWN ”

THE ATLANTIC SEABOARD

Clifton is where the beautiful people go to sunbathe and frolic, to see and be seen – and the beaches (there are four in total) are as handsome as the regulars. White sand crescents shelve into deep turquoise waves – but be warned: the water sweeps straight up from Antarctica and it's cold (around 10 degrees in the middle of summer). There are no shops here – beach vendors stroll around selling cold drinks and ice creams – so for more of a scene, continue round the headland to Camps Bay, a wide sweep of a beach backed by a buzzy promenade of shops and restaurants.



Cape Town's city centre



Oude Werf hotel



The V&A Waterfront

You can bed down here, too, at the stylish little The Marly hotel, set just across the road from the beach, with bright-white rooms and a friendly, boutiquey feel.

OUT AND ABOUT

It's the great outdoors that is the headline act in Cape Town, and number one on your list should be Table Mountain, a vast, towering wilderness set slap-bang in the middle of the city. Whizz up by cable car, or be more adventurous and take a guided hike to the top (it's not easy, but it's worth it). A gentler alternative is Lion's Head, which you can climb up unguided (go in a group, and take a torch to make your way back down after sunset), or even easier is the drive up to Signal Hill for sundowners and epic sea views. At the very tip of the peninsula is Cape Point, a wild slice of rock jutting into the Atlantic, and best visited on a road-trip by side-car. Look out for the baboons scurrying about once you get there, and hold on to any snacks – they've been known to steal sandwiches straight out of visitors' hands. Further around the coast, at the beginning of False Bay, is Boulders Beach, so-called because of the huge granite rocks littering the sand, but best-known for its colony of African penguins. Watch from the boardwalk as they waddle about their daily business (but note that they can be a bit smelly).

FURTHER AFIELD

Do spend a couple of days in the Cape Winelands just an hour out of town, a beautiful area of rolling vineyards, purple-hued mountains and lovely wine estates. The village of Franschhoek is pretty, with a wine tram that trundles between the wineries, while Stellenbosch is more authentic – a charming, proper working town with a university. If you want to stay in the area, Oude Werf is a gorgeous historical boutique hotel, offering stylish rooms and fantastic dining. For the foodies, there are various farmers' markets in town at weekends. ☺

| CAPE TOWN |

A&K's Discover South Africa itinerary, featuring Cape Town, starts at £2,750 per person (based on two sharing, flights included*). For further information, call a travel specialist on 01242 547 702.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist

New heights



Sala Lanna, Chiang Mai

Rooftop cocktail lounges really raise the bar, so here's our edit of the best spots in Thailand to live the high life with a killer cocktail and an amazing view...

BANGKOK

Bangkok is a city of contrasts – where modernity brashly shoulders aside the ancient. Temples sit cheek by jowl with brand new shopping malls, long-tail boats glide downriver while honking traffic sits at a standstill, and street food carts serve bite-sized, eight-legged delicacies within nodding distance of Michelin star-worthy restaurants in glitzy glass skyscrapers.

By day the city's loud and energetic but it's the transformation that happens after dark that keeps people coming back for more. Step up and away from the bustling streets and discover tranquil, uber-cool rooftop bars and restaurants overlooking a cityscape that is one of the world's most magical. There are few finer places to enjoy a well-deserved sundowner.

VERTIGO & MOON BAR, BANYAN TREE, SATHON

Hosting the Vertigo Restaurant at one end and the Moon Bar at the other, this rooftop is cleverly designed to ensure absolutely nothing gets in the way of your view. Located on Sathon Road, it's one of the older rooftop bars in Bangkok. It boasts a sophisticated but relaxed atmosphere in which to enjoy views of the sunset lighting up the Chao Phraya River.

CRU CHAMPAGNE BAR, CENTARA GRAND

Four levels higher than the famous Red Sky bar, CRU Champagne Bar offers jaw-dropping views of the city skyline.



Bangkok's Vertigo & Moon Bar

The central bar is topped by a vast illuminated arch that changes colour throughout the night. Set against the space's pure white design and the night sky, the colours really pop. Run in partnership with G.H. Mumm, fizz and champagne cocktails are the order of the night here. Whether it's a Bangkok Bellini or a No.1 Pink Champagne, there's no need for hashtags when your Instagram feed looks this good.

ALFRESCO 64, LEBUA AT STATE TOWER

Claiming to be the world's highest whisky bar, Alfresco 64 is perched 244 metres above Bangkok on the 64th floor of the Tower Club at Lebua. The whisky is provided courtesy of Chivas Regal, and a taste of the Chivas Exclusive Lebua blend is a must. If a second drink is on the cards, pop downstairs to the Sky Bar on the 63rd floor, made famous by comedy film *The Hangover*, and enjoy views over the river.



Baba Nest, Panwa Beach



Three Sixty at the Millennium Hilton

BREWSKI, RADISSON BLU, SUKHUMVIT

Not immune from the current fashion for bespoke ales, the Thai capital's highest craft beer bar, Brewski, offers 12 international craft beers plus 100 bottled beers and ciders. This may not seem like an enormous selection when compared with some British pubs, but it comes with a side of gourmet bar bites and spectacular panoramic views. A laid-back, urbanite rooftop bar that combines a warm and friendly ambience with live music and DJs makes it a fun place to take in the views at the end of a busy day of sightseeing.

THREE SIXTY AT THE MILLENNIUM HILTON BANGKOK

A popular hangout for Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton and Bangkok's jetset, the Three Sixty bar may not be as high as some of the other hotspots on our list, but with its enviable views over the river, soft jazz playing in the background and substantial drinks list, it offers a sophisticated yet mellow vibe that's incredibly relaxing. Don't ignore the cupola – balanced one floor above the riverside open air bar, you can spend hours here watching life on the river pass by below you.

FURTHER AFIELD

While nowhere in Thailand can match Bangkok for the sheer volume, extravagance and cool factor of its rooftop bars, there are a couple of places that more than warrant a mention.

DISCOVER THAILAND



One night in Bangkok

BABA NEST, PANWA BEACH, PHUKET

Despite being somewhat inconveniently located, situated as it is more than slightly out of the way in the south of Phuket island, and open only for a parsimonious four hours each day, Baba Nest is nonetheless well worth a visit. Design simplicity – in essence an open deck surrounded by an infinity pool – combined with limited availability make for one of the most exclusive rooftop bars in Thailand. With an extensive drinks menu, stunning views overlooking the Andaman Sea and Mexican tapas snacks on tap, there are few better places to while away the early evening hours.

THE ROOF, SALA LANNA, CHIANG MAI

A relatively new addition to Chiang Mai, the Sala Lanna hotel is located on the banks of the Ping River and its rooftop bar offers panoramic views across both the town and the river. Relax by the pool or socialise at the long communal tables and bench seating. The friendly staff and warm Thai welcome you receive on arrival keep this rooftop bar from sinking into the too cool for school territory and keep it safely within the best place to be category at sundowner time. It's worth a trip into the mountains just for this. ☺

| THAILAND |

A&K's 12-night Discover Thailand itinerary starts at £2,595 per person (based on two sharing, flights included*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 895.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist



Live like a LOCAL

Go behind the scenes and off the tourist trail – New York, Key West and New Orleans natives draw back the curtains, revealing how they spend their days hanging out in their neighbourhoods...

Lauren Beebe's Williamsburg, Brooklyn

I get up early to hit a class at Yoga to the People or grab a Citi Bike to ride along Kent Avenue. I head to Greenpoint to explore the neighbourhood or towards the Williamsburg Bridge for a ride over the bridge into the Lower East Side and back. This is an excellent route for experienced runners as well.

Breakfast or brunch at Cafe Mogador makes me happy. To me, it epitomises a perfect blend of old and new Williamsburg. Everything on the menu is wonderful. Although chic and trendy, the pricing is still starving-artist friendly. It's traditionally a Moroccan restaurant, so I usually go for the halloumi eggs – their homemade humous is amazing.

I'm a coffee lover and there are some amazing places to slow it down and enjoy conversation and people-watching over a latte – Toby's Estate, Blue Bottle, and the local favourites, Devocion or Pudge Knuckles.

Williamsburg is chock full of amazing restaurants and cafés. French-inspired Juliette is a real gem of a neighbourhood eaterie. Meadowsweet has a Michelin star – be sure to make a reservation if you can. If you can't, the waiting times for tables usually aren't terrible. Alternatively, hit fantastic Motorino Pizza next door. Freehold showcases Brooklyn's love for multi-use space. Creative types flock to this oversized complex, which contains a coffee bar, kitchen, massive cocktail bar, games area and courtyard space. The latest hotspot in Brooklyn is Sunday. A low-waste restaurant, it serves excellent food in stellar digs. If there's a line at Sunday in Brooklyn, I head a couple blocks toward the Williamsburg Bridge and sip on a caipirinha from Brazilian bar Miss Favela – there might even be a samba band! On Saturday, there is also Smorgasburg, the world's largest outdoor food market with over 100 vendors. It's crowded but worth it: I just go early.

Afterwards comes the hard decision – to shop or to cocktail.

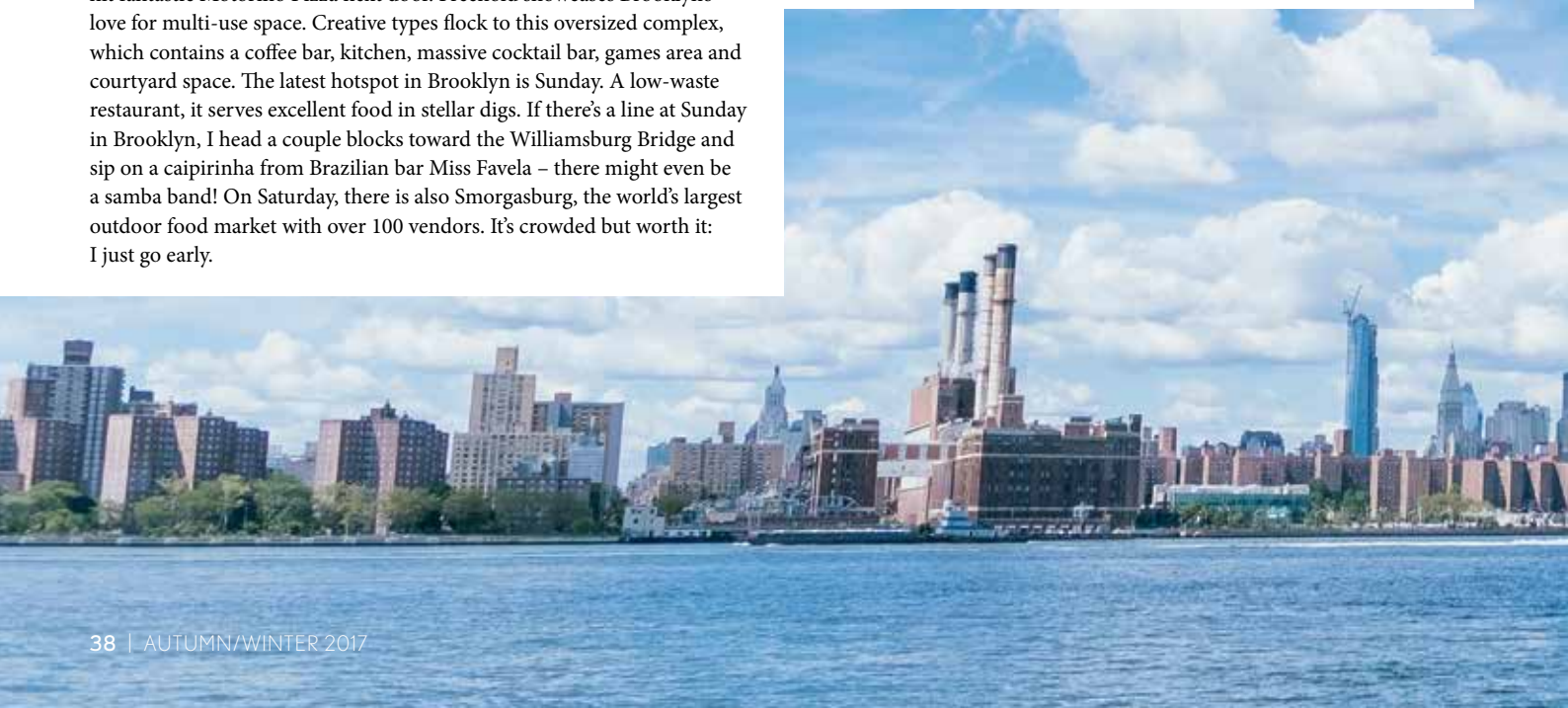
Williamsburg is home to some of the best boutiques and vintage stores in all of NYC. My favourites are Concrete + Water, In God We Trust, The Vale Collective (Gentry across the street for men), Sprout Home and BEAM. For vintage pieces, I head to Beacon's Closet. On Saturday and Sunday there is also Artists & Fleas, which is full of high-end artisans and vintage stalls.

During the summer, you'll find me on the roof or at the pool at The William Vale hotel. Brooklyn Brewery is pretty special as is Brooklyn Winery. My hidden gem is Hotel Delmano, which is not really a hotel but a cocktail bar. It isn't marked by any signage but it serves all the best drinks. It's a firm favourite of the fashion set. You might spot Alexa Chung on the outdoor seating.

I try to catch sunset on the Williamsburg waterfront or on a rooftop. With the iconic New York City skyline in the background, it's a fabulous way to end the day.

Lauren Beebe is the founder of Like A Local Tours

AS TOLD TO: ALICIA DEVENNEY





The Williamsburg Bridge



Brooklyn Brewery



Smorgasburg Food Market
Image: Smorgasburg/John von Pamer



View of Manhattan from Williamsburg



Ocean Key Resort & Spa

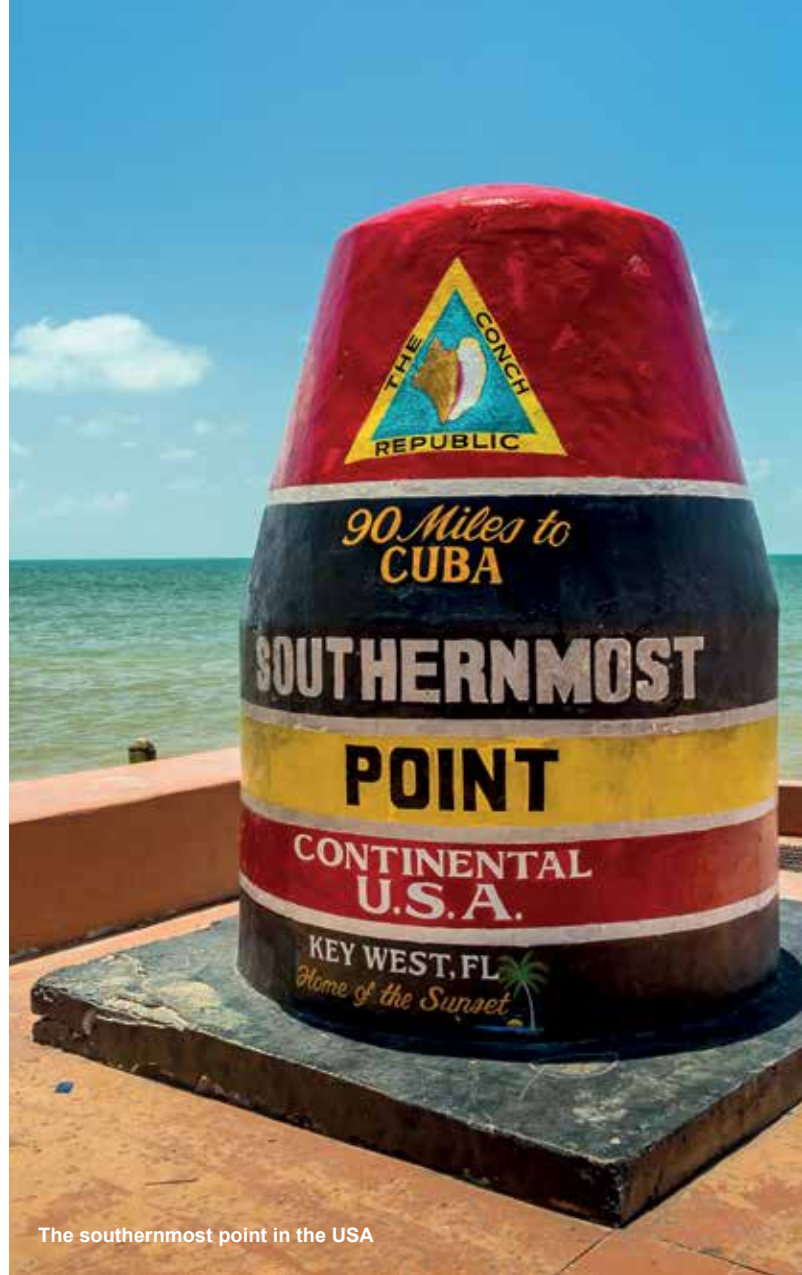
Stacey Mitchell's Florida Keys

A typical day for me begins with *café con leche* (Cuban espresso with steamed milk) and a Cuban mix sandwich from the takeaway window at Sandy's Cafe. They don't take cards, so I always make sure I'm carrying a little cash. I take my dog Jagger for a walk through old town Key West and the historic seaport. As the sky begins to brighten with the sunrise, fishermen are loading their nets and bait to start their day offshore and I am hopeful that their catch will be my dinner that evening.

My preferred method of transportation is my bicycle. Key West is three kilometres wide by six and a half kilometres long and my commute is four minutes. It rarely rains here and if so, it is a brief, passing shower so I don't have to worry about the elements on my commute, plus the dress code is casual. I buy all my clothes from boutiques along Duval Street.

My free time is spent in, on or under the water. I love to snorkel the reef and kayak in the mangroves – my go-to charter companies include Danger Charters and Key West Eco Tours.

Cocktail hours are enjoyed at one of the many open-air cafés, bars and restaurants along the waterfront such as Conch Republic Seafood Company, Ocean Key Resort & Spa and the Southernmost Beach Café, or on a boat, toasting the end of another day. After dinner, I'll head to The Smokin' Tuna Saloon, the Green Parrot, Sloppy Joe's or Irish Kevin's to listen to some foot-stomping live music.



The southernmost point in the USA

Weekends are generally enjoyed with friends offshore in what we call our 'backcountry'. During low tide, sand bars are exposed out in the ocean. We pitch up on these temporary beaches with picnics, play fun soundtracks that everyone can dance to, and enjoy an array of ice cold beverages (making sure there's plenty of sunscreen on hand). Andrea Paulson at Reelax Charters is the number one lady I call for these types of jaunts.

In the Florida Keys and Key West, our everyday life mirrors that of a visitor's experience. The vibe is definitely chill, the cocktails are refreshing and there's a great selection of just-caught seafood to choose from. And it's all set against a backdrop of turquoise waters teeming with sealife and Instagram-worthy sunsets.

Stacey Mitchell is director of sales for the Florida Keys & Key West Tourism Council

Bahia Honda Bridge, Florida Keys





Dauphine Street, New Orleans



New Orleans' French Quarter

Abigail Gullo's New Orleans

There are so many wonderful places to see and people to meet in New Orleans. It's a warm and welcoming city and on my free days, I take advantage of it all.

I like to bike down to the Bywater, stop at Satsuma on Dauphine Street for an amazing juice and then head to the park on the levee there. It's peaceful, relaxing and a great way to start or end the day. The Bywater is an artsy, eclectic area of New Orleans and you'll find colourful creole cottages, graffitied warehouses and hipster kids there.

Sometimes friends and I will do a chicken-wing tour by bike. We cycle up my favourite street, Esplanade Avenue, until we hit City Park. We get some wings and cool drinks at Mopho and then head down to St Ann Street to Willie Mae's Scotch House for the world's greatest fried chicken. And you don't have to take my word for it: this accolade has been awarded by both *The Food Network* and the *Travel Channel*, and for good reason – the chicken is super juicy and the spice has just the right amount of kick.

If I'm not in the mood for wings, I'll stay around the Bywater and head over to Bacchanal. This 'wine laboratory' serves great wine and plays amazing music. Or I'll go to The Joint for barbecue.

Abigail Gullo is the head bartender at *Compère Lapin Restaurant* ☺

| EAST COAST USA |

A&K's 11-night Discover East Cost USA itinerary – featuring New York, New Orleans and the Florida Keys – starts at £3,445 per person (based on two sharing, includes flights, car hire and selected activities*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 717.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist

Bywater Street, New Orleans







BEYOND CHERRY BLOSSOM

BY PENELOPE RANCE

Gion Matsuri, Kyoto

Cherry blossom may be beautiful, but the blooms are heart-breakingly fleeting. Romantically minded travellers heading to Japan for this floral phenomenon can struggle to be in the right place at the right time; or even get there at all, thanks to *hanami* (cherry-blossom viewing) mania. Fortunately for those wanting to experience Japan's ancient traditions, the country's many other *matsuri* (festivals) offer a host of guaranteed experiences, from the spiritual to the prosaic, and excellent reasons to visit this intriguing country at any time of year. Here's where to go, what to see, and when...

TOKYO

The political centre of Japan since 1603, Tokyo weaves the thrum of 21st century life with a deep sense of history. Ultra-modern skyscrapers march side by side with shrines and temples, while the country's most populous city finds breathing space in serene gardens and parks. Go for the shopping and stay for the culture in its dozens of museums.

Held on the third weekend of May, Sanja Matsuri is one of the city's largest Shinto festivals. Two million people gather to witness a trio of portable shrines process through the energy-charged streets, accompanied by traditional music and dancing. Early summer sees two other major religious festivals: Kanda (May in odd numbered years) and Sanno (June in even years). Dedicated to the gods of fishermen, businessmen, harvest and matrimony, Kanda's week of festivities celebrates the wealth and prosperity of the people, while Sanno reveres Tokyo's guardian deity. Less spiritual, but no less impressive, the city hosts three of six national sumo tournaments, each lasting 15 days, in January, May and September.

OSAKA

Beneath Osaka's modern port and shining financial district, centred on the soaring Umeda Sky Building, beats a small town heart epitomised in bustling local shops, ethnic eateries and brash, friendly people. Its nickname, *tenka no daidokoro*, the nation's kitchen, is well deserved – bestowed when Osaka was Japan's rice trading hub, it now refers to a gastronomic paradise blessed with *okonomiyaki* pancakes, *kitsune udon* and the ubiquitous *takoyaki* octopus balls.

As well as March's edition of the Grand Sumo Tournament, Osaka's festival delights include Tenjin Matsuri. With a history stretching back over 1,000 years, it is arguably the country's most magnificent boat festival. Dedicated to Tenman Tenjin, patron deity of art and learning, the festival encompasses *bunraku* puppet plays and *kagura* music, a 3,000-strong parade of people in imperial court dress, and a procession of 100 boats, lit up in a fantastic display as fireworks explode overhead.

KYOTO

Once the imperial capital of Japan, Kyoto is the country's cultural centre, where the traditions of the geisha, temples and formal gardens reflect a city uninterrupted by the modern world. Spared the ravages of World War II, its centuries-old Nishiki Market, UNESCO-protected Kiyomizu-dera Temple and riverside Gion District will transport you back in time.

Kyoto's three major festivals include Aoi Matsuri in May, where hollyhocks (*aoi*) rather than cherry blossom are celebrated. A procession of oxcarts, cows, horses and 600 people bearing *aoi* leaves are led by an imperial messenger from the palace to the Shimogamo and Kamigamo shrines. For the whole month of July, Kyoto is taken up with Gion Matsuri, all



Sapporo Snow Festival



Gion Matsuri, Kyoto

street food, open houses and a massive parade, while October's Jidai Matsuri, the Festival of the Ages, commemorates Kyoto's founding with an historical re-enactment procession of locals in authentic dress from different periods of the city's past.

SAPPORO

Sapporo is the must-see face of modern Japan, all neon signs, sleek cafés, shopping, nightlife and fast food. But if the pace gets too much, visitors can step away into Hokkaido's mountains and its hot springs for some rest and relaxation.

As well as summer beer and food festivals, Sapporo hosts one of Japan's most famous winter events, the week-long Snow Festival every February. More than two million visitors come to view the incredible ice and snow sculptures, and to be entertained by the event stages, food stalls and even snow slides scattered between them. February is also the month of Yuki Akari no Michi or the Snow Light Path Festival in nearby Otaru, when the city is decorated with hundreds of lanterns and small snow statues.



Tenjin Matsuri, Osaka

Yoshikien Garden, Nara

TAKAYAMA

One of those rare things, a rural Japanese city, Takayama's remote mountain location provides an insight into traditional country ways, with its beautifully preserved old town and slower pace of living. Morning markets, the Hida Folk Village open-air museum and a former castle site help to bring the past to life.

In April and October, Takayama hosts, respectively, the Sanno and Hachiman Matsuri, when a dozen heavily decorated floats are displayed, including performances of sophisticated mechanical dolls on board, before being pulled through the streets in the evening. If you miss the festivities, during the year the floats are on display at warehouses throughout the city.

NARA


Japan's first permanent capital, Nara boasts some of the country's greatest historical treasures, including its largest Buddhist temples, the world's oldest wooden buildings, an excellent national museum, the Yoshikien Garden and the family temple of the Fujiwara Clan.

In March, Omizutori at the Todaiji Temple marks the culmination of the two-week Shuni-e sin-cleansing ceremony, heralding the spring. For over 1,200 years, the sacred water festival has seen torch-bearing monks gather at the Wakasa Well, where they sketch circles of fire in the air. The following day, the monks draw the water and offer it to the public. ☺

| JAPAN |

A&K's 10-night Colours of Japan itinerary starts at £4,930 per person (based on two sharing, flights included*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 704.

JNTO
Japan National Tourism Organization

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*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist



WESTSIDE STORY

BY **ROSS PAKES**, SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER

Remote, vast and with the longest coastline of any state or territory Down Under, Western Australia (WA) is renowned for its extreme beauty and year-round sunshine. Australia's largest state, it covers a third of the country, yet it's spent years being overshadowed by its cooler and more urban east coast cousins. That's all about to change. With non-stop flights into Perth preparing to take off, the Lucky Country's west coast is set to open up and dazzle visitors with Antipodean tropes of red earth, sweeping beaches, crashing surf and award-winning vineyards.

The sheer size of WA can make it hard to know where to start and what to do, but in this state the cliché of something for everyone couldn't be more apt. Described by Nigella Lawson as "heaven on Earth", WA is, from coast to desert, a treasure trove of culture, culinary delights, true outback experiences and stunning untouched reefs. ☺



Cars dotted along the wide expanse of Broome's Cable Beach

PERTH

Perth has been a city in constant motion for the last decade, thanks to the mining boom, but it still hasn't managed to shake off its reputation as being sleepy, suburban and out of touch. While it's true that Australia's cultural compass did once point decidedly east, the regeneration and revival of this city is seeing the industrial boom succeeded by a cultural one.

Como the Treasury was the first luxury hotel to recognise that the city was changing and since opening in 2015 has been the central hub for the CBD's ever-increasing evening crowds. Housed in the 140-year-old State Building, it's part of an AUD\$580m redevelopment and is home to award-winning restaurants and a world-renowned spa. If that wasn't enough reason to book a room or a table, it should be worth noting that it was recently voted the world's second-best hotel by *Condé Nast Traveller*.

“THE BUILDINGS MAY LOOK HUGE AND THE ROADS WIDE, BUT TUCKED AWAY IN THE CITY'S LANEWAYS ARE A NUMBER OF GAME-CHANGING SMALL BARS, WHICH HAVE COME TO LIFE THANKS TO NEWLY RELAXED LIQUOR LAWS”

Just a hop, skip and a jump north of the CBD is Northbridge, an area of the city fast gaining a reputation as Perth's creative hub. The suburb wraps itself around Perth Cultural Centre, home to Art Gallery WA as well as the State Theatre, and its outdoor spaces are always brimming with people enjoying that famous western weather.

Perth is a city where you can really have fun delving into its nooks and crannies. The buildings may look huge and the roads wide, but tucked away in the city's laneways are a number of game-changing small bars, which have come to life thanks to newly relaxed liquor laws. They can be hard to find, so it's best to book a walking tour. There are a number of different options ranging from the bar-centric to heritage, art and culture, plus food and beverage tours all over Perth and Fremantle.

MARGARET RIVER

Just over 270 kilometres south of Perth is Margaret River. A three-hour drive will find you arriving in a warm and welcoming town where the food, wine, beaches and surf all fight for top billing. Yet, while Margaret River may be a surfers' paradise with 75 breaks to choose from, it's the food and wine lovers flocking to the town year on year who have helped to build its reputation.

In recent times, Margaret River Gourmet Escape has attracted the likes of Heston Blumenthal, Rick Stein, Nigella Lawson and Matt Stone. These foodie artisans all converge on the beautiful Leeuwin Estate to cook up a storm. Over a period of three days, chefs and sommeliers wow more than 15,000 food lovers with their delicious wares, while running masterclasses and wine tastings alongside a number of Q&A evenings. Those wanting to stay in luxury, while sampling the wares of Margaret River, should look no further than the five-star accommodation of Cape Lodge. Here you'll be surrounded by native woodland and, most importantly, won't have to travel far for a glass of vino – the lodge is nestled in its own vineyard.

If you're looking to explore the area, however, then the only way to truly experience Margaret River is with the help of some wheels. Jump on a bicycle, hire a car or alternatively look out for a group of tour-guiding, passionate petrolheads behind the wheels of beautiful classic cars.

NINGALOO REEF

Drive over 1,126 kilometres north of Perth and you'll arrive at Ningaloo Reef, a spot that's recognised as being one of Earth's last ocean paradises.

Among Australia's best-kept natural secrets, the beauty of Ningaloo Reef is just how easily accessible it is from Coral Bay's beaches. From the sand, you can dive into turquoise waters and immediately find yourself surrounded by colourful coral and over 500 species of fish. Go during the winter season and you'll be able to snorkel, swim and dive alongside migrating dolphin, dugong, manta ray, humpback whale and whale shark, the latter being the reason a lot of visitors choose Ningaloo over the Great Barrier Reef.

To experience the heights of luxury when you visit Ningaloo, stay at Sal Salis, a remote, exclusive beachside bush camp tucked among the dunes of Cape Range National Park. As you sleep under canvas having dined beneath the stars, you'll find yourself drifting off to the sound of waves lapping the shore. Plus, the entire place is a wifi-free zone, so you can completely switch off – and totally relax.



Como the Treasury hotel, in Perth's 140-year-old State Building



Chardonnay vines almost ready for harvest



Busselton Jetty, Margaret River



Perth's skyline



Small Ship Adventure

Unparalleled access and activity-based itineraries providing unique opportunities to discover stunning coastal wildernesses in Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

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TRUE NORTH

The Art of Adventure



Dunes above Ningaloo Reef



Brancho's Lookout, El Questro Station, Kimberley



Little Mertens Falls, Kimberley

THE KIMBERLEY

North of Coral Bay sits the Kimberley, an area roughly three times the size of England with a landscape so vast and diverse it will take your breath away. The isolation of the Kimberley only adds to its complex beauty and it remains one of the most ancient and untouched corners of Australia.

Boab trees, dusty red earth, tidal flats, gorges and waterfalls are all present and correct but the jewel in the Kimberley's crown has to be El Questro Wilderness Park. This uniquely special place is nearly 300,000 hectares of vastly beautiful, and mostly unexplored, terrain. At El Questro there are a range of accommodation options available in the wilderness park itself, which allow you to settle in, spend some time there and really explore the landscape. Choose to stay in unparalleled luxury in the Homestead, or opt for one of the safari-style tented cabins at Emma Gorge.

Avoiding the Kimberley during wet season is common sense, but timing your visit to coincide with the end of the rains offers an opportunity to witness crashing waterfalls, swollen billabongs and all the wildlife that resides here. Seeing these natural wonders from the deck of a luxury cruise ship as the water swirls and swells around you is the ultimate Kimberley experience, and one that True North Cruises offers. So, while it may seem as if it's in the middle of nowhere, a visit to the Kimberley, El Questro and its surrounds is not to be missed – something that could be said for Western Australia itself. ☺

| WESTERN AUSTRALIA |

A&K's five-night Ningaloo Reef itinerary starts at £3,465 per person (based on two sharing, flights included*). For more information on this and other Western Australia holidays, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 826.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist

INSPIRING EXPEDITIONSSM

by Geoffrey Kent



I have always believed that luxury has three hallmarks: a sense of wellbeing; authenticity; and flexibility. Authenticity means the experience is true to its place and its traditions, incorporating elements of the past and reflecting the local culture. Flexibility refers to service that anticipates your needs and satisfies them in an unobtrusive manner. Peace of mind is the sense of wellbeing that comes from knowing you are travelling with a first-class organisation staffed by professionals for whom the word 'impossible' does not exist.

From the opulence of a palatial hotel to the serenity of waking up to a spectacular sunrise in a simple mountain refuge, true luxury is the privilege of discovery, adventure, relaxation and insight, enjoyed in a context that perfectly suits the experience.

I invite you to join me and a small, select party of guests on one of my Inspiring Expeditions by Geoffrey Kent. Guided by the finest local experts and featuring exclusive insider access to fascinating people and places, these are cultural odysseys for the modern adventurer, designed for those who want to explore the most remote and spectacular lands and oceans on the planet – and meet the extraordinary people who live there.

With great imagination – and over half a century of logistical expertise and experience – we are bringing a new level of comfort, elegance and provision to even the most remote destinations.

Geoffrey Kent

Geoffrey Kent

Founder, Chairman and CEO

Follow @geoffrey_kent on Instagram

If you would be interested in joining one of our Inspiring Expeditions by Geoffrey Kent, please email your request to inspiringexpeditions@abercrombiekent.com or visit abercrombiekent.co.uk/inspiringexpeditions

Clockwise from top left: the Northern Lights; the town of Stepantsminda, Georgia; the A&K private jet; penguins in Antarctica; swimming with dolphins in Australia; The Rees Hotel, New Zealand; ice-rally racing



LIGHT & SOUL OF THE ARCTIC

5 DAYS | MARCH 2018

This Inspiring Expedition heads into the wilderness of Finnish Lapland in search of the Northern Lights. Caused by the interplay between the solar wind and our planet's magnetic field and atmosphere, the aurora borealis has mystified since time immemorial. Venture into the very heart of the Arctic circle in search of this spectacular light show.

- Enjoy an excellent chance of seeing the Northern Lights – a sometimes elusive phenomenon – thanks to this trip's timing and destination
- Luxuriate in exclusive use of a remote Wilderness Lodge. Chartered aircraft will lift you to the heart of the action quickly and seamlessly
- Get a kick out of exciting adventures: ice-rally racing on a purpose-built ice track; snowmobile safaris; dog-sled and reindeer-sleigh rides to extraordinary picnic sites; lessons in winter survival skills; cross-country skiing and snowshoeing
- Appreciate rare, privileged interactions with Sami shamans, nomads and their reindeer herds
- Learn from guest lecturers who are experts in the fields of the aurora borealis, the Arctic environment and the anthropology of the Sami people



AROUND THE WORLD BY PRIVATE JET

24 NIGHTS | OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2018

This glamorous yet adventurous round-the-world journey visits the USA, Nicaragua, Chile, Easter Island, New Zealand, Australia, India, Oman and Georgia. Travelling on your own private jet, you'll experience none of the hassles and obstacles the regular traveller endures. Instead, you'll have the time and opportunity to fulfil your wildest travel dreams in the greatest luxury and company and with the greatest ease.

- Explore the volcanoes and wild jungles of Nicaragua
- Penetrate the last wilderness of Chilean Patagonia
- Experience a vibrant cultural event among the mystical statues of Easter Island
- Enjoy wild adventures for all tastes in New Zealand
- Enjoy a private regatta on the Swan River followed by an authentic Aussie barbecue lunch at the members'-only Royal Perth Yacht Club
- Immerse yourself in the spiritual state of Kerala in India
- Explore the Sultanate of Oman's culture and landscape
- Celebrate the sensational music and food of that other great cultural crossroads, Georgia

THE SOUTH POLE AND SUMMITTING HISTORY

11 NIGHTS | DECEMBER 2018

Visit Antarctica and the South Pole on this Inspiring Expedition trip. Assemble in Cape Town. Board your jet to cross the Southern Ocean and land inside the Antarctic Circle. Your expedition basecamp is comprised of luxurious space-age pods, nestled on the edge of the continent. The food, wines, coffee and service are off the charts, as is every day of your exciting expedition, guided by polar explorers selected for their passion and excellent company as much as their experience of the continent.

- Stand at the South Pole. There is no more east, south or west – the only direction here is north
- Our expedition team will lead you to the summit of a virgin, unclimbed mountain (no climbing experience is necessary). You'll have the chance to be part of a team that names a mountain in Antarctica for the history books
- You will be led into the heart of one of the largest emperor penguin colonies in the whole of Antarctica, early in the season when the young chicks are often still sitting on their parents' feet
- Visit seal colonies and a scientific station; explore magical ice tunnels; enjoy Antarctic picnics, saunas and fascinating lectures; and await our signature fabulous surprises... ©



PIONEERING ADVENTURES

A&K HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF PIONEERING AND EXPLORATION TRAVEL: IT'S HOW THE BUSINESS STARTED, AND IT'S WHY WE'VE MANAGED TO STAY AHEAD IN A HUGELY COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE. THIS AUTUMN WE'RE DELIGHTED TO INTRODUCE A NEW RANGE OF PIONEERING TRIPS FOR 2018, AND EXCITED TO SHARE A FEW OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF TWO OF THESE IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES. BY **CHARLOTTE WELLS**



ULTIMATE

Arctic adventure

For too long now the Arctic has been the domain of polar explorers: a hugely intriguing but seemingly inaccessible destination. It's unlike anywhere else on Earth. It's a remote wilderness of untouched landscapes, hardy wildlife and extreme weather, which provides a travel experience like no other. This is a trip that enables you to discover everything the Arctic has on offer, and to be at one with a destination which has seen little change in over 500 years, a place where human influence is minuscule.

Our partners and guides, The Webber family, have dedicated their lives to Arctic adventure. For three generations they've been leading expeditions to the North Pole and have hiked, skied, kayaked and trekked across the Arctic. Richard Webber is a renowned polar explorer, having completed more than 60 Arctic and polar expeditions, and undertaken more successful treks to the North Pole than anyone in history. You couldn't be in better hands for the most spectacular twin centre break you're ever likely to take, and better still, you'll be staying in unparalleled comfort in one of the most extreme destinations on the planet.

“YOU COULDN'T BE IN BETTER HANDS FOR THE MOST SPECTACULAR TWIN CENTRE BREAK YOU'RE EVER LIKELY TO TAKE”

First stop, Arctic Watch Wilderness Lodge in Cunningham Inlet, on Somerset Island, Nunavut. Situated just 805 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, it's the most northerly fly-in lodge in the world. Here you'll discover archaeological sites dating back 1,000 years dotting the shoreline – remnants of the last nomadic Inuit culture. Spend five days exploring the landscape and the wildlife at this world-class beluga whale observation site, with the 24-hour daylight facilitating extraordinary polar photography opportunities. Somerset Island is home to musk ox, beluga whale, polar bear, ringed and bearded seal, arctic fox (and dozens of other species besides), and the chance to



Arctic Watch Wilderness Lodge

observe them in their natural habitat is unrivalled. What's more, you're unlikely to find a more spectacular backdrop to sea kayaking or paddleboarding experiences. The all-terrain vehicle drives are exciting in their own right, but the polar bear tracking which they lead to is extraordinary.

Your second lodge is Arctic Haven, positioned on the barrenlands of Nunavut and on the path of one of the last surviving caribou migrations on Earth. As the autumn colours and northern lights illuminate the Arctic tundra, over 250,000 Qamanirjuaq caribou migrate along the shores of Ennadai Lake and past the lodge. Located on the Arctic treeline, the lodge's surroundings are home to unique diversity including wolf, wolverine, eagle and bear, and the area offers some of the best fly-fishing opportunities in Arctic Canada. From kayaking among icebergs to exploring canyons and waterfalls; night-time polar plunges to mountain-bike trailing; bear-tracking to bird-watching – this really is a phenomenal travel experience in one of the most untamed places on Earth.

| ULTIMATE ARCTIC ADVENTURE |

A&K's 12-night Ultimate Arctic Adventure starts at £9,995 per person (based on two sharing, includes selected activities*, excludes flights). This is a small-group journey – it departs on 10 August 2018. For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 892.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist



Caribou on the tundra



Riding ATVs in Nunavut



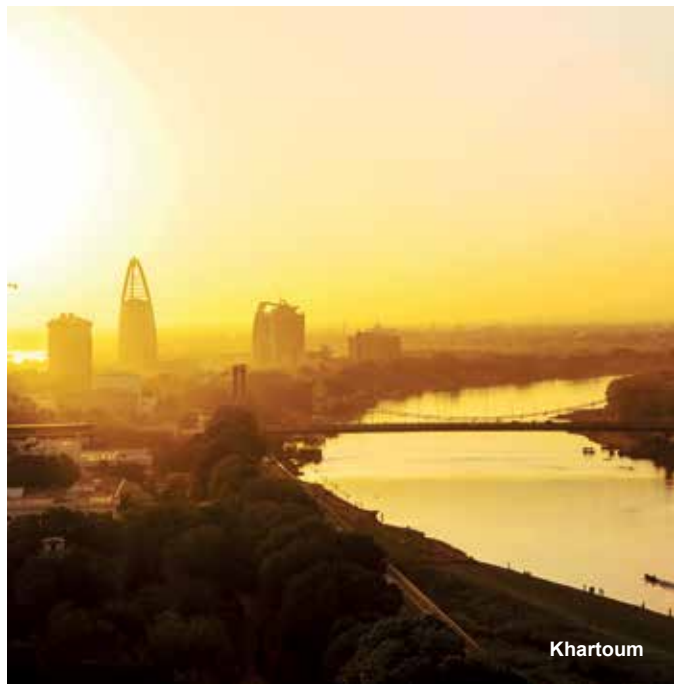
A curious polar bear



The ruins of Soleb



Musawwarat is a UNESCO site



Khartoum

SUDAN & *ancient Nubia*

From independence in 1956 to secession in 2011, the history of present-day Sudan is a complex but intriguing one. Equally fascinating is what came before, when for thousands of years an advanced civilisation dominated this part of the Sahara: the legendary kingdom of Nubia

Join Abercrombie & Kent on an incredible road trip throughout northern Sudan and learn about Nubia – the traditional name for the northern part of the country – and the Kushite kingdoms as you travel through this ancient land. Few written records may remain, but the stories of these kingdoms are told through the art, architecture, legends and culture of the peoples.

The trip starts in Khartoum, where the White and Blue Niles converge, with a visit to the Archaeological Museum which will provide an introduction to the history and culture of Sudan.

During this 11-day trip you'll traverse the country, crossing the Nile on a number of occasions, before finally taking to the water for a boat trip. The tour provides an opportunity to visit, explore and learn about the archaeology and history of the region, taking in some of the most impressive sites on the African continent.

“ FEW WRITTEN RECORDS MAY REMAIN, BUT THE STORIES OF THESE KINGDOMS ARE TOLD THROUGH THE ART, ARCHITECTURE, LEGENDS AND CULTURE OF THE PEOPLES ”

The cataracts are shallow lengths of the Nile River, between Aswan and Khartoum. The itinerary will take you to the third cataract where the water's flow, broken by boulders and rocks, creates white waters on the otherwise serene river. Located between the second and third cataracts is Sai Island which is home to a melting pot of historical offerings including the Kerma Necropolis, Egyptian ruins, Meroitic temples, Christian churches and a Turkish fort.

In Karima, you'll visit the Temple of Amun, and the Meroitic Pyramids at the foot of the Jebel Barkal mountain. These will be far from the only pyramids visited on this tour. Indeed, Sudan has twice the number of pyramids boasted by Egypt, the most impressive of which are the Meroë Pyramids, which dominate the sand dunes near Begrawiya. A visit to this ancient royal cemetery provides the opportunity to view over 100 impressive Nubian-style structures, ranging in height from six to an incredible 30 metres.

You'll be given an opportunity to meet Professor Charles Bonnet of Geneva University during the trip. Charles has been involved in archaeological digs in the region for over 40 years, and his stories are captivating.

The city of Old Dongola was originally founded as a fortress, but grew into a town. With the arrival of Christianity, it became the capital of the Kingdom of Makuria until the 14th century, with dozens of churches being constructed: the excavation sites of these buildings are still visible today.

The Bayuda Desert is located in the eastern region of the Sahara Desert, characterised by black basalt, and largely volcanic, mountains. Meet the Bisharin nomads whose small huts congregate around rare water wells, their livestock and caravans their lifeblood.

From visiting the stelae on the Nile which marked the border between the Egyptian Kingdom and the Kushite one, to being awed by the 7th century BC 'Sleeping Pharaohs', statues of King Taharqa and his successors Senkamaniskien and Aspelta, you'll be crossing the Nile throughout the trip, meeting the welcoming Sudanese people, viewing ancient architecture and artefacts, and learning about the history behind this incredible and definitely off the beaten track destination. ☺

| SUDAN & ANCIENT NUBIA |

A&K's 11-night Sudan & Ancient Nubia itinerary starts at £2,995 per person (based on two sharing, includes selected activities*, excludes flights). This is a small-group journey – it departs on 31 October 2018. For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 892.

*For a full list of inclusions, speak to an A&K travel specialist

FOUR SEASONS OF WILDLIFE IN Latin America

BY PAUL MCLOUGHLIN

From pumas to penguins, monkeys to marsupials, there is nowhere like Latin America for animal lovers. Thanks to intricate weather patterns and a plethora of biospheres, there's also no bad time to visit this wildlife wonderland. Whether you're off to the sprawling icefields of Patagonia, the steaming jungles of the Amazon Rainforest, the lofty peaks of the Andes or the cauldron of life itself, the Galápagos Islands, this is the best place on Earth to witness the vast spectacle of the animal kingdom in all its unrelenting glory.

WHEN? JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH
WHERE? BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO; MARIPOSA RESERVE, MEXICO; AMAZON RIVER, BRAZIL

Start off the year in Mexico – not on the sun-drenched Caribbean beaches of the Riviera Maya, but way out west along the country's Pacific coast. Hundreds of grey whales finish their 1,600km voyage from the south to begin calving in the calm waters of the Sea of Cortez. Soon after birth, the inquisitive calves come right up to the boats, nudging against the hulls to demand a scratch on the head.

Further inland, monarch butterflies in their millions end their annual migration from North America in the pine forests that lie three hours west of Mexico City. It's the largest insect migration in the world. Strolling through the encased forest you notice that the trees literally sag with the weight of winged beauty.

Meanwhile, along the Amazon River, heavy rains will have flooded tributaries, attracting pink river dolphins to play and travel through these swollen waterways. Those bold enough to take the plunge into the river's dark depths will be rewarded with the chance to swim fin to toe with these unique mammals.

Life aquatic in the Sea of Cortez

Monarch butterfly migration

Grey whale, Baja California

Pink river dolphin



Marine iguana



Giant tortoise



Baby turtles

WHEN? APRIL, MAY, JUNE

WHERE? GALÁPAGOS ISLANDS, ECUADOR

For many, a trip here is top of their wildlife bucket list. Resting directly on the Equator, the Galápagos Islands are a year-round destination, home to a menagerie of weird and wonderful animals, from hammerhead sharks to marine iguanas, giant tortoises to Sally Lightfoot crabs. Over 3,000 species are endemic to this land mass, which is no larger than Scotland.

Some of the best months to spot wildlife are April, May and June, fresh off the back of the rainy season and heading into summer, when the land becomes a green, fertile stomping ground for many of the islands' residents. Waved albatrosses start their mesmerising courtship ritual on Española Island, while blue-footed boobies are breeding on North Seymour Island.

Elsewhere, on Santa Cruz Island, marine iguanas hatch, baby green sea turtles also break free from their shells, and giant tortoises begin their slow descent from the highlands of Santa Cruz to find suitable nesting spots further down – and these are just some of the highlights.



Sally Lightfoot crab



Blue-footed boobies



An albatross in flight



A jaguar on the hunt, the Pantanal



Condor, Colca Canyon



Nesting condors

WHEN? JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER

WHERE? COLCA CANYON, PERU; THE PANTANAL, BRAZIL; OSTIONAL WILDLIFE RESERVE, COSTA RICA

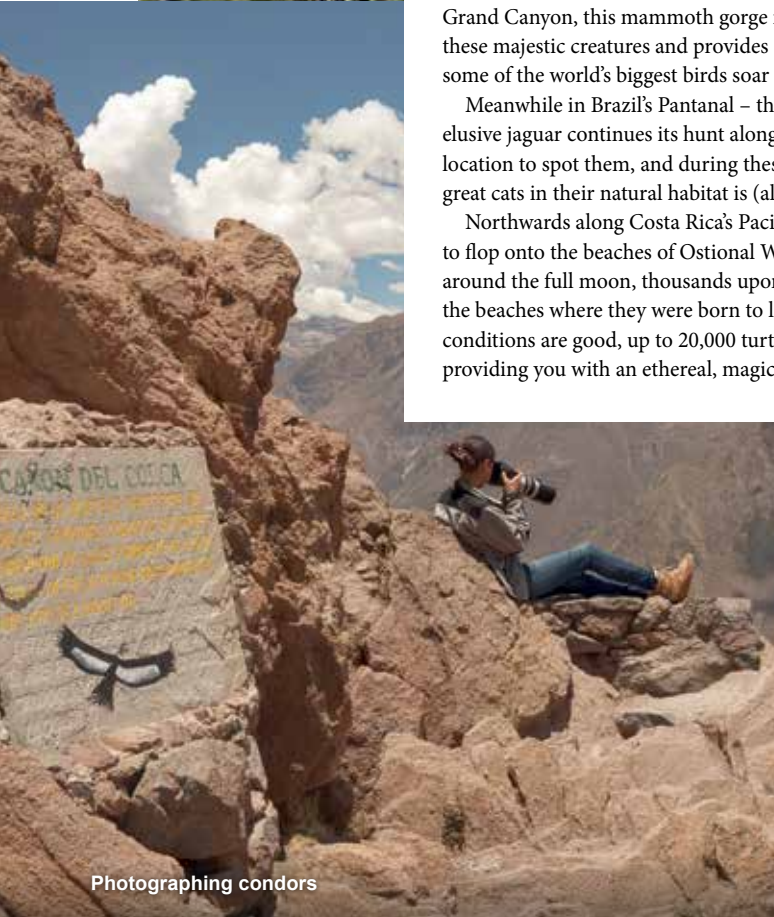
As Peru enters its dry season it's one of the best times to spot condors soaring through the rugged Colca Canyon. More than twice as deep as the Grand Canyon, this mammoth gorge is the top place in the world to spot these majestic creatures and provides a spectacular backdrop against which some of the world's biggest birds soar effortlessly on the thermals.

Meanwhile in Brazil's Pantanal – the planet's largest wetland – the elusive jaguar continues its hunt along retreating rivers. It's the number one location to spot them, and during these months, the best time. Seeing these great cats in their natural habitat is (almost) guaranteed.

Northwards along Costa Rica's Pacific coastline, olive ridley turtles start to flop onto the beaches of Ostional Wildlife Reserve. For a few nights around the full moon, thousands upon thousands of females come back to the beaches where they were born to laboriously dig nests for their eggs. If conditions are good, up to 20,000 turtles can be spotted in a single night, providing you with an ethereal, magical meeting like no other.



A jaguar in the Pantanal



Photographing condors

A baby turtle, Costa Rica





Magellanic penguin family



Wild puma



Guanaco

WHEN? OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER
WHERE? PATAGONIA, CHILE & ARGENTINA

As the summer sun creeps its way southwards, Patagonia welcomes the spring thaw and animal activities in the area begin to heat up. Thousands of Magellanic penguins arrive on the shores of Tierra del Fuego to breed and hunt for fish.

Elusive pumas can, if you're very lucky, be seen stalking guanacos in the sweeping hills of Chile's Torres del Paine National Park, while flamingos and emus can also be spotted amid the lakes strewn across the region.

In Argentina's Valdes Peninsula, enormous pods of southern right whales begin to settle in steady waters to mate. These giant mammals perform a bizarre phenomenon called 'tail sailing': floating upside down, the whales hold their tails motionless in the air – while still a mystery, many believe it's used to catch gusts of wind to 'sail' through the waters. ☺

For more information on Latin America, or to book your next tailor-made Central or South American adventure, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 701.



Magellanic penguin



Flamingos



Whales off Peninsula Valdes

A&K VILLAS

CONSULTANTS' FAVOURITES



CASTELLO TEDITE, PERUGIA

Sleeps 16, from £22,314 per week

Recommended by A&K Villas' Walter Contu

North of the enchanting city of Perugia with its charming and disarming maze of medieval streets, there is a hilltop castle called Castello Tedite. Measuring nearly 11,000 square metres, this eight-bedroom, honey stone castle was built in the 12th century. It commands eye-popping views of the patchwork forest and field floor of the Tiber Valley. Ripped straight from the pages of the big book of stylish castles, it's all velvet furnishing, muted tapestries, dark furnishings and open hearths. There are roof terraces, pools and an on-site spa, hammam and gym to luxuriate in. There's no reason to leave – everything from a chef to a masseuse and yoga instructor can be arranged. But if you choose to get out and about, visit the Church of San Severo in Perugia. Perugia's most celebrated painter, Pietro Vannucci, was known by the moniker Perugino. He is also famous as the teacher of an even more popular painter: Raphael, the Renaissance master. You can see both artists' work simultaneously at the minuscule chapel adjacent to the church, where a fresco is said to have been painted by both Raphael (top half) and Perugino (bottom half).



LA CORNICHE, COTE D'AZUR

Sleeps 6+2, from £9,243 per week

Recommended by A&K Villas' Julie Tourniaire

It's been nearly a century since F Scott Fitzgerald arrived on the French Riviera with his wife Zelda and their daughter Scottie to rent a house and live it up on the Côte d'Azur. Fitzgerald and his 1920s set, with their love of parties, jazz and all things modern, established the blueprint for a glitterati playground vibe that still survives on the Riviera. The villas are every bit as glamorous as the A-listers and aristocrats who holiday here. La Corniche, near Grasse, has three-bedrooms and an open-plan living space. Outside, there's a pool with far-reaching views, and lounging areas shaded by olive and palm trees. Nearly a century old, this villa was totally refurbished in 2012 by its current owner – a stylish Danish lady. If you fancy getting out and about, Cannes and Antibes are close by. The small town of Vallauris is known for its pottery making – this is where Picasso began his work in ceramics. Or head to Vence to the Chapelle du Rosaire, where Matisse designed the stained glass.



NORTH LODGE, THE COTSWOLDS

Sleeps 15, from £20,629 per week

Recommended by A&K Villas' Clare Dungan

The gold standard for English holiday cottages, North Lodge lies in a corner of the grounds of UNESCO World Heritage Site Blenheim Palace, home to the 12th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough. North Lodge was built for an MP in the early 1700s, then used as a sporting lodge by the dukes. Recently refurbished, this refined, early 18th-century residence has seven bedrooms and combines the best of the old world with every modern convenience. It offers a wealth of indulgent features, including a cinema, gym, games room, tennis court, basketball court and heated swimming pool. If you tire of playing lord of the manor, the Cotswolds is arguably England's prettiest pocket. Covering 2,000 square kilometres, it's the biggest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in all of England and Wales. It's full of bucolic honey-hued villages, rolling hills and traditional inns turned Michelin-starred gastropubs. Visit Oxford, the city of dreaming spires, or festival-loving Cheltenham. From 6 to 15 October, the biggest names in literature, journalism and sport descend on the Regency town; a bibliophile's dream. Burford is also nearby with its famous Garden Centre – much loved by local A-listers.



VILLA ESTILA, MALLORCA

Sleeps 8+6, from £9,206 per week

Recommended by A&K Villas' Katja Ewert

Mallorca is practically sunk under the weight of its Spanish charms. The largest of the Balearic Islands is made for exploring – the pace is unhurried, the living is easy and the coastline's pretty coves shout perfect Mediterranean island. However, once you see Villa Estila, exploration might be the last thing on your mind. Infinitely Instagrammable, this contemporary villa's décor was styled by the owner (an interior designer): all white with pops of yellow and green, Eames chairs and trendy pineapple trinkets. Smooth stone is juxtaposed with rough-cut walls. Families will love this villa – both the children's bunkbed room and the shallow-platform in the pool make this space the ultimate little people's party pad. While the kids play and splash, parents can relax and read. We'd recommend a modern classic. Mallorca has a rich literary heritage: it was in 1929 that Gertrude Stein told the English poet Robert Graves that "Mallorca is paradise – if you can stand it". Why the proviso? Graves would need self-discipline to compose on the golden isle. Other writers and artists followed in his footsteps – DH Lawrence, Agatha Christie, Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis to name a few. Be sure to pack your copy of *I, Claudius*, *The Rainbow* or *Brideshead Revisited*.

For all villa holidays, we advise early booking. For more information or to discuss a 2018 reservation, call our villas specialists on 01242 547 705.



Sailing aboard *Silver Muse*



Shore LEAVE

BY STEVE TURNER



This may well be the Golden Age of Travel. Forget the inter-war years when the privileged few could sail down to Cape Town or take the train from London to Istanbul. Never before has exotic travel been so well organised, safe, fast, comfortable and available to so many.

The charmed lives that once graced Art Deco posters are now but a click away. In fact, what's on offer today is far more luxurious, clean and efficient than anything experienced by our recent ancestors.

Electric trains have put an end to smoke-filled stations, filthy windows and soot-stained shirt collars. Modern stabilisers – which are becoming ever more efficient – mean that motion sickness is far less common on ships.

I've just returned from a Mediterranean cruise on *Silver Muse*, the latest addition to the Silversea fleet. Before boarding *Silver Cloud* in 2006, I had never sailed on anything bigger than a cross-Channel ferry, and now realise that I began my cruising life at the top (I've now sailed on four of Silversea's nine ships).

That initial experience disabused me of several myths about cruising. I learned for a start that not all cruise ships are floating cities. *Silver Cloud* had just shy of 300 guests (and a crew of slightly more than 220) and was intimate rather than alienating.

Also, not everyone who chooses cruising does so because they are older. Of course, there were plenty of retirees – after all, they have both the time and the money – but what is almost always true is that these people have excelled in their careers and are interesting, educated and motivated. Cruising is part of their reward for a life of hard work.

They are curious about the world and keen to see new places. Several of those on *Silver Cloud* were members of the Travelers' Century Club – an LA-based organisation for those who've visited at least 100 countries or territories. One guest, a lawyer from New York, was a self-confessed 'country collector' who'd picked this particular cruise solely because it called at Bejaïa in

Algeria, a part of the world not normally on cruise itineraries.

Stan and Judy, a couple in their 80s from Florida, took a shine to my wife and I, and would ask us to join them at their table in the restaurant. They said they liked talking to us because we didn't talk about previous cruises, medication, illnesses or grandchildren (that wasn't conversational aplomb on our part. We hadn't experienced any of the above).

They were mischievous, amusing and always fascinating to talk to. Stan had survived Pearl Harbour as a naval officer and had gone on to become VP of an aerospace company. They travelled so frequently they confessed that they are cruise obsessed and had the largest suite on the ship.

“ ONE GUEST, A LAWYER FROM NEW YORK, WAS A SELF-CONFESSED 'COUNTRY COLLECTOR', HEADED FOR BEJAÏA IN ALGERIA ”

On *Silver Shadow* in 2009, I met a very suave plastic surgeon from Beverly Hills who was on board as a 'gentleman host'. In return for free accommodation and food he (along with other hosts) would make sure that no single woman was left unwillingly unaccompanied. The qualities necessary in a host (according to the company that trains such experts) include excellent manners, an ability to mingle, deftness at games and shipboard activities, a warm smile and expertise at ballroom dancing. One of the perks of the trip for him was being able to dash to a tailor in Hong Kong to get several cheap copies of his favourite suits run up.

Another myth that soon bit the dust was that cruising is

claustrophobic. Not only was there plenty of space on board (a pool deck, panorama lounge, library, internet café, jogging track) but also most of the sailing was done by night and the days were taken up with exploring new locations. On my first trip alone I saw the Sistine Chapel, Catacombs, Colosseum, Pompeii, Knossos Palace, Acropolis and Pyramids. In the 18th century only the son of an aristocrat would have been able to do something similar, and even then he would have given it two years of his time rather than two weeks.

When I think of Silversea luxury, I don't think of excess, wastefulness or decadence. I think of comfort, choice, attention to detail and the assurance that there's nothing to worry about.

As aboard every ship in the line, all guests on *Silver Muse* get a butler who will do everything from shining shoes and collecting laundry to making restaurant bookings (or cancellations) and sorting out sticky problems. The only problem I had was literally sticky. I needed a new toothbrush on my first night because my sun cream had exploded in my wash bag on the outbound flight.

The suites on *Silver Muse* (along with the verandas) are larger than those of its sister ships. The choice of food and drink is remarkable. Each of the eight restaurants specialises in a different regional menu and has an appropriate ambience. You can dress informally and eat Neapolitan pizza in Spaccanapoli or put on a suit and tie to try freshly caught fish in Atlantide.

It helps that fares are inclusive of food and drink (excepting meals at La Dame by Relais & Chateaux and Kaiseki), so there's no need to budget, fret over who's settling the bill if eating with friends or have to calculate tips. On all Silversea ships, there is a lunch buffet and waiters are never far away from offering you poolside drinks.

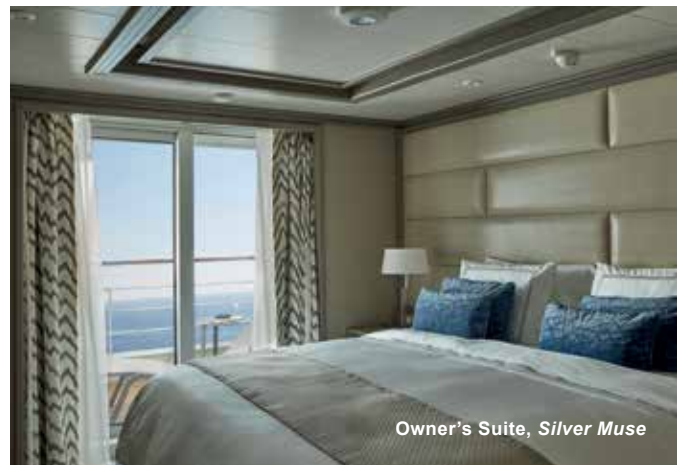
Many guests on Silversea extend their tours at either end of their cruise. Luxury rail travel is a particularly inviting option because it not only maintains the same high standards, but also delves into parts of a country that ships can't reach.



The Blue Train



Venice Simplon-Orient-Express



Owner's Suite, Silver Muse

Again, these rides are far more sumptuous, refreshing and accommodating than they ever were back in the day. The Orient Express that left Istanbul in the 1930s consisted only of sleeping cars and baggage wagons (fourgons). The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, by contrast, has a restaurant, piano bar, lounge and Grand Suites with en suite facilities.

The Blue Train that runs between Cape Town and Pretoria boasted ceiling fans and hot and cold running water in the 1920s but nothing like the air-conditioning and underfloor heating of today, nor did it have an observation carriage, boutique and conference room.

The Eastern Oriental Express (Thailand and Singapore) and The Maharajah's Express (India) are relatively recent additions but both draw inspiration from the updated Orient Express.

For me the best thing about cruising is only unpacking once, waking up in a new country almost every morning and being able to combine the best of travel and exploration with the comforts of a settled existence in your own familiar space.

At two o'clock in the afternoon you can be in an African village watching voodoo dancers or wandering Trieste in search of James Joyce, and by six o'clock be back showering in your private bathroom knowing that you'll soon be dining in a five-star restaurant, then watching a show in the theatre before finishing the night off in Silver Note with a cocktail of blues, jazz and popular standards.

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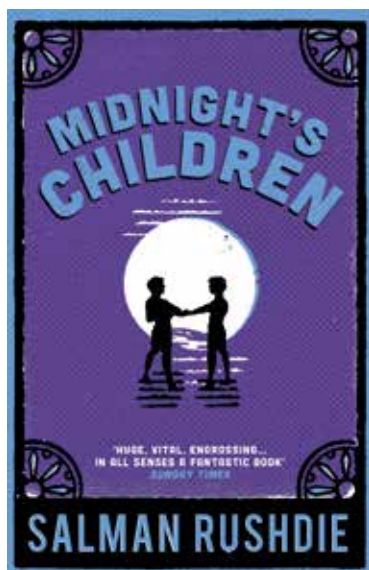
TOP 5 TRAVEL NOVELS

Have you ever noticed the most dedicated travellers are also the most voracious readers, with bucket lists of destinations as big as their to-read lists? Books and travels are both forms of enjoyable escapism – and they go brilliantly together. Five well-travelled lovers of literature reveal the books that influenced their own travels – near or far. These novels have acted as a catalyst and inspired readers to pack their bags and go in search of the people and places depicted within...



MARKETING DIRECTOR, LISA WARNER

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie



Awarded not just the Booker prize but also the 'Booker of Bookers', I always felt that *Midnight's Children* was a book I really should have read. And yet for some reason it sat on the shelf untouched for a lot longer than I care to admit. Last month, it finally won its long-awaited place in the holiday suitcase. I expected to be impressed by Rushdie's literary prowess. I was less sure whether I'd really enjoy the book – especially as I'm yet to experience India first hand. What was unexpected, though, was that reading the story would awaken an overwhelming desire to visit India. This is a very Indian novel. Set in India and written by an Indian author, it tells the epic and magical tale of Saleem Sinai, born on the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947 – the moment 70 years ago when the country gained independence from the British Raj. It doesn't so much teach you Indian history – it immerses you in it from start to finish as you follow the nation's violent, tragic, and sometimes optimistic rebirth through Saleem's story. It also portrays India while avoiding any romanticism. Rushdie's India is "hot and messy and vulgar and crowded and noisy". But it's also colourful, mystical and sensual. Bombay leaps off the pages as a city where east meets west, and wealth, business, politics and humanity mingle to create a vibrant melting pot of a city that demands to be visited. It's a novel that's full of energy and excess – much as I suspect India is to the uninitiated. Suffice to say, my plans are already well advanced for a trip to India to compare modern day Mumbai with that of Rushdie's opus.

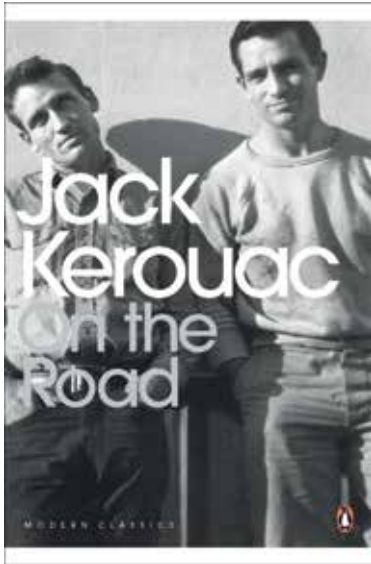


TV SPORTS PRESENTER, JILL DOUGLAS

Swallows and Amazons by Arthur Ransome

Although not technically a piece of travel fiction, *Swallows and Amazons* reminds me of summer sunshine, long school holidays and childhood adventures with family and friends. It also paints a glorious picture of the Lake District, a corner of our beautiful country which continues to inspire poets, writers and artists. I worked in Cumbria for several years as a young reporter and presenter with Border TV and looked forward to forays into the Lakes with my crew to cover local news stories. The fun and freedom of the Blackett and Walker children still make me smile.





PRODUCT MANAGER, CHARLOTTE WELLS

On the Road by Jack Kerouac

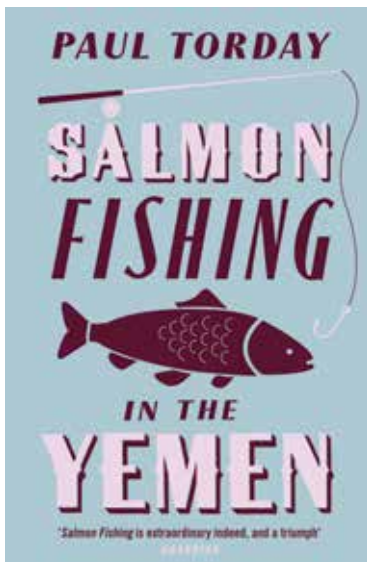
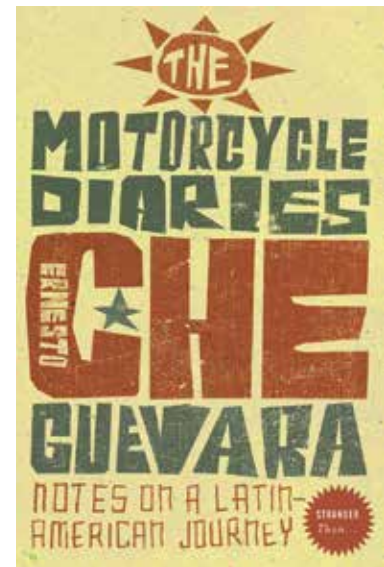
On 5 September 1957, the *New York Times* published a review of *On the Road*. The reviewer, Gilbert Millstein, called it: “The most beautifully executed, the clearest and the most important utterance yet made by the generation Kerouac himself named years ago as ‘beat’, and whose principal avatar he is.” This zeitgeist book defined the post-war counterculture generation. It became hugely popular; Bob Dylan said it changed his life. The ultimate American road-trip novel, it’s impossible to imagine a book like Hunter S Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* or films such as *Easy Rider* or *Thelma and Louise* if *On the Road* hadn’t come first. The book is a loose, thinly-veiled autobiography starring Kerouac as Sal Paradise and Neal Cassady as Dean Moriarty. The story opens amid a freezing winter in New York City, 1947. Sal, Dean and their fellow disaffected, bohemian ‘beats’ are feeling the call of the wild. They want to hit the road and head out west. *On the Road* follows Sal and Dean on their zigzag journey across the United States in search of the elusive, ultimately never to be found ‘it’ – “the moment when you know all and everything is decided forever”. A must read for anyone who has ever daydreamed of an epic road trip.



PRODUCT MANAGER, GRAEME BULL

The Motorcycle Diaries by Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara

What led a would-be doctor from an affluent Argentinian family to help Castro overthrow a US-backed government and attempt to start a rebellion in Bolivia? Set in 1952, *The Motorcycle Diaries* is the story of Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, a 23-year-old medical student, and his friend Alberto Granado, a 29-year-old biochemist, who leave Buenos Aires on the back of *La Poderosa* – a 1939 Norton 500cc motorbike – to explore the South America they’d only read about. These coming-of-age memoirs track their nine months, and 8,000km of travel – by bike, steamship, raft, horse, bus and hitchhiking – to places including the Andes, the Atacama Desert and the Amazon River basin. During their travels, Guevara witnesses the social injustices of exploited mine workers, persecuted communists, ostracised lepers and the tattered descendants of a once-great Inca civilization. The diary ends with a declaration by Guevara, born into an upper-middle class family, in which he proclaims his willingness to fight and die for the cause of the poor, and his dream of seeing a united Latin America.



CONTENT STRATEGIST, STEVE COOK

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen by Paul Torday

Torday’s comedic, romantic novel is based on an impossible premise – fishing in the desert. Through a combination of emails, diary entries, letters and transcripts, Torday takes you on the extraordinary journey of one man’s desire to introduce salmon into the Yemen. Dr Alfred Jones, the man tasked with making the impossible possible, describes a wonderfully raw picture of his first experiences of the Middle East. His words paint a vivid picture of faraway places and untouched landscapes. In your mind’s eye, you can’t help but imagine the towering mountains, glittering blue oases dappled with sunlight, and of course the scorched desert – a sea of sand which spans as far as the eye can see. As the Yemeni natives say: “*Al-Yemen balad jameel*” – (the Yemen is a beautiful country).



LAST OF THE SUMMER SUN

COMPILED BY LIZ HARPER



Castello Del Nero, Tuscany



For anyone unconfined by school holiday restrictions, September and pre-half term October time really are the holiday holy grail – offering some of Europe and North Africa's best destinations, without the hordes, and at reduced prices. The A&K team provide you with a sneaky peak at the best places to head for some sun this autumn.

VERDURA RESORT, SICILY

RECOMMENDED BY ELLIE HUGHES,
A&K TRAVEL SPECIALIST

Sciacca in southern Sicily is best known for its thermal waters, seafood and wine. Travel in September and you can indulge in all three, and do so while the air is still warm, the beaches are empty, and the annual grape harvest festivities are in full flow. As the second largest wine-producing region in Italy, there'll be plenty of tipples on offer, and the Planeta Winery, just a short drive from the hotel, is well worth a visit. If you fancy enhancing your culinary skills, cooking classes will equip you with the wherewithal to whip up a tasty regional speciality on your return home. Culture vultures will enjoy a trip to Agrigento, home to the Valley of the Temples, one of the most significant archaeological sites in Sicily. The super stylish spa and golf resort of Verdura, west of the baroque town of Sciacca, offers uninterrupted views of the glistening azure Med from virtually every vantage point. With golf, football and tennis academies on site, water sports aplenty and complimentary bikes for exploring the resort, there's loads to keep even the most active visitor entertained. The indoor pool and state of the art gym are there for the asking, while if it's rest and relaxation you're looking for, the spa offers serenity and indulgence galore.

CASTELLO DEL NERO, TUSCANY

RECOMMENDED BY REBECCA COX,
A&K TRAVEL SPECIALIST

Oozing with 900 years of history and architectural heritage, this beauty of a property sits in the heart of the Chianti wine region and boasts its own Michelin-starred restaurant, La Torre: not bad for starters (or mains or desserts). Add to this the 300 hectares of olive groves and vines (both olive oil and wine are produced on site), an ESPA spa with outdoor Vitality pool, a Turkish hammam, ice fountains and fitness suite, and a complimentary shuttle service to Florence and Siena, and you'll be hard pushed to find a better choice in the region. The air is still warm in September and October, and a hot-air balloon flight over the Tuscan hills will provide a bird's-eye view of the burnt orange autumnal landscape. The grape harvest in September is cause for great celebrations, with wine festivals taking place throughout the month. What better time of year for a guided tour of the local vineyards in a classic Fiat 500 or tuk-tuk? For ice-cream lovers, there's a behind the scenes glimpse of the Italian gelateria – tasting compulsory, of course. Foodies can have a guided market tour, cookery lesson, or maybe a truffle hunt, followed by a feast at the hunter's local restaurant. If you're looking for *la dolce vita*, look no further.



Verdura Resort in Sicily

LA MAMOUNIA, MARRAKECH

RECOMMENDED BY AURELIA VAN LYNDEN,
A&K CHAIRMAN'S CLUB MANAGER

October is arguably the best time of year to visit Marrakech, the city has shaken off the oppressive summer heat, and basks in deliciously warm temperatures. It's perfect for city exploration, or luxuriating in the grounds of exclusive property, La Mamounia. A five-minute walk will see you transported into the drama of Djemaa el-Fna, Marrakech's famous square. Historically a place of public execution – the square's name means 'assembly of the dead' – it's now buzzing 24/7 with snake-charmers, musicians and street theatre. By day it's intriguing, but at night the square really comes into its own, with acrobatic displays, storytellers, music and street food vendors. It's hard to believe you're staying so close to the action, but back at the hotel, the frenetic pace of the square seems a million miles away. The pool provides an idyllic spot to sip a refreshing mint tea, the snow-capped Atlas mountains creating a really rather spectacular backdrop. Sport enthusiasts will love the tennis courts and Pilates sessions, while those looking for R&R can chill out in the spa. Fashionistas may be aware that Morocco is said to have been the inspiration for much of Yves Saint Laurent's work, and October sees the exciting opening of a museum in the city devoted to the legendary fashion designer's work – you could be one of the first to visit.

ELOUNDA BEACH HOTEL & VILLAS, CRETE

RECOMMENDED BY JOHN BERRY,
A&K PRODUCT MANAGER, EUROPE

When the hordes of families that flock to the island in the school holidays have all dispersed, Crete basks under a late summer sun, and is very much still open for business as usual, making it a blissful time to visit. The traditionally Cretan-style Elounda Beach Hotel & Villas complex is scattered amid 16



Crete's Elounda Beach Hotel & Spa

hectares of landscaped grounds beside the mountain-backed Bay of Mirabello. The property, a Leading Hotel of the World, offers sensational views of the Aegean Sea, and access to two private, sandy beaches and an outdoor saltwater pool from which to enjoy them. The glistening turquoise waters remain warm late into the season, and seafront rooms with steps down to the beach provide a little piece of personal paradise for those who love swimming in the sea. If you suffer from itchy feet on holiday, there's tennis, mini-golf, scuba diving, water sports, and a health and fitness club offering yoga, Pilates and aerobics on site. Stay for a week and you can dine in a different restaurant every night, enjoying worldwide cuisine from Greek to Japanese to Peruvian. Outside the resort you'll find charming villages and beautiful scenery. If you've read Victoria Hislop's historical blockbuster novel *The Island*, a visit to Spinalonga, a former leper colony and the location of her tale of love, secrecy and devastation is an absolute must. And while a helicopter tour will provide some amazing views of this Greek goddess, scuba diving lessons will bring you an altogether different, although no less incredible, perspective of life under her ocean borders. ☺

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DETOXING IN THE DOLOMITES

BY ALICE PAISLEY, SKI PRODUCT MANAGER



Alpina Dolomites Health Lodge & Spa

Summer is barely over, the autumn school term only just begun, yet already thoughts are turning towards winter – and more specifically, the snow. With just under two months to go before the lifts and gondolas are brought out of hibernation, anticipation is mounting over the coming ski season, and with many resort hotels set to reveal new offerings for 2017/18, there's plenty to be excited about.

“ A SKI TRIP IS THE PERFECT WAY TO CONTINUE YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING REGIME WHILE STILL EXPERIENCING THE BEST OF ALPINE HOSPITALITY ”

But it's not all vin chaud and tartiflette on the slopes this year – we haven't worked out all summer to get beach ready just to snuggle down into a Argyll sweater and indulge in the comfort, cosiness and conviviality of the Danish phenomenon of *hygge*. On the contrary, a ski trip is the perfect way to continue your health and wellbeing regime while still experiencing the best of Alpine hospitality. And when it comes to the top mountain detox destination, at Abercrombie & Kent we believe the Dolomites



Mont Chalet

range is the outright winner. Home to a host of hotels recently introduced to our portfolio, specifically chosen for their spa and wellness offerings, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is the up and coming destination for those looking to succour the mind, body and soul, both on and off the slopes.

Marching across the north-eastern border of Italy, the Dolomites extend over the provinces of South Tyrol, Alta Badia and Trentino. The region is scattered with picture-perfect resorts and boasts spectacular skiing – not least the famous 40km Sellaronda route, looping around the Sella mountain range. But as well as the usual pilgrimage by slaves to the snow, this year the area is also set to welcome a host of wellness worshippers.

Brand new for this season, and leading the charge in the pursuit of wellbeing, is Mont Chalet. Located in the resort of Urtijëi (also known as Ortisei) in the Val Gardena region, this anything-but-simple boutique hotel stands by its carefully-chosen watchwords:



Rosa Alpina



Mont Chalet's pool

exclusive, unique and private. With just 16 suites all enjoying their own outdoor hot-tub or Jacuzzi, the small spa is all of those things. As well as pampering the body, you can give your brain some mental training in the Nu Relax Floatation Bed. Subtle audio and lighting combine to help users reach new levels of meditation on this 'floating' bed, harnessing the latest neuroscience to create a sense of heightened wellbeing.

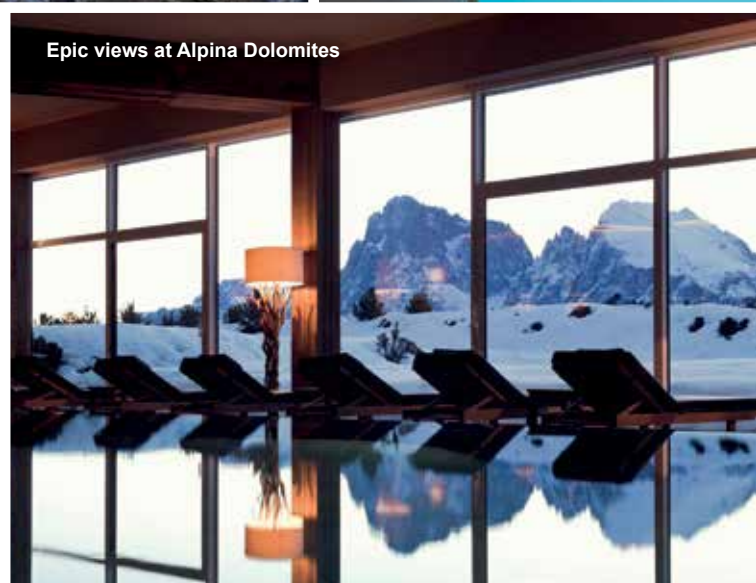
Venture higher into the mountains and you'll discover the Alpina Dolomites Health Lodge & Spa Hotel. Perched on the top plateau of Alpe di Suisi, this is the ideal location to benefit from high-altitude living. Seemingly parachuted in from the skies, the hotel blends perfectly into its Alpine location, offering pure air and pristine surrounds. With a dedicated beauty farm and award-winning detox programmes which extend all the way from the massage table to your plate, Alpina Dolomites is ideal for those in search of complete escapism. And as it also has direct access to the ski slopes, you can even escape the lift queues.

Back down in the plunging valley of the Dolomites, in the elegant resort of San Cassiano lies the family run Rosa Alpina. Following a two-year extension programme, this hotel claims to offer the region's leading spa and wellness facilities. Adult-only areas promise peace and quiet, while yoga and expert-led holistic weekend packages can be combined with a night or two in nearby Venice or Lake Garda. For those in search of more bobbing in spa baths and less bombing down slopes, Rosa Alpina is our top tip for this coming winter.

So if you're seeking a little serenity along with your skiing, and want to come back from holiday relaxed rather than exhilarated, we recommend you head to the Dolomites this season. Take your choice from our top picks, and we guarantee you'll return with mind, body and soul in peak condition. ©

| THE DOLOMITES |

For more information on ski chalets and hotels, or to discuss your next Alpine adventure, call our ski-holiday specialists on 01242 547 705.



Epic views at Alpina Dolomites



Time to reflect at Alpina Dolomites

A&K PHILANTHROPY OFF TO A GOOD START

Nakatindi Clinic's first dedicated maternity unit has opened its doors, transforming maternal health in Nakatindi Village, Zambia

According to UNICEF, Zambia is among the 25 countries in the world with the highest numbers of pregnant women living with HIV. Approximately 28,000 babies are born HIV positive every year.

Nakatindi is a small community, which sits on the outskirts of Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park in Zambia. It is located approximately five kilometres from Sanctuary Sussi & Chuma – a lodge that is popular with Abercrombie & Kent's guests.

Believing that the people of the local community should also benefit from tourism in their area, A&K Philanthropy (AKP) – A&K's charitable foundation – has partnered with the village to help improve the area. Projects that AKP has initiated in this area include drilling clean-water wells and opening a new school and shop to provide both employment and education.

In 2013, AKP constructed a healthcare clinic in the area, which now cares for approximately 50 people daily. The foundation's latest programme, the new maternity unit, expands the services offered at the clinic and will transform maternal health within this community and surrounding area.

The unit has increased access to maternal care and will improve the chances of early diagnosis and treatment of HIV for both mothers and their partners, as well as providing ongoing support and health monitoring post-delivery. Family planning and vaccinations for under-fives are also being offered.

A key objective is providing pregnant mothers with complete treatment to prevent transmission of HIV to their babies. Currently, only 19 per cent of women will report to a health facility for antenatal care within the first 12 weeks of their pregnancy. Furthermore, a skilled health worker attends only 47 per



cent of births and only 39 per cent of women receive a postnatal check up from a health professional following delivery. At each stage, there are numerous missed opportunities for identifying HIV status, commencing treatment and providing continued monitoring and support. Access to antiretroviral drugs is key in preventing mother-to-child transmission.

The new unit is equipped to target these problems. By reducing the delay in the diagnosis of HIV and removing the current pattern of sporadic treatment and care (or no treatment in many cases), the transmission rates from mother to child during pregnancy, labour or breastfeeding decrease from up to 45 per cent to just below five per cent.

Although a complex and vast challenge, the collective work of smaller initiatives on a local scale can accumulate to have a nationwide, or even a global, impact.

For A&K guests travelling to the Victoria Falls region, visits to the clinic and maternity unit can be arranged. Seeing this facility in person shows how it has become the beating heart of the village. It provides the chance to understand the challenges and solutions with healthcare in this corner of Zambia.

While healthcare services in developing Zambia may be under significant strain, with projects like this, combining the efforts of both locals and tourists, solutions can be found. This is just the start – but what a great start it is.

WORDS: AMBERLIE HYDE & CAMILLA RHODES





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