

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

SUNDOWNER

S/S 2018 £4

ERECTED TO COMMEMORATE THE LANDING
IN INDIA OF THEIR IMPERIAL MAJESTIES
KING GEORGE V AND QUEEN MARY

Mumbai

GATEWAY TO ANOTHER INDIA

WHAT'S COOKING?

LATIN AMERICA'S
RESTAURANT SCENE
IS SIZZLING

RENAISSANCE MASTER

EXPERIENCE
EGYPT'S REBIRTH

WILD THINGS

SEEKING OUT
UGANDA'S
GORILLAS

Abercrombie & Kent



Abercrombie & Kent

SOMETIMES THE KEY TO THE PERFECT HOLIDAY IS HAVING IT

ALL DONE FOR YOU.

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.

To find out about A&K's range of Discover itineraries,
call our travel specialists on **01242 547 760**
or visit **abercrombiekent.co.uk/discover**



DEAR TRAVELLER

Happy New Year! Abercrombie & Kent saw an amazing 12 months in 2017. We were awarded one of the industry's most prestigious plaudits when the readers of *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Times Travel Magazine* voted us 2017's Best Luxury Tour Operator at the Travel Awards. We were pleased and proud to receive this award and I would like to personally thank you for voting for us, and for your continued support.

In this issue of *Sundowner*, travel writer Ianthe Butt takes us on a behind the scenes tour of the grande dames of the hotel world; Stan Cullimore goes gorilla trekking in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest; and *The Sunday Times Travel Magazine's* Nick Redman finds that Egypt is back in business.

We also have Jo Lamiri on Latin America's gastronomic scene. Famous for its ancient ruins and spectacular scenery, Peru can now add cuisine to its appeal; or you can explore the Amazon on a luxury cruise to see where many indigenous ingredients come from.

I'm looking forward to exploring new frontiers and reaching new destinations in 2018 and no matter how you choose to travel – for a long weekend or joining one of my month-long expeditions via private jet – as always, I wish you happy travels...



Geoffrey Kent

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Abercrombie & Kent Group
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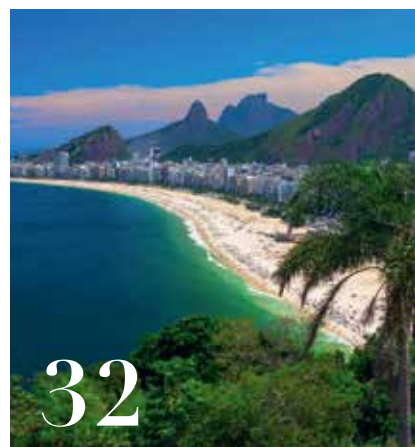
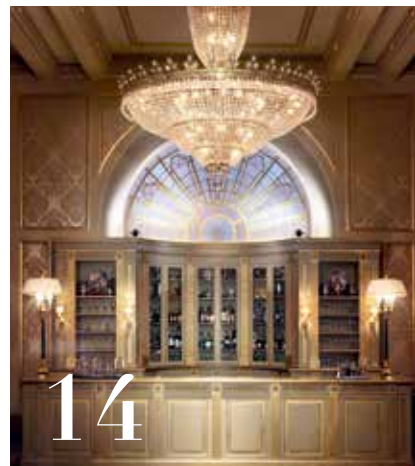
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And the winner is...

A&K was thrilled to have been crowned 2017's Best Luxury Tour Operator at the fifth annual News UK Travel Awards. This accolade is voted for by the readers of *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Sunday Times Travel Magazine*. We were delighted to receive such positive feedback – many thanks to those who voted for us. Here's to an equally successful 2018.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CITY BY APPOINTMENT

A&K's City by Appointment is celebrating its first birthday – and what a year it's been for this successful service. In early 2017, in response to feedback from strapped for time city workers, it launched. CBA sees travel specialist, Elizabeth Patch, journeying to meet clients in locations convenient to our patrons – at desks, in lobbies, bijou coffee shops, anywhere at all. Proving especially popular with customers is meeting CBA's travel specialist at The Ned. Located in Cheapside, The Ned, the latest offering from the Soho Group, is London's hottest members-only club.



Bush TELEGRAPH

NEWS FROM A&K AND THE WIDE WORLD OF TRAVEL

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

Sanctuary Retreat's flagship camp – Chief's Camp in Botswana – reopened recently after a major refurb. It's a veritable land of taupe and glory – all blond wood and pale fabrics, tactile materials and sweeping views of Big Five country. The new family-friendly Geoffrey Kent suite has its own kitchen, fire pit and bar, plus a dedicated butler and guide. The camp has reopened to great fanfare, sweeping the travel awards boards. It was named Botswana's Leading Safari Lodge 2017 at the World Travel Awards, voted number four resort in all Africa in the *Condé Nast Traveller Readers' Choice Awards*, one of *Tatler* magazine's 101 best hotels in the world, as well as gracing the *Travel+Leisure* It List 2017.



SANCTUARY OLONANA REOPENS

In June 2018, Sanctuary Olonana will relaunch as an exceptional luxury lodge, which impressively showcases modern design blended with distinct traditional African finishes. Sanctuary Olonana is set in lush woodland on the banks of the Mara River in the Masai Mara, where the great outdoors is invited inside the 14 new glass-sided suites. Famous for soul-warming service and exceptional customer experience, the lodge is already regarded as one of the top safari properties in East Africa. It was named the best resort in Africa *Condé Nast Traveler's* 2017 Readers' Choice Awards. Never happy to rest on its laurels, this refurb represents the latest phase in Sanctuary Retreats' extensive investment programme.



FLYING HIGH

THE NEW FLIGHT ROUTES
THAT WE'RE MOST
EXCITED ABOUT
IN 2018



BRITISH AIRWAYS is launching direct flights to Nashville from Heathrow. Debuting in May 2018, with five departures per week (not Thursday or Sunday), this service will utilise BA's brand-new fleet of Boeing 787 Dreamliners. Exciting news for music lovers, who have had to fly via hubs such as Atlanta or Miami since the mid 1980s.

The airline is also debuting a new direct route to the Seychelles – the first non-stop service to the islands from the UK. This service takes off in March 2018 and will operate twice a week from London Heathrow on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Travellers opting to use this service will depart on Wednesdays or Saturdays and return on Thursdays or Sundays.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC has announced a partnership with Air France/KLM on flights to North America, enhancing its existing partnership with Delta Air Lines. This partnership

will provide over 300 daily transatlantic flights servicing 370 destinations across the UK, Europe and North America.

The carrier is also breaking ground as the first airline in Europe to offer wifi to passengers across its entire fleet. Surfing the web while in the sky will cost from as little as £2.99 per flight.

EMIRATES is set to introduce a fourth daily service from Dubai to Sydney in March 2018. This flight will be operated on the airline's iconic A380 aircraft.

QANTAS The Australian airline has announced it will switch the refuelling stop on its flagship route from Heathrow to Sydney and back. Dubai is to be ditched from March 2018 as the airline reverts to Singapore as a stopping point.

IN OTHER AIRLINE NEWS:

British Airways has entered an exciting partnership with Velocys, a renewable fuels company, to create jet fuel from waste. Velocys plans to convert post-recycled household waste destined for landfill into renewable jet fuel to power BA's fleet. This fuel is expected to deliver a 60 per cent greenhouse gas reduction and 90 per cent reduction in particle matter emissions compared with conventional jet fuel. It's all part of the airline's plan to develop long-term, sustainable fuel options.



The temple of Karnak in Luxor, Egypt



Ladakh



Andilana beach, Madagascar



Monks at Angkor Wat in Cambodia



Nashville, the home of country music



Cala d'Hort, Ibiza

A&K's top destinations to head for in 2018

THE HOTTEST PLACES TO TRAVEL IN THE YEAR AHEAD

THE INDIAN HIMALAYA

The hottest destination on the Indian subcontinent at the moment is Ladakh and the Indian foothills of the Himalaya. Ladakh is located in the northern reaches of India's highlands, its mountain walking trails offering an alternative to the Nepalese Himalaya. The hottest hotel in the region is the Oberoi's Wildflower Hall resort in nearby Shimla. The ideal spot for a true digital detox – unplug at this mountain retreat. Big-cat lovers will enjoy staying at the five-room Snow Leopard Lodge in what was the home of a top leopard tracker. Located in the small village of Ulley in Ladakh, seeing ibex, urial, wolf, Himalayan fox, vulture, golden eagle as well as snow leopard is more likely than in most spots.

A nine-night holiday to the Indian Himalaya starts at £2,195pp and includes flights, transfers, selected meals, excursions and accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 755.



A snow leopard



Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay

IBIZA

For years, Ibiza has been known as Europe's dance mecca. In recent years though, things have been subtly changing on the White Isle as the island evolves and chills out. Millennials, in search of a new scene, are opting to club elsewhere, DJs are exiting their residencies, and famed clubs like Space are closing their doors. In response, opening on the island are a new wave of high-end hotels to welcome a new breed of slightly older guests. These 30-something former ravers are still making their annual pilgrimages, though now with their children in tow. Those who partied until dawn are now flocking to hotels such as the newly opened Nobu Hotel Ibiza Bay – a game-changer for the island – to have a tranquil holiday in this beautiful place.

A seven-night holiday stay at Nobu Ibiza starts at £1,295pp and includes flights, private transfers and selected meals. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 703.

NASHVILLE

There's been a buzz around the state capital of Tennessee since the *Nashville* TV series, starring Connie Britton and Hayden Panettiere, hit our screens in 2013. Just like the show, Nashville at its core is all about the country music scene, but in the same way artists such as Taylor Swift and Lady Antebellum have helped shift perceptions about the genre, Nashville is no longer just about the Grand Ole Opry and cowboy boots. Nicknamed "Nowville" by American GQ, the city has undergone a renaissance in recent years. Formerly shabby neighbourhoods like 12 South and East Nashville are being regenerated. Behind this gentrification are hip new residents who have flocked to the city in recent years. The foodie scene is also thriving thanks to artisans like those at work in Five Daughters Bakery. In May 2018, British Airways will launch direct flights from London Heathrow to America's self-proclaimed Music City – making it easier for travellers to reach the beguiling birthplace of country music and America's new capital of cool.

A three-night holiday starts at £1,350pp and includes flights, transfers and accommodation. Valid for departures from 4 May to 30 June 2018. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 717.



Colourful Nashville

CAMBODIA

Thailand and Vietnam have traditionally stolen the spotlight in southeast Asia, but for 2018 the star of the show is going to be Cambodia, with new hotels springing up reflecting this shift in tourism hotspots in the region. Due to open in 2018 is a 40-pool-villa resort by Six Senses on the private island of Krabey. The all-villa, private island resort of Alila Villas Koh Russey will join uber-luxe Song Saa in the Koh Rong archipelago. Opening in mid 2018, Shinta Mani Wild Private Nature Sanctuary is by Bangkok-based, Harvard-alumnus architect and landscape designer Bill Bensley. Known as the king of exotic luxury resorts, Bensley is behind some of the most spectacular resorts in Asia. He's been named one of the world's top 100 designers in both *Time Magazine* and *Architectural Digest*. Shinta Mani Wild is a radical new concept in accommodation in Cambodia – a luxurious tented camp, located in one of the most unspoiled wildernesses in the region, in a wildlife corridor connecting Bokor and Kirirom National Parks, along a two-mile stretch of waterway. There's even talk of guests zip-lining into reception – a thrilling entrance. No longer will travellers just dip into this country to do Angkor Wat and Phnom Penh – Cambodia is finally claiming its position as a standalone tourist destination.

A 16-night holiday starts at £4,850pp and includes flights, excursions, transfers and accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 895.



Argentina's Lake District

ARGENTINA

Argentina is having a moment. In a continent that was all about Brazil, eyes and expectations are turning south to Argentina. Valentine's Day 2018 will see the inaugural Norwegian Airlines nonstop flight from Gatwick to Buenos Aires. In addition, Norwegian is opening a subsidiary to fly domestic and regional services in Argentina's interior, opening up this destination like never before. Plus, it's less expensive than ever – the government is waiving the value-added tax on lodgings in an effort to encourage tourism. With restaurants like Tegui in Buenos Aires dishing up culinary wonders, Argentina's food scene is getting noticed. The country was crowned South America's leading culinary destination 2017 at the World Travel Awards. Now's the time to explore Buenos Aires; bright spark Salta in the northwest with its surrounding vineyards and boutique estancias; the Iberá Wetlands, where you can go on the gaucho trail and swim with horses; or explore the epicly beautiful Lake District.

A 12-night holiday starts at £5,540pp and includes all flights, private transfers, selected meals and luxurious accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 701.



MADAGASCAR

The Big Five aren't the only animals that are worth travelling for when it comes to African wildlife. Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island, is a paradise for wildlife lovers. It's a biodiversity hot spot with about 75 per cent of the species living on Madagascar found nowhere else on Earth – the island was marooned when supercontinent Gondwana broke up 180 million years ago. In the island's forests, half the world's chameleons and 28 species of lemur are to be found. Last June saw the opening of Miavana on the private island of Nosy Ankao, finally bringing luxurious accommodation to Madagascar's shores. This 14-bedroom beach resort is set within a protected marine area for underwater wildlife spotting. Expect other luxury properties to follow soon. Travellers, too, are taking note: in 2016 the island welcomed 293,000 visitors – up from 244,000 in 2015. At A&K, Madagascar has seen an increase of a whopping 120 per cent in bookings in the last year.

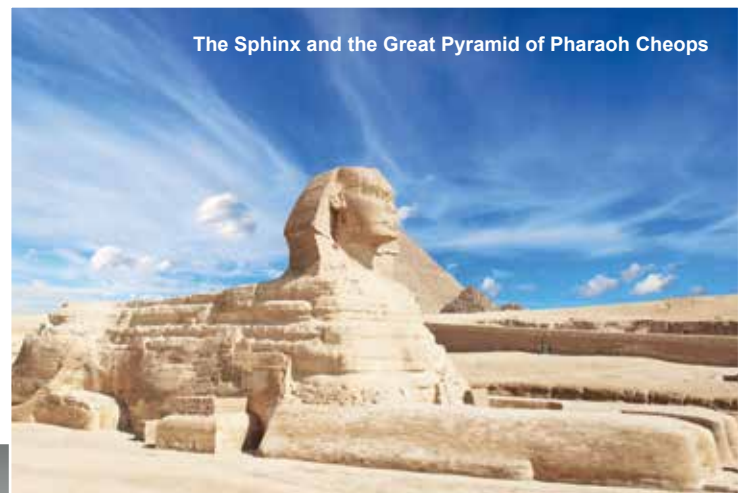
A 12-night holiday starts at £4,635pp and includes all flights, private transfers, selected meals and accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 702.



EGYPT

This ancient country is awash with optimism right now. There are new hotel openings to entice, such as the 39-storey St Regis in the heart of old Cairo. New archaeological sites are being discovered regularly – a trio of rock-tombs were unearthed 200 kilometres south of Cairo and another on the left bank near the Valley of the Kings believed to be the resting place of a goldsmith. Most excitingly, just beyond the Great Pyramids of Giza, the world's largest archaeological museum, the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) will open in 2018. Tutankhamun's chariot and funeral bed are among the big-ticket items that will be on display. "A bucket-list destination for centuries, there has never been a better time to travel to Egypt," says Geoffrey Kent, A&K's founder, chairman and CEO. "Not only is the country buzzing with renewed confidence, but its many fabled sites are free of crowds and open to in the know travellers. The experience for tourists in Egypt right now is as welcoming and upbeat as I've ever seen it, but the ability to see the pyramids without crowds won't last long."

A 10-night holiday starts at £2,195 and includes flights, private transfers, selected meals, excursions and luxurious accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 703.



TASMANIA

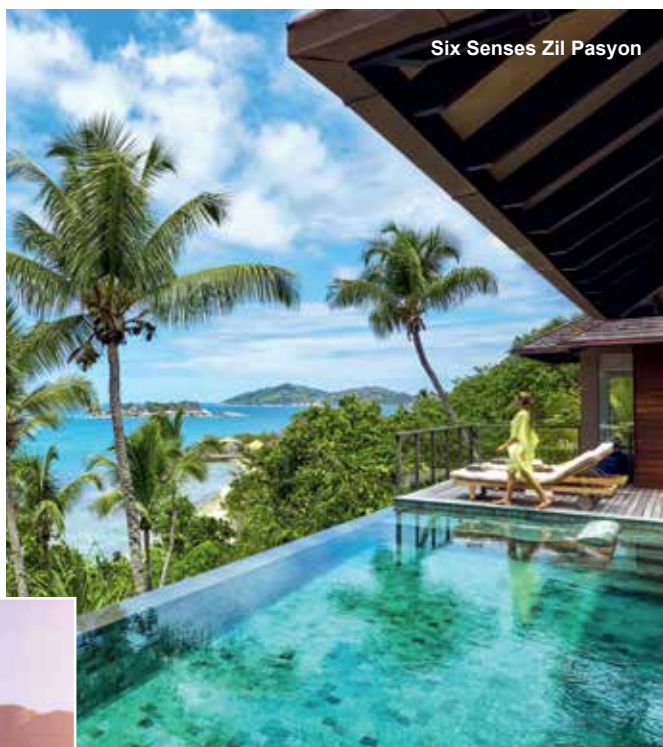
No longer just known for its eponymous devil, Tasmania is renowned as Australia's newest gourmet hot spot thanks to its rich produce and innovative chefs including Steve Cumper and Alistair Wise. The Michelin guide is even said to be taking note, but the stellar food is just one reason to visit. Hobart is emerging as a hub of cool. The taste-making team behind luxury hotel Saffire Freycinet just launched a new "story-telling" hotel in Hobart. When MACq 01 opened its doors on the city's waterfront, it instantly made its mark. Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) is also a huge draw. The museum's annual cultural festival, MONA FOMA, has been garnering praise since its inception in 2008. In addition, MONA's owner has announced he is expanding his Tasmanian cultural empire. Details of a mammoth 172-room, five-star hotel on the MONA site have been released. Dubbed HOMO (Hotel MONA), it will be inspired by the Golden Gate Bridge. Expected to cost AUD\$300 million, it will take three years to build. Tasmania is primed and ready to take its rightful place on the Australian tourism scene.

A 12-night holiday starts at £2,850pp and includes flights, car hire and boutique accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 826.

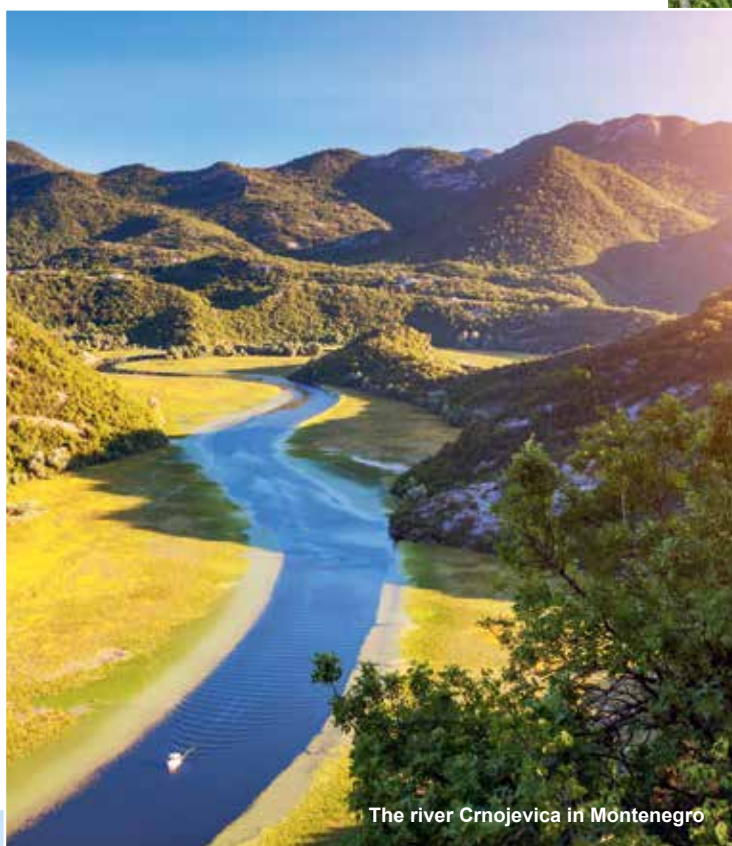
SEYCHELLES

There are island paradises and then there are the Seychelles – granite and coral islands made up of lush forests, black-rock formations and some of the world’s best beaches. From 24 March 2018, it’s going to be easier than ever before to get to the 115-island nation in the western Indian Ocean. Described as a game-changer for the Seychelles tourism scene, British Airways is set to fly nonstop from Heathrow to Mahé twice a week. And when you get there, the newly opened Six Senses Zil Pasyon, located on the private island of Félicité, is wowing guests. In addition, around the time these new flights land, 71-room Four Seasons Resort Seychelles at Desroches will open its jetty to the first guests.

A seven-night holiday starts at £4,175pp and includes flights, transfer and accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 708.



Six Senses Zil Pasyon



The river Crnojevica in Montenegro

MONTENEGRO

For years, Montenegro has been quietly attracting savvy travellers looking for an Adriatic beauty spot, minus the crowds, but suddenly all eyes are turning to this country in the Balkans, with some even dubbing it “the new Croatia”. With even more hordes arriving on Croatia’s shores, thanks to the *Game of Thrones* effect, Montenegro’s charming towns, pretty countryside and beautiful beaches are more appealing than ever. The yacht set are loving the (relatively) new, multi-million-pound marina in Tivat. The area’s most renowned hotel, Aman Sveti Stefan, will soon be joined by the 140-room One&Only Portonovi, which is due to open in 2018 at the entrance to Boka Bay.

A four-night holiday starts at £1,995pp and includes flights, transfers, selected meals and accommodation. Call an A&K travel specialist on 01242 547 703.



Aman Sveti Stefan



No you haven't died and gone to heaven. Although you'd be forgiven for thinking you had when you step into Tasmania's Garden of Eden. Before you know it you'll be plucking fresh oysters straight from the water while sipping fine wines and sampling the freshest local fare Mother Nature can conjure. However, it's the passion and ingenuity of the local characters that will capture your heart and soul, while their colourful stories will stay with you forever.

Come on, dip your toe in... call A&K's travel specialists on 01242 547 826





in the KNOW

Here's our scoop on the most exciting hotel openings



AWASI IGUAZÚ, ARGENTINA

The team behind two Chilean design-forward hotels is branching out westwards into Argentina. One of South America's most hotly anticipated new properties, the debut of Awasi Iguazú was a wonderful Christmas gift for travellers when it opened in December, 2017. Located in the Misiones province, a mere 15 minutes from the Iguazú Falls, this hotel is designed to be intimate and have minimal environmental impact. The 14 private, stilted villas all sit on the banks of the Iguazú river, and each has a private plunge pool, outdoor shower, spacious living area and dedicated 4x4 and guide. There will be biologist-led trips to the falls and sunset boat rides on the river. In addition, this will be a great base to explore what remains of the Atlantic rainforest.



SEVEN PINES, IBIZA

Welcome to the softer side of this once hard-partying island. The beat of house music has faded in recent years while the volume on the high-end, deluxe hotels has been turned up. Due to open in the first quarter of 2018, Seven Pines Resort Ibiza is a member of the Leading Hotels of the World. Perched on a clifftop and surrounded by pine forest, above a secluded cove called Cala Codolar, the all-suite resort will offer 195 keycards to its one- and two-bed villas, three restaurants, two bars, two pools and a medi-wellness spa, as well as a sleek Pershing yacht for transfers and charters. Views of esoterically renowned Es Vedrà island and the Med provide the backdrop to the classically Balearic, white-box design of this hotel.



Iguazu Falls, Argentina



CAPELLA UBUD, BALI

In January, Capella Ubud launches as an ultra-luxe 22-tent camp in Bali's rainforest. This resort has been brought to life by hotel-designing, superstar-architect Bill Bensley, who ensured no trees were harmed in the making of the camp. Surrounded by dense forest and paddy fields, the property is set on the banks of the sacred Wos River, where the Balinese regularly gather for festive processions. The culturally immersive camp also features a library, canopied cistern pool, tented gym, robatayaki grill and an Auriga spa and wellness retreat. As if all that wasn't enough, each stay includes the services of a Capella Personal Assistant, who will curate a bespoke stay for each guest.

KUDADOO, MALDIVES

Straw hats off to the team behind Kudadoo Private Island by Hurawalhi, due to open in summer 2018. When it opens, it will join the ranks of a select few private islands already raising the bar for chic castaway island resorts in the archipelago. Serviced by the adjacent Hurawalhi Maldives resort in the Lhaviyani Atoll, a mere five-minute boat ride away, this exclusive-use, grown ups-only island features 15 villas. Designed by Yuji Yamazaki of YYA New York, all elegant villas are over-water and butler-serviced. If guests can bear to leave their patch of private paradise, Hurawalhi features a fun, all-glass undersea restaurant – the largest in the Maldives.

ON OUR RADAR: OTHER OPENINGS IN EARLY 2018

Best known for its high-end city hotels including The Carlyle in New York and Hôtel du Crillon in Paris, the Rosewood group is adding to its empire with a new opening in Laos in spring. Designed and built by Bill Bensley, the **Rosewood Luang Prabang** will be set within a forest, by the Mekong River. Its 22 rooms include five luxury tents. This spring, the landmark Astir Palace will debut, after an extensive, \$100-million-dollar renovation, as the **Four Seasons Astir Palace Hotel Athens**. The first Four Seasons in Greece, the hotel sits on 30 hectares on the Athenian Riviera and will have 300 rooms. Also in spring, on Cable Beach in Nassau, Bahamas, **Rosewood Baha Mar** will offer 185 rooms as well as five villas, four restaurants, a spa, salon, barber shop, two pools and private beach access. Closer to summer, the 403-room **Ikos Dassia** will open on the Ionian coast of the Greek island of Corfu. The hotel will feature seven restaurants, a spa by Anne Semonin, a stretch of private beach and a kids' club.

Elevated STOREYS

FEATURED IN ICONIC FILMS,
ATTRACTING THE CULTURAL ELITE
AND HOLLYWOOD GLITTERATI,
WITH CAPTIVATING HISTORIES
THAT HAVE LEFT LASTING MARKS
ON THE SOCIETY SURROUNDING
THEM, GRANDE DAME HOTELS ARE
INSTITUTIONS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT.

I **AN THE BUTT** EXPLORES EIGHT
OF THE BEST, DELVING INTO THEIR
FASCINATING PASTS, AND THE FRESH
ADDITIONS WHICH ENSURE THEY
REMAIN AT THE TOP OF THEIR GAME

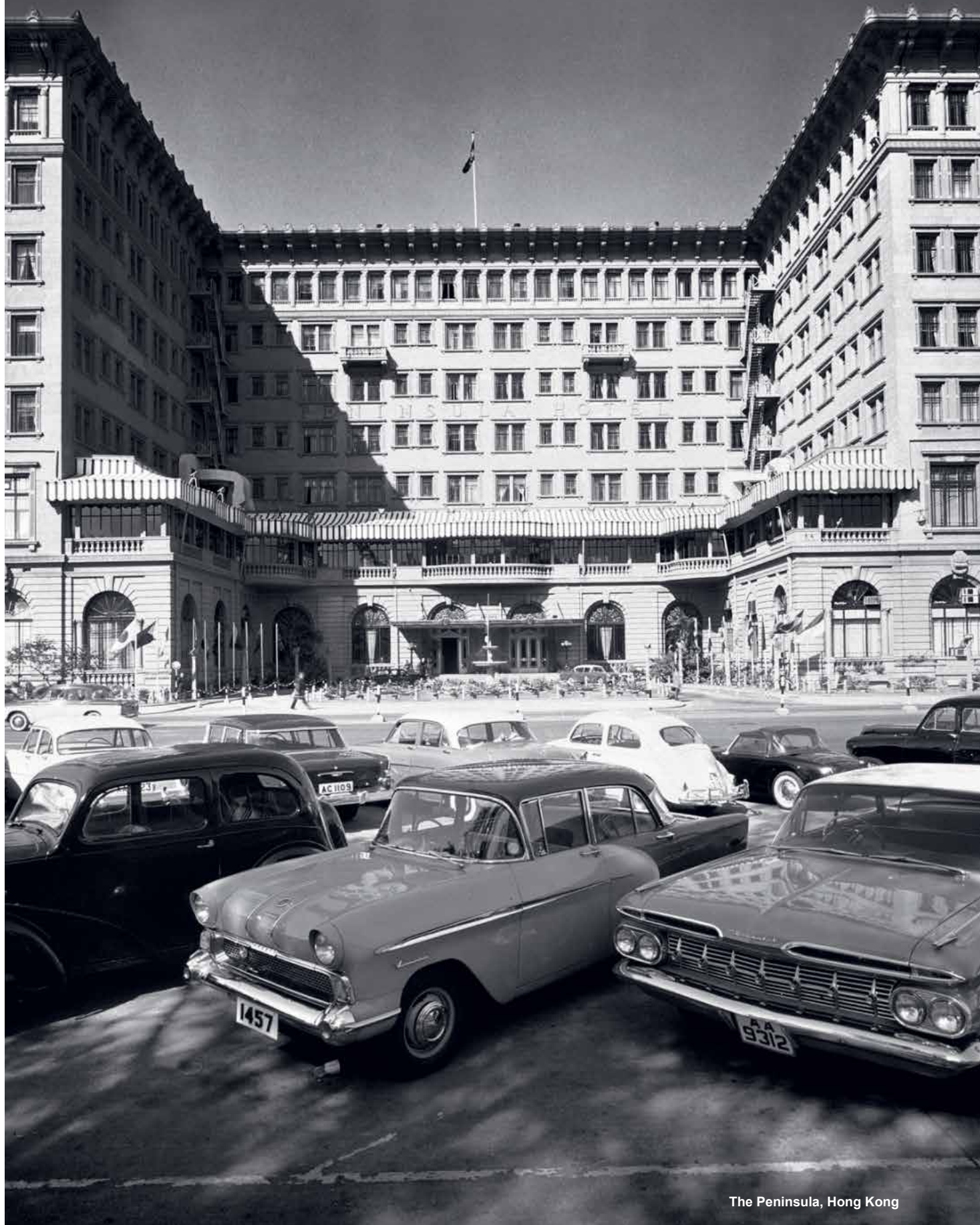
The Peninsula, Hong Kong, China

BACKSTORY: Woven into the fabric of Hong Kong's history, the formal surrender of the country to invading Japanese forces at the conclusion of 1941's Battle of Hong Kong took place on The Peninsula's fifth floor, in room 336. Taking its name from its location at the tip of the Kowloon Peninsula, this elegant hotel housed in a Chino-Belle Époque building opened in 1928 and was immediately the darling of high society. After the war, it was a star magnet attracting the likes of Lauren Bacall and Marlon Brando. Featured on the silver screen almost as much as its lodgers, a scene from *The Man With the Golden Gun* sees James Bond (Roger Moore) and Mary Goodnight (Britt Ekland) tail Andrea Anders to the hotel in one of the Pen's famed Rolls-Royce fleet. Offering old-world charm, today, 900 staff help serve finger sandwiches in the lobby – where gargoyle statues peer down from the top of gilded columns – or proffer plates of jellied lobster at Gaddi's, where Ava Gardner once twirled beneath its Christofle candelabras.

LOCAL LEGEND: Ask barman Johnny Chung Kam Hung to mix you up a Screwdriver cocktail; the recipe was taught to him by Clark Gable.

WHAT'S NEW? A Shaolin Wushu training experience which gives a hands-on introduction to one of China's oldest martial arts.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: The Upper House. A calming space designed by award-winning architect Andre Fu, its 117 rooms are the largest in Hong Kong starting at 68 square metres. Modern European restaurant Café Grey Deluxe and a stylish Sky Lounge on the 49th floor both afford wonderful skyline views.



The Peninsula, Hong Kong



Belmond Copacabana Palace

Belmond Copacabana Palace, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

BACKSTORY: Planted on the golden sands of Rio's most famous beach, this Mediterranean-style, Joseph-Gire-designed Art Deco wonder has epitomised Brazilian seaside glamour since 1923. The fast-footed antics of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, filmed at "the Copa" in 1933's *Flying Down to Rio*, set off a carioca craze and attracted celebrity guests such as Errol Flynn and Marilyn Monroe. Soon after, its Golden Room became Latin America's foremost show venue, headlined by greats such as Ella Fitzgerald. After a period of decline in the 1960s, Belmond (then Orient Express) restored the property to its former glory in the 1980s. Antique *freijo* furniture and lavish marble bathrooms in its 236 rooms have pulled in Madonna and The Rolling Stones. Keith Richards' wife slept so soundly, she bought the mattress after their stay, and supermodel Gisele Bündchen considers the Copa a second home. It's no wonder that the Golden Book, containing VIP signatures, is locked in a safe.

LOCAL LEGEND: Running from the 1920s (with a hiatus 1973-1993), the annual Palace Ball is the ultimate Rio experience. Samba late into the night, prior to the feathers and frivolity of Carnival.

WHAT'S NEW? Pergola restaurant reopens this winter, serving Mediterranean cuisine with local twists, joining Michelin-starred MEE and Restaurant Hotel Cipriani.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: The newly opened Hotel Emiliano. Here, bold design abounds, from a futuristic façade punctuated with intricate *cobogó* (articulated open-and-close panels) by famed Brazilian architect Arthur Casas, to 90 light-filled contemporary rooms. An organic restaurant with vertical garden adds charm, while a spa and rooftop pool draw Rio's hip young things.



Belmond Copacabana Palace



Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel, Cape Town

Belmond Mount Nelson Hotel, Cape Town, South Africa

BACKSTORY: Cape Town's first hotel with hot and cold running water caused a stir when it opened in 1889, providing elegant digs at the foot of Table Mountain for first-class passengers disembarking from Union Castle liners in Cape Town. A young war reporter, Winston Churchill, deemed it "a most excellent and well-appointed establishment". Post-WWI, the Victorian building's exterior was painted a jolly shade of sugar-pink with a white gingerbread-like trim, and remains this hue today. Sometimes notable names remained anonymous; John Lennon checked in under pseudonym Mr Greenwood, and enjoyed meditating in the lush gardens. A guest informed management that "a vagrant was on the lawn whom he might wish to escort from the premises". Still packing heaps of colonial charm, ask waitress Margaret Roberts to seat you at Nelson Mandela's favourite table in the hotel for a delicious afternoon tea.

LOCAL LEGEND: A loudly chiming grandfather clock in the lobby enraged a guest so much that he hammered nails into its hands. After falling silent for 20 years, another visitor repaired it. Today's chime is much quieter.

WHAT'S NEW? "Chairs to dream in" feature in the East Wing's 48 just-revamped suites. Budding artists can join a class with Cyril Coetzee, Mandela's portraitist.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: The Silo, Cape Town's most-talked about opening in decades. Occupying six floors in a historic grain silo complex reimaged by Thomas Heatherwick, above the new Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), 28 rooms have rainbow-toned interiors and pillowed glass windows, plus there's a bar with panoramic Table Mountain views.

El Palace Barcelona, Spain

BACKSTORY: The brainchild of politician Francesc Cambó and hotelier César Ritz, the former Ritz, and Barcelona's first luxury hotel, sits in the heart of the Eixample district. Built in 1919, this Belle Époque landmark retains its neo-classical façade. Famed for its lavish royal banquets in the early years, it was used as a makeshift hospital during the Spanish Civil War. Afterwards, with hotel status regained, it emerged as a hotbed for creative luminaries – Josephine Baker, Xavier Cugat and Salvador Dalí – not only staying but finding inspiration and performing there too. Now, 120 bedrooms channel 1920s style, with original Roman baths, bespoke chandeliers and antique curios. Jazz and blues-filled nights accompanied by craft cocktails at the basement Bluesman Bar are as diverting as they were when the likes of Freddie Mercury graced the stage.

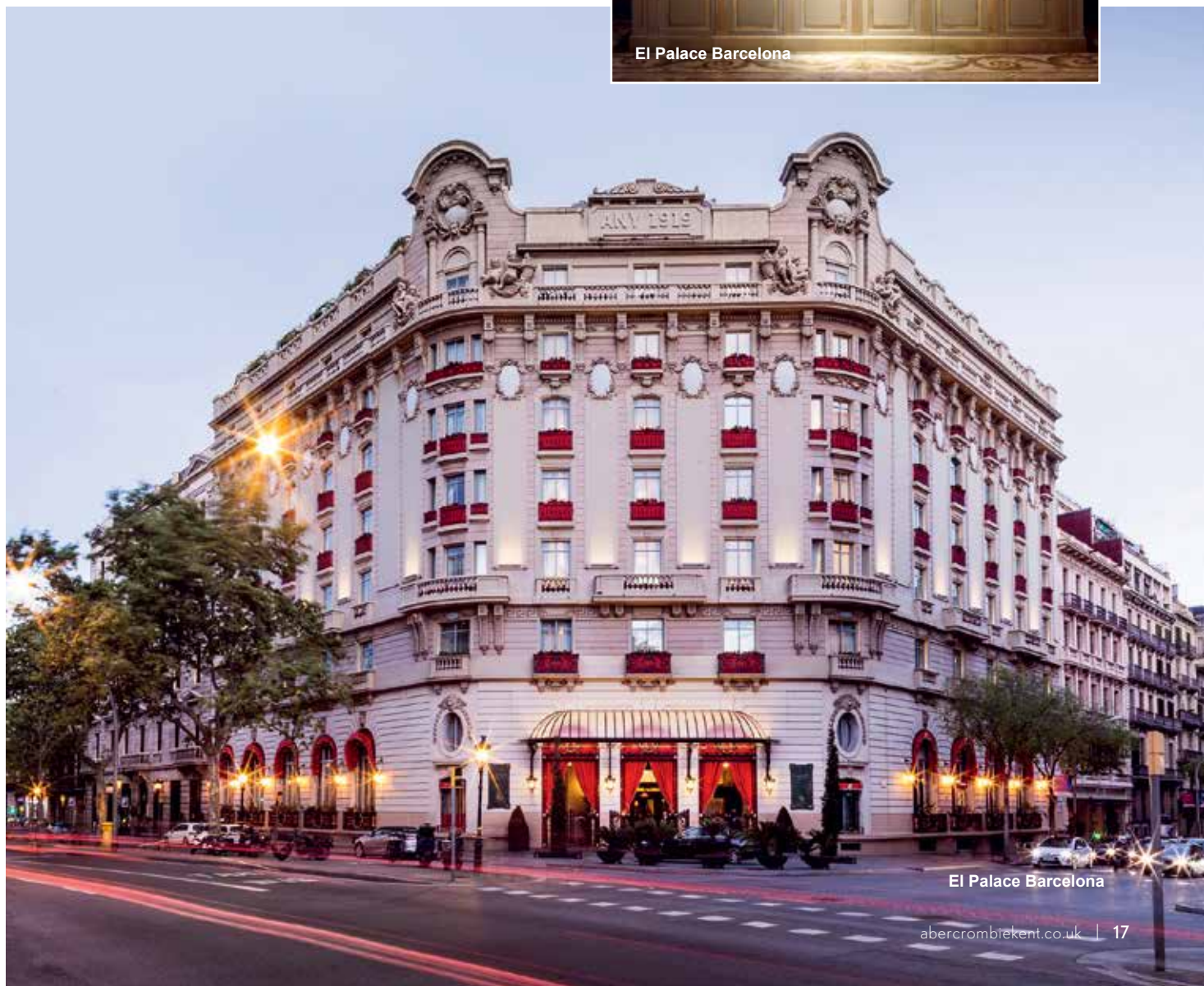
LOCAL LEGEND: Dalí lived for extended periods in the vast suite which now bears his name. Once, a stuffed white horse arrived at the room, an eccentric gift for his wife, Gala.

WHAT'S NEW? Six extravagant suites, each inspired by the classic arts and named after a noteworthy guest (say Carlos Ruiz Zafon or Joan Miró) have been overhauled. Also, Jardín Diana, a seventh-floor garden, provides a romantic plant-filled oasis with paintings by modernist Ramón Casas.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: Mandarin Oriental, Barcelona. Set in high-end shopping district Passeig de Gràcia, in a 1950s building which formerly housed the Banco Hispano Americano HQ, are 120 elegant rooms and a smart spa. Interiors are by Patricia Urquiola, while Carme Ruscalleda, the world's most Michelin-starred female chef, heads up Moments restaurant.



El Palace Barcelona



El Palace Barcelona



Fairmont Banff Springs



Fairmont Banff Springs

Fairmont Banff Springs, Canada

BACKSTORY: “If we can’t export the scenery, we’ll import the tourists,” said William Cornelius Van Horne, Canadian Pacific Railway’s general manager, and pioneer of the Banff Springs Hotel. Opened in 1888, it played an instrumental role in bringing tourism to Western Canada, accommodating rail enthusiasts wishing to explore the untouched wilderness which would become Canada’s first National Park. Initially a wooden French château, the “Castle in the Rockies” sat a mile high, looking over the Bow River Valley. Later it was reconstructed in stone, with a 17th-century Scottish castle feel. Royalty, including the late Queen Mother and George VI visited. Marilyn Monroe twisted an ankle during a stay, and bellboys drew straws to determine who would assist her. In the 1960s jet-age travellers arrived to ski at the world-class slopes nearby. While hi-tech heli-skiing is *de rigueur* today, heritage runs deep; the 764-room property has original stained-glass windows and a spiral staircase with a 450-million-year-old fossil in its steps.

LOCAL LEGEND: In 1939 “King of Swing” and amateur pilot Benny Goodman declared he would only arrive by aircraft. Staff cleared a field at the base of the Cascade Mountain, creating Banff airport.

WHAT’S NEW? Bow Valley Grill, known for its weekend brunches, will soon reveal a brasserie concept and on-tap prosecco.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: Moose Hotel & Suites, the first lodge to open in Banff in a decade. Natural materials and the talent of local craftspeople have resulted in 178 cabin-luxe rooms. Make for the rooftop for stunning views, stargazing and dips in two bubbling hot pools.

Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka

BACKSTORY: Another of the early grand railway hotels, Galle Face sets the standard for stays in Sri Lanka. Moments from the rolling Indian Ocean this elongated, gleaming white, terracotta-roofed Victorian building was originally a Dutch villa. It opened as a hotel in 1864, when well-to-do Ceylonites would zip up and down kilometre-long Galle Face Green in horse-drawn carriages while Colombo’s *crème de la crème* watched from wicker chairs, sipping on Pimm’s Cups. As notorious for the glamorous guest lists at its Coconut Grove Club (now the Palm Club), as its guests were for missing departing ships after partying at the club, Galle Face hosted a veritable *Who’s Who* spanning revolutionaries (Che Guevara) to cosmonauts (Yuri Gagarin). Vivien Leigh conducted an affair with co-star Peter Finch when filming *Elephant Walk*. Husband Laurence Olivier sent her home in disgrace. Sundowners on the hotel’s terrace, during the nightly ritual when the national flag is hoisted accompanied by a piper, and swimming in its large saltwater pool are quintessential Colombo experiences.

LOCAL LEGEND: The British used to use Galle Face Green for artillery practice. Once, a 30-pound cannonball careered into the hotel. Luckily it didn’t explode. An annual cannonball run sees competitors sprint its course in commemoration.

WHAT’S NEW? The Verandah restaurant, specialising in delectable Sri Lankan curries and string hoppers, now offers an exciting selection of world cuisine, from Thai to Arabic meze.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: The Residence by Uga Escapes, a lovingly smartened up Victorian townhouse between leafy Park Street and Gangarama Lake. With just 11 suites, it’s small but beautiful, has a tropical garden, and a restaurant that uses ingredients from the Residence’s east-coast farm.



Galle Face Hotel, Colombo





Doris Day in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*

La Mamounia, Marrakech, Morocco

BACKSTORY: Art Deco architecture melded with *Arabian Nights* aesthetics best describes this Moroccan palace. Designed by Prost and Marchisio in 1922, La Mamounia bears the name of its 200-year-old, extraordinary, eight-hectare, once-royal gardens, which burst with lemon, guava and olive trees, the manicured lawns lit by thousands of candles come night-time. Exotic and exciting, it became the go-to for stately dinners. Winston Churchill whiled away hours on his balcony, painting watercolours of the gardens, while Alfred Hitchcock immortalised the hotel on screen in his 1956 thriller, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Kaftan-clad rock stars and fashionistas seeking a refined foil to their exploits along Marrakech's hippie trail arrived in the 1960s – Yves Saint Laurent and Pierre Balmain among them. A place for modern-day dreamers, its 209 rooms and three riads have stunning Koutoubia Mosque, Atlas Mountains or rolling garden views. All have intricate wooden latticework and mosaic floors. Even the 2,500-square-metre spa here is an artwork, with lofty halls and eye-catching Zellige tiles.

LOCAL LEGEND: When General Charles de Gaulle visited, a made-to-measure bed had to be built to accommodate the statesman's height – he stood just shy of two metres.

WHAT'S NEW? It's the first African hotel to partner with French pastry maestro Pierre Hermé, meaning superior sweet treats.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: Riad Joya. A seven-suite hotel centred around a pretty indoor courtyard, in the Medina. Astonishing decor is a mish-mash of Morocco's cultural influences – think travertine Doric columns, Romanesque bronze doors and traditional pottery. A stay feels as if you've been given the keys to the private house of your most discerning friend.

Hotel Adlon Kempinski, Berlin, Germany

BACKSTORY: Lorenz Adlon spent an astronomical 20 million gold marks building his original Hotel Adlon in 1907. His vision? To create the planet's most opulent hotel. First through the doors was Emperor Wilhelm II, who quickly became its most loyal patron, declaring the marble "more shiny and nicely polished" than in his own palaces. Aristocrats and international dignitaries dropped anchor, many embassies setting up offices in the illustrious *Kaisersaal* (Emperor's Hall). Businessmen came unaccompanied, fearing wives might pressure them to redecorate homes in a similarly exorbitant style. Despite operating throughout WWII, shortly afterwards the property burnt to the ground, only rebuilt in 1997, on the same site to the tune of €265 million. Mahogany and cherry furnishings fill its suites, along with, of course, plenty of marble. When Barack Obama visited Berlin, he and Angela Merkel dined at its two-Michelin-starred Lorenz Adlon Esszimmer restaurant.

LOCAL LEGEND: Standards are exacting. In-house flower atelier Mario Weidner has used 1.5 million of the finest roses (since 2001) creating the hotel's sensational floral arrangements. One of the butler team irons morning papers so VIPs don't dirty their fingers.

WHAT'S NEW? The lobby, a vision in rich gold and turquoise tones. The focal point is an elaborate elephant fountain, a gift from the Maharaja of Patiala in the 1930s.

ON THE FLIPSIDE, TRY: Das Stue. Whimsical touches at this cool, 78-room boutique hotel, housed in the former Danish Embassy (Das Stue means "living room" in Danish), include an oversized sculpture of a crocodile by Quentin Garel, and black and white Henri Cartier-Bresson photography.



Barack Obama with Angela Merkel in the Adlon Hotel, Berlin

Pictures: REX Features



Galle Face Hotel, Colombo

| ELEVATED STOREYS |

For more information on A&Ks hotel collection, or to book your next break, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 760.



GRANDE PEVERO BEACH

Sardinia

While all the beaches on the Costa Smeralda beckon, I think this white-sand stretch with its shallow seabed is ideal for families.

Stay at: Cervo Hotel

VIETRI SUL MARE

Amalfi Coast, Italy

There's more to Amalfi than vertiginous hillsides. If craving some beach time while in the region, Vietri sul Mare is one of the area's few sandy spots.

Stay at: Palazzo Avino



TUERREDDA BEACH

Sardinia

With its fine sands and tropical ambience, you could be forgiven for mistaking this beach for one in the Caribbean.

Stay at: Forte Village

EUROPE'S *best* BEACHES

THERE'S NO NEED TO VISIT FAR-FLUNG SHORES TO FIND SOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST BEACHES: PERFECT PATCHES OF SAND-STREWN PARADISE CAN BE FOUND CLOSE TO HOME. A&K EUROPE PRODUCT MANAGER **JOHN BERRY** PICKS HIS FAVOURITES

SCALA DEI TURCHI

Sicily

Also known as the "Stairway of the Turks", sunbathe on the steps of this pure white cliff and enjoy the calm waters below.

Stay at: Verdura Resort



PUNTA PROSCIUTTO

Puglia, Italy

Loved by families from nearby well-heeled Bari and Lecce, it's famous for its beauty, white sands and beach shacks.

Stay at: Borgo Egnazia



PAKLENI ISLANDS

Croatia

Croatia has no shortage of beautiful beaches, but these islands' deserted coves are perfect for individual exploration.

Stay on: *A&K yacht charter*



FTELIA BEACH

Mykonos, Greece

The kitesurfing and windsurfing are simply fantastic here.

Stay at: Grace Mykonos



GREECE

✈️ Thessaloniki

✈️ Mykonos

✈️ Santorini

SYKIA BEACH

Sithonia, Greece

A long, wide stretch over which a Blue Flag flies. Enjoy views of ancient Stagira, where the ancient philosopher Aristotle is said to have been buried.

Stay at: Danai Beach Hotel



PERVIOLOS BEACH

Santorini, Greece

The longest stretch of sand on the island, this beach isn't your typical golden hue. The sand of Perviolos is black and I think that makes it even more special. It's infinitely Instagrammable (no filter needed), and a little quieter than nearby Perissa.

Stay at: Vedema Resort



BLUE LAGOON

Cyprus

You need to sail to this lagoon but upon arrival, you'll be instantly rewarded by the warm waters and stunning scenery.

Stay at: Anassa



TURKEY

CYPRUS

✈️ Paphos

| EUROPE |

For more information on Europe's best beaches, or to book your next beach break, call our travel specialists on 01242 546 611.



The Gateway of India, Mumbai

Coasting ALONG

MARITIME MUMBAI TEEMS WITH COLOUR, GLAMOUR AND ENERGY. BEYOND THE BEACH IN GOA, THERE'S A COMPELLING CULTURAL SCENE. INGENIOUS HOTELIERS HAVE BEEN AT WORK IN BOTH CREATING BEAUTIFUL BOUTIQUE HOTELS. A&K'S **RUPERT CUE** REDISCOVERS INDIA'S WEST COAST

The end of July, just as the monsoon starts in earnest, might not seem the most auspicious time to visit Mumbai, but even a spell of wet, blustery weather isn't enough to make a trip to this thrilling city a washout. There is always something new to beguile the adventurous traveller with a couple of days in hand before heading down to the balmy climes of Goa.

While India serves up a feast of excellent independent hotels in rural Rajasthan and the backwaters of Kerala, where small, owner-run properties abound, by contrast the high prices of real estate in the cities of both Mumbai and Delhi can limit the options. The seasoned visitor may struggle when looking for an alternative to the mega-luxe accommodation of institutions such as the Taj Mahal Palace and the Oberoi.

“REVIVE WITH AN ULTRA-SWEET SHOT OF MILKY CHAI BEFORE TACKLING THE BUSTLING MORNING MARKETS”

One stand-out exception in the Colaba district is Abode, strikingly different from the surrounding, more monumental alternatives. A small boutique hotel just a few minutes walk from the Gateway of India, the designer accommodation is decked out with antiques and upcycled vintage furniture and, while you won't be offered a pool or a choice of restaurants, there is an intimate atmosphere that can't be found in the city's soaring tower blocks. Built in 1910, Abode was initially a merchant's home, eventually becoming a basic guesthouse in 1982. The building was completely renovated in 2013 and now offers 20 cosy, chic rooms in the centre of the city.

For the returning visitor, the Hanging Gardens, Gateway of India and the Victoria Terminus (now with the catchy new name Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus) will be familiar friends. To truly get under the skin of the city, a more intimate experience can be had on a Mumbai at Dawn tour, which promises an up close and personal introduction to *Mayanagri*, the City of Dreams, and what makes it tick.

Setting out, albeit bleary eyed, at 4am, the first stop is a visit to the newspaper wallas, crammed into a single block with a veranda for shelter, busily preparing papers to be distributed around the city and beyond. The country has one of the highest newspaper readerships in the world and in true Indian style, the process is entirely manual and very hectic – but for all that, the system seems to run like clockwork.

Joining the brisk trade at a mobile tea stall will help you revive with an ultra-sweet shot of milky chai before tackling the bustling morning markets accompanied by your guide. The fish market is a hive of activity with a catch of all sizes and colours on offer wholesale to stallholders and shopkeepers. Be warned, the smell can be overwhelming at times, but it's an educational insight into this thriving industry. Move on through the covered vegetable, spice and meat markets, where customers animatedly bargain for the best deals of the day, and end up in the flower market – a more serene spot that will help freshen the sinuses after all those intense aromas.

Leaving Mumbai, a short flight delivers travellers to the Goan capital Panjim, in the north of this coastal state. Recognised as the busiest part of Goa with lively nightlife and jam-packed bars and restaurants, those planning on staying here during the high season from November to March need to book ahead – and be fond of crowds. In July, however, the pace drops, and it's the perfect time to explore the north, go beyond the beaches and mine for its hidden gems.

There is still a strong Portuguese influence in the area. Panjim is a web of small cobbled streets lined with colourful villas and



Goa's beaches are rightly famous

churches, set against a backdrop of neon signs and floating casinos. An evening stroll with a guide around the old town, punctuated by stops at small tavernas serving shots of feni, a local liquor, is a great way to explore its contrasting cultures.

After admiring the architecture and soaking up the continental atmosphere, stop at Joseph Bar, essentially a hole in the wall seating around 10 people, but something of a local institution. With craft beer on tap from a special unit set next to the bar and an array of interesting spirits, service is pretty much a help yourself and settle up later affair. The manager, Gundu, is a community legend and keeps a keen mental note of the bar tab as people wander in from outside and pour themselves an ale. Patrons spill on to the street where passing musicians play acoustic guitars and percussion, while local ladies serve up delicious bar snacks.

Before getting too stuck in, it's wise to consider dinner, and the Black Sheep Bistro is a relaxed option for tapas-style eating – and more drinks. A modern lounge bar offering Goan and “internationally inspired” dishes, there are handcrafted cocktails and extensive wine and beer lists.

After sampling the delights of the north and leaving Panjim, hopefully not too fuzzy headed and feeling energetic, any journey to the southern part of the state should take in the small village of Chapora, from which you can climb up to Chapora Fort to take in the view across Vagator beach. Chapora is also known as the location of the ultra-modern and trendy W Hotel.

If you're aiming for five-star luxury, the Leela and the Taj Exotica will not disappoint, but there are also a number of smaller properties that offer quality and character without

the price tag. Vivenda Dos Palhacos is a pint-sized B&B that ticks all the boxes. Located in a palm-fringed lane, just a few minutes from the beach, this six-room property offers homely accommodation with bags of character fusing Indian and Portuguese culture. The two huge, friendly basset hounds add a home from home feel and the natural pool provides the perfect location to kick back with a book – absolutely the done thing when in Goa.

If you've brought the family along and are looking for a few more facilities, the Alila Diwa is a more extensive, but equally lovely, option. A short step from the quieter and more expansive beaches of south Goa, this hotel has a fantastic pool and a choice of restaurants on the scale of a resort. It also has more anonymity than the hosted guesthouses, which can be a good thing when you're looking for some proper old-fashioned downtime.

It would be a mistake to overlook Mumbai and Goa in summer – or at any time of the year. A&K now has some fantastic options which can be easily be tagged on to the end of a cultural tour of Rajasthan, and even the most India-hardened traveller will find something new to delight and intrigue. ☺

| MUMBAI & GOA |

For more information on Mumbai or Goa, or to discuss your next holiday, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 755.



The sense-saturating Mumbai flower market



Fort Chapora, Goa



Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, formerly known as Victoria Terminus



Traces of Portuguese influence infuse Goa

48 HOURS IN HOBART

WITH ITS STELLAR LOCAL PRODUCE, SMART RESTAURANTS AND DELIGHTFUL DELIS, IT'S VERY EASY TO DEVELOP A TASTE FOR TASMANIA'S CAPITAL, SAYS FORMER RESIDENT, A&K'S **ALEXANDRA ROBERTSON**

DAY 1

08.00

Start your day by heading to Daci & Daci, an amazing bakery. Their selection of handmade delicacies and freshly baked breads are renowned among locals. Whether you choose sweet or savoury from their enticing menu, you'll be in for a treat. Accompany your breakfast with a proper Aussie coffee, the perfect way to kick off your trip.

10.30 - 17.00

Cross the D'Entrecasteaux Channel to tour Bruny Island, a short ferry ride from Tasmania's mainland. The island's spectacular landscape and outstanding local produce have secured its deserved place on the tourist map. Visit Bruny Island Premium Wines for a tasting or buy some cheese by the Bruny Island Cheese Company. Be awed at the incredible scenery surrounding The Neck, the narrow isthmus adjoining the north and south of the island. The Neck's deserted beaches are home to fairy penguin and 13 of Tasmania's 14 endemic bird species. Birders flock to the south of Bruny where you might be lucky enough to spot wedge-tailed eagle, albatross, swift parrot and the forty-spotted pardalote. As you stand, toes-in-sand, gazing out at the Southern Ocean, you might just spy a pod of playful dolphin, fur seal or migrating whale.

17.45


Wander around the historic wharf area of Salamanca. The simple Georgian warehouses – dating back to the 1830s – now house a host of art galleries, theatres, cafés and bars. Hobart's art scene has exploded in recent years, bringing with it a collection of boutiques selling everything from art to jewellery, fashion and urban design. Continue to Salamanca Square – the heart of Hobart – and relax at a fountain-side eatery, watching the passing locals.

18.45

Hobart's wharf is lined with seafood restaurants, swaying yachts and bobbing fishing boats. Mures is a standout spot for dinner. With three sites overlooking Victoria Dock, Mures is known for offering "the ultimate seafood experience". This family-run collective of sustainable restaurants and fishmongers pride themselves on catching and preparing seafood from scratch. At Upper Deck, they lovingly pair their offerings with an exclusive Tasmanian wine list.

20.30

Every Friday night, the Salamanca Arts Centre fills with the sounds of gypsy jazz and swing music. Sit back and soak up the atmosphere or dance off your dinner under the night sky.



22.00

Head to Henry Jones, an art hotel that opened in 2004, for a nightcap at IXL Long Bar. A former warehouse and adjoining jam factory dating from the 1820s have been transformed into this enthralling first-class hotel, showcasing the work of Tasmania's finest visual and performing artists.

23.00

Retreat to your home for the weekend, MACq 01, handily located one minute from the door of Henry Jones. This unique waterfront property has caused quite a buzz since its recent opening. The luxurious story-telling hotel portrays Hobart's most infamous historical characters and plays out the city's fascinating past throughout the property.

DAY 2

09.30

On Saturday mornings Hobart's waterfront square comes alive with the vibrant Salamanca Market, showcasing the very best of Tasmania's fresh produce and handmade creations from local potters, artists and craftsmen. Spontaneous live street performances pop up as you wander around and you could witness anything from a juggler to a busking string quartet. Sample the array of organic produce on sale, from fruit and veg to freshly baked pastries, pies and bread – it's the perfect brunch location.

10.30

A small passenger ferry will take you to the Museum of Old & New Art (MONA), one of the most eclectic museums you will ever visit. The museum, housed on its own private island, must be seen to be believed. Enjoy a spot of lunch at wine bar The Source Restaurant, where charcuterie plates are seamlessly matched with the museum's very own Moorilla wine. After lunch, learn about another type of artistry on a behind-the-scenes winery tour.

17.30

Start your evening with a fascinating walking tour of Hobart's waterfront pubs, journey through 200 alcohol-soaked years as you explore some of the city's oldest taverns. This evening is the perfect opportunity to sample the produce of local brewery Cascade, as you learn of Hobart's underbelly through stories of pubs, brothels and characters who played an unforgettable part in the murky yet fascinating history of the city.

19.00

Finish your tour of Hobart's pubs in the best way imaginable, by visiting Salamanca Bakehouse. Open 24 hours a day, this local gem supplies Hobart's hungry locals with fine pies. Sample a Tassie speciality, the classic Scallop Pie.

19.45

Lark Distillery has made a name for itself as a boutique producer. It's owned and run by a local family. The distillery's malt whiskies have achieved success on an international level, claiming such accolades as Best World Whisky Winner at the 2014 International Whisky Competition. Team Lark have cleverly combined their world-class produce with live music and great food at their waterfront cellar door, the perfect place to end your day.

22.30

As you make the short walk back to MACq 01, take a moment to enjoy the peace of the moonlit harbour, listen to rattling rigging as lines of yachts and fishing boats move up and down, and wonder at Hobart's simple yet sophisticated charm. During the winter months, you may even be lucky enough to witness the aurora australis, commonly known as the southern lights.

| HOBART |

A&K's nine-night Self-Drive Tasmania itinerary starts at £1,360 per person (based on two sharing, includes car hire, selected accommodation and excludes international flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 826.

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

A photograph of a gorilla in a dense, green forest. The gorilla is positioned in the lower center of the frame, looking directly at the camera. The forest is filled with various types of trees and ferns, creating a vibrant green background. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the upper part of the image, containing the title text.

A CHANGE OF FACE



In the mid 1980s, A&K founder Geoffrey Kent convinced Uganda's president to set aside Bwindi Impenetrable Forest as a national park in an effort to conserve the country's mountain gorilla population. Two decades later, **Stan Cullimore** (left) travelled to Sanctuary Gorilla Camp in the hope of coming face-to-face with one of these magnificent animals. He just forgot the golden rule – when meeting a mountain gorilla, don't make eye contact and, whatever you do, never, ever smile...

Looking through a holiday brochure is like being let loose in a sweet shop. It's hard to know what single thing to choose, when what you really want is to try everything that's on offer. However, when I saw pictures of people gorilla trekking in the mountains of Uganda, I couldn't help but think of Sir David Attenborough when he was filmed being cuddled on the lap of an enormous silverback all those years ago. I decided I wanted to try to get close to one of these giant primates myself – just maybe not that close.

The adventure began when I got to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. A national park where over half the world's endangered mountain gorilla population roams wild and free. A park that Geoffrey Kent, the driving force behind Abercrombie & Kent, helped to create some years ago. This explains why A&K was the first to set up a camp within the forest itself.

“

I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE MY VERY OWN, AMAZING ENCOUNTER WITH A DOMINANT MALE. SNEAKING A QUICK SELFIE WITH THE SILVERBACK, I WAS DELIGHTED TO HAVE PROOF OF MY 'BRAVERY'...

”

Sanctuary Gorilla Forest Camp is described as a luxury canvas camp, but this collection of thatched buildings and safari tents is a lot more than a campsite. When I saw the outdoor reception area, I realised this was going to be a chance to experience the very best that jungle life has to offer. The view is breathtaking, overlooking the forest valley below, with cute monkeys and colourful birds in almost every tree. Apparently, so my guide told me, there are even, from time to time, unscheduled visits from the very gorillas that we have travelled so far to see.

After a welcome drink, I was shown to my quarters, complete with full-sized bath, rainfall shower, running hot and cold water and a decidedly

luxurious bed. It was more like a palace than a campsite. When my own personal room attendant politely introduced himself, I felt as if I had somehow stepped into a Hollywood movie set where the guests were the filmstars. Whatever else happened, I knew this was going to be one of those holidays you never forget.

After a night in what is, possibly, Africa's most relaxing bed, I was ready for breakfast, a freshly cooked feast that set me up nicely for the main attraction: the gorillas. The trek started with a briefing from Moses, our guide, telling us to stay at least seven metres from the animals at all times. They are used to humans approaching them – after all, they see people trekking every day, including Christmas Day – but they are still wild creatures. Untamed and unpredictable. Moses told us that if any of them should approach us, we should kneel, avoid eye contact and not show our teeth. In gorilla terms, these are all examples of bad manners and could result in the gorillas getting aggressive. As Moses explained, no one wants to be around an angry gorilla if they can help it.

We made our way into the perfectly named impenetrable forest. After a couple of hours of trekking, we found ourselves in the spot where trackers had last seen the family group. But they were long gone, hidden by the dense undergrowth. As we walked on in single file, not sure which way to go next, something brushed against my leg. Looking down, I saw a mother gorilla with a baby on her back, silently pushing past me.

We all stopped and watched as the gorillas passed by. Just as I had hoped, I was lucky enough to have my very own, amazing encounter with a dominant male. He was sitting down in a clearing, resting all by himself, just as I walked by. Sneaking a quick selfie with the silverback, I left, delighted to have photographic proof of my 'bravery'.

When I returned to camp, I decided to go for a stroll round the nearby village. There are hand-painted signs by the roadside, reminding the villagers how much the gorillas do for them. A local teacher explained it to me. Some of the money raised from the gorilla trekking permits is used to fund community projects – things such as hospitals, schools, orphanages and drinking water. These benefits encourage the villagers to be patient when the gorillas sneak into town and pillage their gardens for the tasty crops that grow there. In the days before tourists, these same villagers would have chased the gorillas away and maybe even hunted them down for bush meat, but not anymore. Thanks to tourism, the gorillas are valuable assets, which was reassuring to learn.



A female gorilla watches over her playful infant



A bedroom at Sanctuary Gorilla Camp



The camp's exterior

Later that evening, after a sumptuous supper, those of us who had been trekking sat round the campfire. We sipped fine whiskies and swapped stories about our day's adventures. The staff were superb, moving among us like a well-oiled machine. Topping up drinks, bringing blankets, all with quiet efficiency. As if they could guess what we wanted even before we realised it ourselves. I must admit, luxury really does come as standard in this place.

“ I THOUGHT NOTHING COULD POSSIBLY MATCH THE EXCITEMENT OF THE DAY BEFORE. IT JUST SHOWS HOW WRONG YOU CAN BE ”

The next morning, we set off for another trek, heading for a nearby photogenic waterfall and hoping to meet another family of gorillas along the way. I thought nothing could possibly match the excitement of the day before. It just shows how wrong you can be.

After getting to the waterfall, seeing a pair of chimpanzees and a troop of baboons along the way, we found the gorillas nearby in a relaxed mood. A young female sat at the bottom of a tree as her infant charge

scampered around, treating the forest as his personal jungle gym. From a safe distance, I was pleased to get several snaps of the excited little youngster.

All was going well, until I heard a low rumbling sound from behind me. Turning around, I saw a large adult male gorilla, standing just a few feet away, gazing in my direction. Kneeling slowly, as instructed by Moses in the briefing, I raised my phone and took a picture. Hearing the camera click, the silverback decided to come closer. That was when it dawned on me that this enormous creature, twice my size, was much closer than seven metres away. He was close enough to reach out and touch me if he wanted to – which I really, really hoped he didn't.

For a few heartbeats, I was confused, unsure what to do. I wanted to get out of the way, but didn't want to make any sudden movements. Sensing my indecision, the gorilla turned to look me straight in the eyes. At which point, I am afraid to say, I forgot everything Moses had told us.

Instead of heeding his wise words, I fell back on old-fashioned manners. I looked right back at the gorilla and flashed the sweetest smile I could manage. Which was exactly the wrong thing to do. Obviously.

No doubt seeing my sappy grin as a ridiculous challenge to his supremacy, the silverback moved closer, lent in towards me and gave



“AS CLOSE ENCOUNTERS GO,
IT WAS SHORT, SWEET AND ENTIRELY
MY OWN FAULT. IT WAS ALSO
STRANGELY EXHILARATING”

An infant gets a piggyback

me a tiny nudge with his shoulder as he moved past. There was no anger, no aggression, no malice, but that small movement was enough to send me sprawling on my back. At which point he casually put out his back leg and flicked me out of his way.

It was a modest but effective way of reminding me, a mere tourist, of my place. While he was prepared to tolerate humans, there could only ever be one, true king of the forest.

As close encounters go, it was short, sweet and entirely my own fault. It was also strangely exhilarating. The brochure had promised adventure by day and luxury by night. That was exactly what I had found. It had been a perfect holiday in every way.

I just wish Sir David had been there to give me some advice. ☺

| UGANDA |

A&K's four-night Uganda Gorilla Safari itinerary starts at £3,915 per person (based on two sharing, includes flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 702.

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



RWANDA: GORILLAS IN THE MIDST

Uganda isn't the only country in Africa in which to gorilla trek. Today the mountain gorilla is confined to the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and the Virungas – a range of forested volcanoes that straddle the borders of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rwanda, a country in which A&K runs and operates an on the ground office, is real *Gorillas in the Mist* territory. American primatologist Dian Fossey's work in Rwanda in the 1960s and 1970s changed public perception of these animals, raised their less chest-thumping profile, aided conservation efforts and put the country on the tourism map. And this year sees the opening of two luxury resorts that almost guarantee an encounter with these rare beasts.

Best known for their portfolio of beachside hotels, One&Only's new Nature Resorts Division will debut its next two properties in Rwanda in the next 18 months. O&O Nyungwe House is scheduled to open first. Perched on the edge of the vast Nyungwe National Park, this 22-room resort is being converted from an existing tea plantation property. The nearby national park encapsulates one of the oldest forests in Africa and is home to 13 different species of primates.

Due to open in 2019, Gorilla's Nest is located near the village of Kinigi, in the foothills of the Virungas. This beautiful resort, nestled among a forest of eucalyptus trees, will provide jaw-dropping views of Rwandan hills and the slopes of the Volcanoes National Park. Guests will be able to explore the magical habitat of mountain gorillas, a rare adventure. In addition to the gorilla trek, guests will be able to see golden monkeys, as well as visit Dian Fossey's Karisoke Camp.

So long, SHORT-HAUL

Forget weekends away in Europe: exotic city breaks are the next big thing. New planes, routes and technology mean we can reach far-flung locations quicker than ever before. It's time to think outside – far outside – the box when it comes to planning a few days away. Here are our top five destinations for a long-haul urban adventure



New Delhi

New Delhi is a glorious jumble of the ancient and modern. The megapolis is teeming with magnificent monuments and mausoleums, fabulous forts and bustling bazaars complemented by a thriving arts scene and convivial cafés. Its innumerable, must-visit sites include history-imbued Humayun's Tomb, the Red Fort, Jama Masjid and the Lodhi Gardens. And it's a feast for more than just the eyes. Bukhara, based in ITC Maurya Hotel, is A&K founder Geoffrey Kent's favourite restaurant on Earth. "It's like a pilgrimage for me, whenever I visit India. I'll say, 'forget the board meeting, let's go to Bukhara.'" This restaurant, which sits at number 45 on the list of Asia's 50 Best Restaurants, serves up north-west Indian frontier food, the type of rustic fare that could be cooked over a campfire. Bill Clinton is also said to be a fan. For something more modern, Indian Accent, at number 30 on the same list, was named Best Restaurant in India 2017.

Flight time: 8 hours 25 minutes

Bed down: The Oberoi New Delhi or The Imperial

Call our travel specialists on 01242 547 755

Hong Kong

2017 marked the 20-year anniversary of the handover of control of Hong Kong from the British to the Chinese, but fascination for the city remains undimmed among Brits. The city is an intoxicating powerhouse of creativity – home of an electric arts scene and inventive, boundary-breaking chefs. As renowned travel writer Peter Jon Lindberg put it, Hong Kong "transcends cultural and culinary borders such that nothing is truly foreign and nothing doesn't belong". For those who've never been before, no visit to Hong Kong would be complete without a trip across the harbour. Cruise on a traditional junk or ride the world-famous Star Ferry. Go to the horse races or for a hike to get to grips with the city's vast beauty. Another excellent vantage point, Ozone at the Ritz Carlton is on the 118th floor, making it one of the highest bars in the city. Do as the locals do and be sure to go for a dim-sum brunch. Fuelled by delicious morsels, shopping is de rigueur when in HK: hit the markets in Mong Kok, or head to PMQ – this 1950s complex was once the city's Police Married Quarters, and is now a hub for independent designers.

Flight time: 10 hours

Bed down: Upper House or the Mandarin Oriental

Call our travel specialists on 01242 547 704





Austin, Texas

Without a doubt, it's Texas's coolest city, and perhaps the hippest in the whole US. The fact that Whole Foods, the holistic food retailer, was founded here is telling. If you look at a map of the political landscape, Austin is a dot of blue in a sea of red. While the state voted for Trump 52.2 per cent to Clinton's 43.2, in the city the Democratic candidate took nearly 66 per cent of the vote. It's undeniably liberal leaning and this funky college town's unofficial motto is "keep Austin weird". And eccentric it's staying, with new residents flocking to the city, gentrifying neighbourhoods and adding to the cityscape of independent stores, cafés and studios. Every March, the South by Southwest Festival has tourists making a musical pilgrimage to the city. Must-sees for first-timers to Austin include Lady Bird Lake, the State Capitol and the enormous bat colony that resides under the Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge.

Flight time: 10 hours 20 minutes

Bed down: Hotel Saint Cecilia or The Driskill

Call our travel specialists on 01242 547 717

Rio de Janeiro

Fifty-eight years after the government upped sticks and moved to Brasília, and decades after São Paulo established itself as the country's (and continent's) economic heavyweight, Rio's renaissance has been fully realised thanks to catalytic events including the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Much about Rio has been upgraded, but the city's reputation as a party town remains unchanged. *Cidade Maravilhosa* (the Marvellous City) still pulsates to a samba beat. The five-day long carnival in February is often at the forefront of people's minds when they think of Rio, but don't limit yourself to trips in spring – you'd be missing out on so much. It's a naturally wonderful place, and home to Sugar Loaf Mountain, Christ the Redeemer and some of the most famous stretches of sand anywhere on Earth: Copacabana and Ipanema.

Flight time: 11 hours 45 minutes

Bed down: Belmond Copacabana Palace

Call our travel specialists on 01242 547 701



Ho Chi Minh City

Forget Tokyo, Seoul and Singapore – they've all been done. These days, design aficionados looking for new destinations are heading to Saigon (now officially called Ho Chi Minh City, but still referred by its former name by most residents). Cultural tourists are being lured by a burgeoning art and design scene, the chic café culture and a plethora of spas and bustling markets. Concept stores like L'Usine off Dong Khoi and skydecks atop the city's tallest building – the Bitexco Financial Tower – sit alongside old-world sites including Notre Dame Cathedral, a relic from French colonial times, and the infamous Cu Chi Tunnels. Four decades after the fall of Saigon, the city's favourite mode of transport has evolved from bicycles to mopeds and motorbikes. They're everywhere you look, and can make crossing the street a uniquely exhilarating experience. Join in with the hustle and bustle with a restored vintage Vespa tour: it's a great way to see some of the city's lesser-known spots.

Flight time: 12 hours

Bed down: Hotel des Arts, The Reverie or The Myst

Call our travel specialists on 01242 547 895



THERE'S
AN ISLAND
WAY OUT
IN THE SEA





IGNORE THE NAY-SAYERS WHO CLAIM LONG-HAUL IS ONLY FOR GROWN-UPS. IT'S TIME TO TAKE THE CHILDREN FURTHER AFIELD ON A FAMILY-FRIENDLY TRIP TO THE SEYCHELLES, SAYS A&K'S **ALICIA DEVENEY**

The first time I flew to the Seychelles, a decade ago, I landed in an archipelago that seemed like the sole reserve of honeymooners and loved-up couples. In my whole time on the island – which was mostly spent in or around our private pool, having one-to-one yoga lessons, or face-down at the spa – I saw one family with children, splashing about in the resort's main pool. I'm now ashamed to admit that the sound of the happy (slightly high-pitched) laughter, at the time, caused me to curl my lip in disgust and stomp back to my villa. Who would bring a child to this perfect paradise, and ruin it for the rest of us?

Ten years on, how different I am. And how different these islands seem. Maybe the hotels always catered to children. Maybe it's something that wasn't on my radar then, when all I noticed was glowing just-engaged or just-married couples. I now think that says more about my state of mind at the time, rather than a true reflection of my resort's clientele. After all, it would make more business sense to cater to a family with two point four kids than just a twosome.

These days when I travel, I do so with a Star Wars-obsessed, whirlwind of a nearly five-year-old (the "nearly" is very important to him). For four and a half years, we've done staycations and the short-haul thing, visiting Ireland, France, Spain and Greece. Longing for more tropical climes, distant destinations beckoned seductively. I knew there's no way I'd get to spend as much time in the spa, on a lounge or in downward dog, but we decided that we could now survive a long-haul journey (with the help of an iPad, sweets and a lot of bribery) and boarded a flight to the Seychelles.

The archipelago, to be found four degrees south of the equator, is made up of 115 lush islands, scattered over 400,000 square kilometres of the Indian Ocean. On land, you'll find some of the most picture-perfect beaches in the world, lush vegetation and black-rock formations, a rich culture and the legendary coco-de-mer palm.

A bonus when holidaying with little people, travel to the Seychelles also doesn't require any vaccinations in addition to the norm, there are no dangerous animals or plants and it's malaria-free.

Resorts in the archipelago offer sophisticated food, world-class spas and excellent, on-the-ball service. I knew all that 10 years ago. What I wasn't aware of was that they also host innovative and imaginative offerings for children, including tracking turtles with a ranger, treasure hunts on beaches where real pirates once buried their booty and all manner of water sports, as well as so much more.

The Seychelles is still a paradise for couples, but families will find their own little bit of tropical heaven too. At most resorts on these islands, you'll see – if your eyes are open to it – surfing lessons, tortoises being fed with banana leaves, children taking cookery lessons from the hotels' chefs and happy little families enjoying being together.

And if my son's giggles disturb you and you pack up and head to the adults-only pool, I won't be offended. I was you, once.

But if you fancy having an in-depth chat about Boba Fett, Darth Vader or Captain Phasma, we'll be the ones pretending branches are lightsabers and attempting to make a Millennium Falcon-shaped sandcastle.

Our favourite family-friendly resorts in the Seychelles

Four Seasons Resort Seychelles

At the Four Seasons Seychelles, water babes can learn to surf, paddle board or body board with a lesson from TropicSurf on Petite Anse beach, while land-lubbing children can climb on the island's black rock formations. From tween to teens, they'll all love the kids' spa. For children aged six to 11, treatments include a coconut and passion fruit cocktail body treatment, sleep time massages and fancy fingers nail care. For guests aged from 12 to 17, there are facials, manis, pedis and massages galore to choose from.

North Island

The name probably rings a bell or two. This luxurious private island is where the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge chose to honeymoon in 2011. North – as it's affectionately known – has just 11 villas on 200-odd hectares and is a short helicopter-hop from Mahé. True, it's best known for welcoming newlywed guests, but children will love it too, especially the island's Beach Buddy Programme. It's the ultimate playground, so even the most adventurous youngster won't be bored. And, with a staff to guest ratio of six to one, parents can luxuriate in the knowledge their progeny are being as well taken care of as if they were royalty.

Constance Ephelia

The complimentary kids' club can hold its own with the best. Open daily from 9am to 8pm for children aged between four and 11, there are indoor and outdoor play areas and a swimming pool in which kids can splash, bounce, play chase and let their imaginations run riot all day long. On the timetable are arts and crafts sessions, scavenger hunts and culinary lessons. At the spa, children from six to 16 can enjoy massages, facials, manis and pedis.

Denis Island

The second most northerly island in the Seychelles, Denis is a family-run operation and welcomes all guests – old and young. Little people will love to go exploring with the rangers to tally tracks of egg-laying sea turtles on the beach, or scout the forests for magpie-robins and paradise flycatchers to learn more about breeding and tagging projects for these critically endangered birds. Parents, take note, there is no phone signal here, no televisions in the rooms, no internet... But if you're looking to unplug and reconnect, what could be better?

Raffles Island

The island's Sugar Palm Club caters to everyone from toddlers to teens. All sorts of supervised games are organised by the cheerful kids' club. Seashell and crab hunts, sandcastle competitions and pirate-survival courses are all on the cards. Culture isn't neglected either though, and learning will happen, even if by stealth, on visits to the Praslin Museum, the Vallée de Mai Nature Reserve and Anse Lazio to meet the giant tortoises.

Frégate Island

Parents could use a trip to Frégate Island as a wonderful opportunity to teach children about the natural world and the importance of conservation. On this 16-villa private island, more than 2,000 Aldabra giant tortoises roam free, and the hotel has successfully managed to reintroduce endangered species such as the magpie-robin and Seychelles blue pigeon. Kids in the Castaway Club can go on treasure hunts or venture into parts of the jungle that are "out of bounds" for adults, where the giant tortoises and many other wonderful animals and plants grow and thrive.



Four Seasons Resort Seychelles



North Island



Conservation meeting at Frégate Island

| THE SEYCHELLES |

A seven-night Family Seychelles holiday starts at £14,098 for a family of four (based on two adults and two children under 12 sharing one room, includes flights and private 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

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Grub's up...





WITH EIGHT OF THE 2017 SAN PELLEGRINO WORLD'S 50 BEST RESTAURANTS LOCATED IN LATIN AMERICA, IT'S TIME TO SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE OF THE GASTRONOMIC SCENE IN PERU, CHILE, BRAZIL AND MEXICO. SOME OF THE REGION'S MOST CREATIVE CHEFS HAVE REDISCOVERED THEIR INDIGENOUS CULINARY HERITAGE (ANT EGGS AND EDIBLE CLAY, ANYONE?), WHILE ALSO EMBRACING FUSION CUISINE. IT ALL ADDS UP TO AN UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURE FOR THE SENSES, SAYS **JO LAMIRI**

Latin American food has always been diverse. How could it fail to be, when each of the region's 20 countries has its own distinctive foods and ecosystems, from desert to jungle, mountains to sea? Add in Incan, Mayan and Aztec heritage, Spanish conquistadors and immigration from China, Italy and Japan, and only then can you appreciate the exciting modern food scene that's garnering worldwide admiration.

Travellers still have Incan and Mayan ruins and temples, smouldering volcanoes, tropical rainforest and stunning lakes on their bucket lists. But the desire to visit Latin America is now also being fired by a mission to eat mind-blowingly inventive cooking at destination restaurants (book months ahead) in Lima, Buenos Aires, Mexico City and Santiago. Latino chefs are applying classic techniques – usually learnt in Europe – to “lost” native foods as they forage like Bear Grylls in survival mode for herbs, berries and seeds, making use of ant eggs, lake water bacteria, edible clay – and even a root containing cyanide.

A foraged creation by Virgilio Martínez: *Cosecha y Recolección*, meaning Harvest and Collection

“LATIN AMERICAN RESTAURANTS ARE NOW THE ONES THRILLINGLY PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES”

While international fine dining has become fairly homogenous, Latin American restaurants are now the ones thrillingly pushing the boundaries, maxing everything native, seasonal and sustainable (no food-mile eating here). Even René Redzepi, the father of foraging at Noma, recognises this, choosing Tulum, Mexico, for a recent pop-up.

The renaissance began in Peru with legendary super-chef Gastón Acurio, whose tireless mission has been to promote Peruvian food worldwide. Acurio opened Astrid y Gastón in Lima's trendy Miraflores district in 1994, and in 2008 founded the 10-day Mistura Food Festival, attracting 600,000 visitors every September. So significantly has he contributed to the city's arrival on the menu map that three Lima restaurants – Central, Astrid y Gastón and Maido – are in the Top 50.

But it wasn't always so. “Although Peruvians have always been passionate about food, 25 years ago they'd have taken you to a French restaurant,” Acurio explains. Initially, he followed suit. “But we knew something was wrong. Why were we doing boeuf bourguignon and terrine de foie gras in Peru? So we started adding a little chilli, playing with our roots.”

These roots run deep, starting 7,000 years ago with the cultivation of potatoes (3,000 varieties), chillies (400) and corn (300). You'll still find *cebiche*, potatoes, corn, guinea pig and quinoa on the menu, but the new tribe is reinventing them: Astrid y Gastón's guinea pig comes with *mashua humita* (*masa harina* and corn), *oca* (sorrel tuber) cream and *huacatay* (black mint) juice. Multi-hued potatoes crop up everywhere from freeze-dried to charcoal-grilled, while Inca superfood quinoa appears in ice cream and bark.

Raiding the home-grown larder has given Latin American food a distinctive uniqueness: unlike in the UK, where it's quick and cheap to import ingredients from France, Italy and Spain, South America is geographically remote, making food imports hugely expensive and slow to arrive. Using native, traditional and indigenous foods makes much more sense, giving chefs and restaurants a strong national identity in the process.

Invasion and immigration over the centuries has also created a culture of fusion food, according to the current culinary superstar of Latin America, Virgilio Martínez of Central. “Peruvian food is the result of other countries' input: Asian, Hispanic, African, Middle Eastern, Japanese, Italian. Many immigrants to Peru found a way to express themselves through a type of cuisine that welcomed them all. That may be why people from different places identify our food as familiar and good.”

Peruvian and Japanese food combines to tastebud-tingling



effect with Nikkei cuisine at Maido (“welcome” in Japanese and number eight on the list). Here, Japanese-Peruvian TV chef Mitsuharu Tsumura's menu may include *cebiche* anointed with soy and ginger rather than the traditional red chillies and red onion, or sea snail *cau-cau* (stew). His 16-course menu includes *cebiche* with lemon ice cream and superlative *natsuke* (beef short rib, slow-cooked to melting softness for 50 hours).

Everywhere you eat, colourful dishes evoke the Spanish saying “*primeros, comes con los ojos*” (first, you eat with your eyes), yet most of the restaurants are contemporary, almost clinical box-like buildings, often with harsh lighting and neutral colours. Perhaps this is deliberate, aimed at highlighting the food's Insta-worthy intensity of colour.

The exception is Gastón Acurio's Casa Moreyra, an elegant, white, 17th-century plantation house with a kitchen garden. Described online as “a place to fall in love”, the menu certainly seduces: purple potatoes stuffed with Arabian-Andean aromatised lamb; *gyoza* filled with seafood and Nikkei *parihuela* (seafood) sauce. Acurio also has a restaurant, Chica, in the old Incan capital Cusco – handy if visiting Machu Picchu – serving regional food such as white corn *tamal* stuffed with pork *adobo*; alpaca carpaccio with turnip flowers, chestnut vinaigrette and Andean pesto; oven-baked quince and cheese mousse.

Virgilio Martínez is one of Acurio's protégés. His restaurant, Central, has been awarded the Best Restaurant in Latin America

Pictures: César del Río; Ricardo D'Angelo



Rocky fare from Virgilio Martínez



Chicken and okra



Tables at Central



Anticuchos de lengua



Cebiche



Gastón Acurio with his local suppliers



Virgilio Martínez goes foraging



Crepes Barrio Chino de Cuy Pekines



Los huevos tímidos



The bar at Central



Martínez at work

“ EVERYWHERE YOU EAT,
COLOURFUL DISHES EVOKE
THE SPANISH SAYING ‘FIRST
YOU EAT WITH YOUR EYES’ ”

accolade and is number five on the World’s Best list (he also has Michelin-star Lima, in London). Obsessed by terroir and biodiversity, Martínez roams wetlands and mountains like a hunter-gatherer possessed, turning obscure ingredients almost by alchemy into some of the world’s most exciting cooking. He says: “I love the diversity of ingredients and how inspiring it is to keep finding new things.”

Using 180 ingredients, he takes diners on a 17-course journey, Mater Elevations, from 20 metres below sea level with *chaco* clay, crab and sea snail, to Marine Soil at 0 metres with sea urchin, *pepino* melon, razor clam and seaweed. Lofty Andes, 3,900 metres above, gives a heady taste of dehydrated potato, *annatto* and black *muna* mint. Exotic names will have you searching Google: *papas en mezcla* (mixed potatoes), wild *kiwicha* (ice plants) and *cushuro*, a caviar-like cyanobacteria harvested in high-altitude wetlands.

New “passion projects” beckon, so next year Mil will be opening 11,500 feet above sea level in Cusco, focusing on Andean mountain food, with guests entering through Martínez’s research “food lab”, Mater Iniciativa.

But it’s not all about Peru. Over 3,000 kilometres south, Rodolfo Guzmán flies the flag for Chile at BORAGó in Santiago, 42 on the World’s 50 Best, unearthing ingredients from the indigenous Mapuche people. “One day we can be cutting a wild fruit available only three weeks a year at 3,500 metres; next day we are in a rainforest collecting mushrooms that grow nowhere else in the world.”

After a stint in Europe, Guzmán returned home in 2006 determined to connect Chilean gastronomy to its natural surroundings. BORAGó’s 16- to 20-course Endémica tasting menu could feature venison tartare with *maqui* berries; rockfish and rocks; Chilean rhubarb with fruits of the beach; conger eel fried with squid ink batter; or the milk of cows, goats and donkeys in a *tres leches* dessert, all 100 per cent Chilean.

Innovation and national pride are also to be found in Brazil, at Alex Atala’s elegant and contemporary D.O.M. in São Paulo, 16th on the World’s 50 Best list, where Amazonian rainforest ingredients have pride of place. Believing that Brazilian gastronomy was “a feasible dream”, former punk and DJ Atala has made esoteric ingredients commonplace. It took a while to catch on, but a contemporary restaurant showcasing Brazil’s disappearing flavours eventually piqued diners’ appetites. Dehydrated ants, *prioprioca* (a root used in cosmetics), *tucupi* (yellow liquid from wild manioc, boiled to remove its cyanide) and *jambu* (para cress), which simulates an electrical sensation, are added to far less violent-sounding dishes like *pirarucu* (an ancient fish) with *tucupi* and tapioca.

Mexico, too, is taking an experimental approach. Pujol in Mexico City, number 20 in the World’s 50 Best, may have a



Food for the eyes

simple interior with wood-burning oven, terracotta flooring and a taco bar, but it’s an exciting food destination. Chef Enrique Olvera incorporates *chicatana* (flying ants), ant eggs and grasshoppers into six courses that could include octopus with habañero ink; lamb, mint mole, lime and baby potato; *chayote* (squash), sea asparagus and *maguey* worm salt; and a chocolate *tamal* dessert with *guayabate* (guava paste) and tonka bean. His signature Mole Madre, Mole Nuevo is a circle of fresh mole sauce encased in a layer of 769-day-aged mole.

Also in Mexico City, the 22nd restaurant on the list is relaxed but elegant Quintonil with leaf-covered walls reflecting the nearby urban orchard. Jorge Vallejo, formerly of Noma and Pujol, cooks sardines in green sauce with purslane, fennel and guacamole or fresh and toasted Mexican *quelite* leaves in a *quelite*-stem emulsion with *comal*-griddled tomatoes and *cotija* cheese. For dessert, look out for Ocosingo cheese flan, celeriac ice cream, sugar-coated cocoa nibs and almond-tile. In 2014, with Mauro Colagreco and Virgilio Martínez, Vallejo launched Orígenes, a project to preserve Latin America’s culinary customs.

But, according to Martínez, this explosion of creative excellence in Latin America’s restaurants is nothing new. “It’s always been there, but it wasn’t the time and place for people to listen. The world is more globalised and connected, so people recognise it now.” We’re all ears. ☺

| LATIN AMERICA |

For more information on Latin America, or to book your next holiday, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 701.



Postcard-perfect Barbados

ROCK HOPPERS

WHY LIMIT YOURSELF TO JUST ONE CARIBBEAN ISLAND? DO THE REGION THE SMART WAY: GO HOPPING AND COMBINE TWO BIG HITTERS WITH ONE OF THE REGION'S SMALLER GEMS, SAYS **AMANDA SPRINGER**

Think of the Caribbean and you may picture white beaches, turquoise seas and dark rum cocktails. You might also conjure images of barbecued seafood, endless sunshine and a famously laid-back attitude. While these visions are certainly accurate, there's much more to the islands than just sand, sea and serenity.

On a map, the archipelago forms a string of pearls draped across the ocean from the southern tip of Florida to the coast of Venezuela. Each has its own distinct character and charm, and a long list of reasons to visit. There's the clear, marine life rich Caribbean Sea, offering boundless opportunities for underwater exploration for scuba divers and snorkellers. The year-round tropical weather means that activities above the waves, and on land, are just as plentiful. There's the West Indian cuisine, loved the world over and tastefully reinvented by skilled chefs across the islands. And of course, don't forget those picture-perfect, white-sand beaches.

For the best of all worlds, three of the islands – Barbados, Saint Lucia and Bequia – can be combined to create one life-enriching holiday with a unique flavour of the Caribbean.

BARBADOS

The most easterly of the islands, Barbados is an isle of two halves. Pounded on one side by the powerful Atlantic Ocean and caressed on the other by the Caribbean Sea, the coastline here varies from rugged and dramatic to calm and paradisiacal.

Most of Barbados' hotels and resorts lie on the sheltered west coast, and visitors are treated to an incredible selection. The same goes for places to eat. In fact, it doesn't take long to understand why Barbados has been named the culinary capital of the Caribbean. You can choose to brush shoulders with celebrities at fine-dining establishments such as Lone Star or The Tides. Or kick off your shoes and eat the freshest seafood at a rum shack right on the beach.

Barbados' capital, Bridgetown, retains much of its colonial heritage and charm following the island's settlement during the 16th century. The town also plays host to a schedule of events and colourful carnivals throughout the year, so it's well worth a visit.

STAY AT: FAIRMONT ROYAL PAVILION

FLIGHT TIME TO BEQUIA: 45 MINUTES



Fairmont Royal Pavilion, Barbados

Bequia Island



BEQUIA ISLAND

If you want to experience the Caribbean at its most unspoiled and authentic, the tiny island of Bequia should be on your itinerary. Part of St Vincent and the Grenadines, Bequia has managed to retain its old-world charm and avoid the attentions of the large-scale developers. With fewer than 5,000 inhabitants and only a scattering of charming hotel resorts along its beautiful coastline, the island offers plenty of opportunity for perfect relaxation.

Choose whether to climb into a hammock with a good book, swim in the warm, cerulean water or explore one of the island's many walking trails. Wildlife fans may want to pay a visit to the Old Hegg turtle sanctuary on Bequia's east coast. Here, hawksbill turtles are rescued and nurtured before being released back into the wild in a bid to help save this endangered species from extinction.

STAY AT: BEQUIA BEACH HOTEL

FLIGHT TIME TO SAINT LUCIA: 45 MINUTES



Saint Lucia's rainforest-clad peaks



Bequia Beach Hotel

SAINT LUCIA

If Barbados is the Caribbean's culinary capital, Saint Lucia takes the crown for natural beauty. Most views on the island are framed by lush, rainforest-clad mountains. The National Rainforest Reserve covers a vast swathe of the island's interior – a protected paradise that is home to countless bird species, hiking trails and picture-perfect waterfalls. The UNESCO-listed Pitons, Saint Lucia's iconic pair of towering volcanic mountains, form the focus of many an Instagram photo. And don't forget La Soufrière – the world's only drive-in volcano.

If all that sounds like too much effort, Saint Lucia offers plenty of what the Caribbean is famed for – white sandy beaches, swaying palm trees and crystal-clear water. In fact, the ocean surrounding Saint Lucia offers some of the best diving in the Caribbean. Grab your dive buddy, submerge beneath the waves and explore a world rich in colourful marine life and historic shipwrecks.

STAY AT: EAST WINDS

| CARIBBEAN ISLAND HOPPING |

A&K's 12-night Caribbean Island Hopping itinerary starts at £6,828 per person (based on two sharing, includes flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 780.

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





ALONE TIME

EGYPTIAN TOURISM IS RISING FROM THE ASHES, FOLLOWING THE POLITICAL UPHEAVALS OF 2011. BUT IF YOU GO SOON, YOU CAN STILL EXPERIENCE UNCROWDED TOMBS AND NO QUEUES AT THE PYRAMIDS, AS **NICK REDMAN** DISCOVERS



Experiencing a private Egypt at the Temple of Kom Ombo



Tutankhamun's death mask



W e've met before, this superstar and I: that gaze framed by eyeliner worthy of Elizabeth Taylor; the 24-carat complexion as clear as Naomi Campbell's. Last time I came to Cairo I queued with hundreds, shuffling along in hope of an audience. Now it's me and Tutankhamun, more or less alone.

For decades, among the countless exhibits in the Egyptian Museum, one has held centre stage: the solid-gold death mask of the world's most famous pharaoh, forever swarmed by sightseers desperate to lock eyes with a legend. In 2007, I remember, I was forced to admire from afar, above a sea of bobbing heads. Today I'm enjoying more or less a private viewing.

There are small whirlpools of passers-by – from Taiwan and Brazil, France and Greece. I chat with an amiable lady from Chennai, who has flown via Mumbai with a party of 20 for a week's holiday. The museum, we agree, doesn't feel empty, just non-touristy and hassle-free – altogether rather rarefied, despite the savage grimaces of wizened brown mummies, like so many extras from Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video. There's space to think, to read, to contemplate the myriad artefacts which these mysterious forebears left for us to decode – desiccated fragments of meat, bread and dates; wigs and shrines. All so exotic, yet simultaneously everyday – Egypt's eternal appeal.

On a balmy blue October afternoon – temperature 25 degrees centigrade – Cairo has a calm, contented air as I exit the museum.

In the grounds, idling under trees, clusters of armed security guards – such as you'll see nowadays at the Louvre or London Bridge Station – are a discreet reminder that Egypt has navigated some violent political rapids since my previous trip; as, indeed, has the world. Desperate times followed the national uprising in January 2011. Now, for the locals, there is light at the end of the tunnel: tourism, Egypt's economic lifeblood, is flickering back to life.

We aren't talking anywhere near the 15 million visitors averaged annually before the revolution. Yet in 2016, British numbers totalled 231,000 – reportedly a rise of 30 per cent year on year. At gov.uk, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's safety map is coloured green (for go) all along the broad belt of the Nile, through Cairo and north to the Mediterranean: prime sightseeing territory. The Egyptian pound is twice as cheap since the currency was floated just over a year ago. If you've long had Egypt on your bucket list, the time to tick it off is now.

And so I step aboard *Sanctuary Sun Boat III* in Aswan, after a 90-minute flight south from Cairo, spent transfixed by the tawny wind-sculpted wastes of the Western Desert, 11,500 metres below. Home for the next three nights is a vessel of svelte elegance, with its own private mooring (beyond the clusters of cruisers closer to town, many sadly empty, awaiting bookings). Interiors synthesise Bedouin tradition (bright cushions, long sofa-stools) with shiny



The temple of Hatshepsut

ewers and other Cairo-auction finds. In the airy Howard Carter Lounge, where G&Ts slip down with ease, a wind-up gramophone with trumpet speaker has a colonial whiff of Agatha Christie.

With 16 supremely comfy cabins (from regular, with power shower, to royal, with bathtub and balcony), *Sun Boat III* is in fact a mobile boutique hotel, ready to spirit us over the next couple of days to Luxor, 200 kilometres north, past fertile plains, lively towns dotted with mosques, and of course some of the greatest temples on Earth.

So close to Sudan, Aswan is another country, home to the atmospheric Temple of Isis, god of the underworld. Remarkable mostly for its powers of survival, the temple preached paganism for millennia, from its BC founding until the 4th century, well after the arrival of Christianity. In the 1970s it was even moved stone by stone to save it from the drowning waters of the first Aswan Dam. Following our guide, George, a fascinating young Coptic (Egyptian Christian) man, we wander in awe, silent save for our footfalls.

The people of Aswan are dark-toned and noble, their souks an irresistible netherworld of tobacco-tinted smiles and spices in piles, pairs of socks at £1 a pop and displays of unctuous patisseries. Heavy with purchases, we reboard to sail the Nile to Kom Ombo, a stretch spent relaxing in the cool of the top-deck cabanas. All the while a staff member circulates with tankards of

cold Egyptian Stella to soften the Greek-island heat of the day.

That afternoon our stomachs are full (with barbecued chicken from a particularly fine aft-deck lunch) – as full as the Temple of Kom Ombo is empty. Unnerving? Quite the opposite: we are growing accustomed to this sense of privilege; our own private Egypt. Even so, a low-lit bunch of dried-out crocodiles behind glass manage to give us the heebie-jeebies, leering eerily as if still alive rather than long-dead, mummified in antiquity for Kom Ombo's deity, the reptilian god Sobek.

Casually weaving all this awesome history together is the mysterious Nile, every bit as intriguing itself. Gazing while lazing in the cooling plunge pool on deck, I am mesmerised by the eternal shape-shifting of the banks and landscapes. One minute they are flat, green and frilly with date palms, grazed by cattle the colour of fudge; then, around the next sweep they reappear as towering cliffs of deathly pallor. After dark, as other guests dress for dinner down below, I sit at the prow in a folding chair, tickled by Mediterranean-warm breezes, and watch the captain's torch sweep the shore, detecting sandbanks, looking for the way ahead in the absence of maps (the river is uncharted). When it goes off, blackness descends, leaving me under a sky powdered white with stars.

Magically the voyage finds its perfect balance, both informative and indolent, given to elegant dinners of lively discussion,



Karnak at sunset



Sanctuary Sun Boat III's top deck

invariably about the delicious food. One evening there is succulent Nile perch, caught by an enterprising guest earlier that day and baked whole. The mere mention of *omm ali* – a sweet, filo-layered pudding laden with cream and nuts – soon has tongues dangling like Pavlov's dogs.

The winning main course is Luxor, where our voyage ends. While not edible, it is incredible, creaking under the weight of its sights. I will always remember the town's eponymous temple, its enormous façade effigies like an opera set. And I will never forget ambling around the vast decaying complex of Karnak in the day's fading light. Begun in 2,000BC, Egypt's largest temple pays homage to Amun Ra, the supreme god. But never mind the history, feel the width – or rather the height. In the Hypostyle Hall, endless soaring columns topped by billowing capitals evoke a long-lost episode of *Star Trek*.

Ultimately – inevitably – we are drawn to Luxor's western bank; the sunset side of the Nile, reserved for the burial of the dead since dim distant centuries. The infamous Temple of Hatshepsut stretches like a corpse's grin, cut into the quarry-like rocks in a procession of toothy columns. But the greatest bounties are more subtle, hidden far below ground in the Valley of the Kings.

Here, down a set of unassuming steps, I'm thrilled to once again come face to face with my favourite pharaoh, Tutankhamun: the man, or rather the mummy, behind the golden mask. Stripped of his exotic finery, which I saw just days earlier, hundreds of kilometres north, in the Egyptian Museum, this shrivelled figure looks somewhat battered lying here in his tomb. Beaten – yet unbowed. A unique survivor, you might say, just like Egypt itself. ☺

Nick Redman is deputy editor of *The Sunday Times Travel Magazine* (sundaytimestravel.co.uk), on newsstands monthly, price £4.20.

| EGYPT |

A&K's 10-night Classic Egypt itinerary starts at £2,195 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



ASWAN

NILE VALLEY
THIS IS ISLAND HOPPING



Egypt

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS
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For more information, call A&K's Egypt travel specialists on **01242 547 703**



Beale Street, Memphis



The King, Elvis Presley



Famous French Quarter balconies in New Orleans

NOTE WORTHY

From rock 'n' roll and soul in Memphis to country in Nashville and jazz in New Orleans, America's Deep South is having a moment – albeit one that began decades ago – drawing music lovers to a region that still sounds great, says **Steve Turner**

I was travelling through Atlanta in a cab when I heard a radio commercial for an Elvis concert at the local Omni Coliseum. Back at my hotel I called the box office and was told the only available seats had restricted views. I declined. I wanted to see Elvis, not a pillar or the back of a speaker cabinet. A year later, The King was dead.

I regret the missed opportunity to see one of popular music's legends. Even though he was by then sluggish and bloated, it would have been nice to add him to my list of top rock 'n' roll pioneers seen in concert, along with Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Little Richard, Bill Haley, the Coasters and Jerry Lee Lewis.

The next best thing to seeing Elvis is seeing where Elvis walked, something I've done a few times since. In 1948 he moved with his parents from his birthplace of Tupelo, Mississippi, to Memphis, Tennessee, where he went through his teens, recorded, came to fame, set up his first marital home and eventually died and was buried.

Memphis was at the confluence of four important streams of American music – spirituals, southern gospel, country and blues. Elvis loved each of them, learned how they were played and eventually fused these influences into what became known as rock 'n' roll.

The first live blues music he heard was in clubs on Beale Street, then an infamous and tawdry area. When I first visited Beale Street, it was in a state of terminal decline. Once-vibrant clubs were boarded up, there was an air of decay and the sound of music had vanished. I stopped to talk to the great Rufus Thomas (*Walking the Dog*), who I found sitting on a doorstep twirling an umbrella. He told me about the old days when he'd played the Palace Theater, The Elks' Club and a place called Club Handy on the corner of Beale Street and Hernando "run by a fellow by the name of Sunbeam Mitchell".

Two isolated premises were clinging on. A. Schwab, a dry goods store (still at 183 Beale Street) had been there for the past 100 years and was determined to remain. "If you can't find it at A. Schwab, you're probably better off without it" was its motto.

Across the street at 126 was Lansky Bros., a clothing store directed almost exclusively at young African Americans. Lansky Bros.' offerings were ostentatious, glitzy and extravagant; pegged trousers that were billowy at the thighs and tight below the knees; continental roll-collar shirts; wingtip shoes; jackets in bold colours.

Bernie Lansky (who died in 2012) explained to me that he'd spotted a teenage Elvis eyeing up these clothes. He stuck out because he was young, poor and white. Elvis eventually bought an all-pink jacket – outrageous for the time – and caused a sensation when he later wore it on stage. "People from all over America came to Beale Street for style," Lansky told me, "and we had the style."

Lansky Bros. now has an additional shop in the prestigious Peabody Hotel, a Memphis landmark where twice a day, every day, a group of ducks is brought down by elevator to the foyer and marched down a freshly rolled out red carpet towards its central fountain.

“IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE THAT SO MUCH CULTURE-CHANGING MUSIC CAME FROM SUCH A SMALL BUILDING IN SUCH A NONDESCRIPT INNER CITY AREA”

Beale Street was regenerated not long after my first visit to the city. The original façades of the old buildings were kept but the insides were gutted and redesigned. Today, lined with restaurants, bars, gift shops and music venues, it's the city's premier entertainment location.

The two most essential Memphis sites for Elvis pilgrims are the studios where he recorded his early songs and the home where he lived with Priscilla.

Sun Studio, at 706 Union Avenue, is where Elvis cut his first single, *That's Alright Mama* on 5 July, 1954. It also saw the creation of Johnny Cash's *I Walk The Line*, Jerry Lee Lewis's *Great Balls of Fire*, Carl Perkins' *Blue Suede Shoes* and many other mid-1950s hits.

As with the Motown studio in Detroit, it's hard to imagine that so much culture-changing music came from such a small building in such a nondescript inner city area.

It still has the old Shure 55 vocal microphones and you can see the spot marked X where Scotty Moore played lead guitar and the indentation on the floor where the spike of Bill Black's

“ MY MEMORIES OF NASHVILLE EXTEND FROM HEARING OLD BLUES MUSICIANS SINGING IN PRINTER’S ALLEY TO BEING GIVEN A FRONT-ROW SEAT AT THE JOHNNY CASH MEMORIAL TRIBUTE IN 2003 ”

upright bass once rested. There is even a cigarette burn on the piano keys donated by Jerry Lee Lewis. Blow-ups of stars including Elvis and Sun Records’ producer Sam Phillips stare down from the white soundproofed walls.

Graceland is the colonial-style mansion that Elvis bought in 1957 in the first flush of his fame. Even before I went there I knew its famed Corinthian columns and its unique wrought iron gates with musical notes. On the outside walls of the property fans then, as now, daubed messages and prayers.

The interiors are fairly representative of a man who had a lot of money and not much taste. He clearly associated fine living with mirrors, velvet, crystal and gold.

His design aspirations reached their apogee in the Jungle Room – the man den where he entertained the long-term buddies known as the Memphis Mafia. Heavy Polynesian carved furniture rests on a shaggy grass-green carpet, rainbow lighting plays on the walls, the plants are plastic and there’s a waterfall.

The local tourist board introduced me to the late Bill Burk, a former *Memphis Press-Scimitar* journalist who had known Elvis well. He showed me the old Presley family apartment in Lauderdale Courts and Humes High School, where a room was dedicated to its most famous graduate from the Class of ’53.

Bill took me to a hotel where a group of German tourists had invited him to share his stories. One asked him if it was true that Elvis had taken drugs. Bill assured them he hadn’t. Later I challenged him about this. “Of course, he took drugs,” he told me. “But they don’t want to hear that.”

Besides producing rock ‘n’ roll in the 1950s, Memphis was a crucible for some of the best soul music of the 1960s. Out of Stax Studio (now the Stax Museum at 926 E McLemore Avenue) came the hits of Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Carla Thomas, Sam and Dave, and Booker T and the MGs. The studio’s unique sound was so influential that The Beatles almost left Abbey Road to record there in 1966.

Nashville, just over 320 kilometres away, is justly famed as the capital of country music (and from 4 May will be served by direct BA flights from London five days per week). Everyone from Hank Williams, Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton and Johnny Cash to Garth Brooks, Alan Jackson, Taylor Swift and Tim McGraw has lived there. It’s home not only to the genre’s most celebrated showcase, the Grand Ole Opry, but also to the Country Music Hall of Fame and the annual CMA Awards.

However, it’s a mistake to think that the streets are cluttered with cowboys and that every club features musicians wearing Stetsons who are blubbing into their beers about lost loves and bad life choices. Nashville is a modern metropolis of skyscrapers (the stars tend to live outside the city in places like Franklin and Brentwood) and the records made here cover the musical spectrum. It’s a hub of video making, songwriting, recording and music publishing (if you want clearance to use Beatles lyrics, as I have found out, you must deal with Sony in Nashville).

My memories of Nashville extend from hearing old blues musicians singing in Printer’s Alley to being given a front-row seat at The Johnny Cash Memorial Tribute in 2003 (held at the

Ryman Auditorium, original home of the Grand Ole Opry) where I gazed up at such country greats as Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris, Hank Williams Jr., George Jones, Kris Kristofferson, and Willie Nelson as they sang Cash songs and paid their respects.

I’ve interviewed musicians on Music Row (the heart of Nashville’s music business district) and at homes ranging from The Cowboy Arms Hotel and Recording Spa on Belmont Boulevard (home of legendary producer Cowboy Jack Clement) to Amy Grant’s 180-hectare farm in Franklin.

One of my all-time favourite music trips was to New Orleans, birthplace of such wide-ranging musical legends as Louis Armstrong, Mahalia Jackson, Jelly Roll Morton, Wynton Marsalis, Allen Toussaint and Dr. John. There was jazz on Bourbon Street (the city’s musical locus has since shifted to Frenchmen Street in the nearby Faubourg Marigny district) and I also travelled out through the bayous to Lafayette to hear Cajun and Zydeco music, which is what country would sound like if the French played it.

New Orleans is a funky city that crackles with influences from France, Spain, England and Africa, just like the jazz that it’s rightly celebrated for having originated. You can taste it in the Creole cooking, hear it in the swampy bass lines emanating from bars and clubs and see it in the stained walls, the peeled doors and the 19th-century cast iron filigree galleries that extend over the sidewalks of the Vieux Carré.

My most memorable moment, though, was a late night riverboat cruise on the Mississippi. As dusk gathered and the steamer’s giant wheels churned the darkening water the rock ‘n’ roll legend Fats Domino (who died in October 2017) took to the piano and, accompanied by a brass section, pumped away at his hits from *Blueberry Hill* and *I’m Walkin’* to *Ain’t That a Shame*.

When he performed his 1960 hit *Walking To New Orleans*, all my fantasies of the music of the American South came together. Here I was on a riverboat, on the Mississippi, sailing out of New Orleans and one of the city’s most celebrated musicians was standing in front of me playing a song about his home town. It doesn’t get much better than that. ☺

Steve Turner is a journalist and author based in London. His books on music include Johnny Cash’s authorised biography *The Man Called Cash*, *Trouble Man: The Life and Death of Marvin Gaye* and, most recently, *Beatles ’66*.

| DEEP SOUTH |

A&K’s 13-night Classic Deep South itinerary starts at £2,720 per person (based on two sharing, includes flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 717.

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



The interior of Sun Studio



Natchez, Mississippi



Johnny Cash in Memphis, 1955



Nashville, Tennessee

48 HOURS IN VENICE

WITH ITS GLITTERING WATERWAYS AND MOSAIC OF 118 SMALL ISLANDS LINKED BY MORE THAN 400 BRIDGES, LA SERENISSIMA IS ITALY'S MOST ROMANTIC CITY. IT'S EASY TO BECOME INFATUATED, SAYS A&K VILLAS' **WALTER CONTU**

ADDITIONAL CORY: ALICIA WILLIAMS

DAY 1

15.30

Arrive in Venice and board your private water taxi. Cruise along the Grand Canal to your apartment. The façades of the centuries-old stately piles that line the waterway now front high-end hotels and magnificent museums. Behind these palazzos, restaurants jostle with buzzy bars and artisanal boutiques in the winding alleys.

16.30

Your water taxi will dock at your apartment (or close by) where you'll be met by an A&K team member. Sip a glass of prosecco while you are shown around your home from home for the next two nights.



The Grand Canal

18.30

Head to T Fondaco dei Tedeschi – a beautiful new department store. Located at the foot of the Rialto Bridge, this palatial structure was built in the 13th century as a commercial exchange. Under Napoleon, it was a customs house and, later, a post office. The current building dates from the 16th century and has been renovated by Rem Koolhaas and his company, OMA, with interiors by Jamie Fobert. The store's crowning glory is the roof terrace. It offers unparalleled views of this watery wonderland. Make a reservation to access this space when you arrive at T Fondaco on the iPads you'll find on the third and fourth floors, then browse homegrown labels' boutiques, including Fendi, Bottega Veneta and Gucci, or shop for Venetian crafts such as Murano glass.

20.30

Follow the locals' lead and congregate outside a *bacari*, a traditional bar, where Venetians spill out onto the streets nightly. All *bacari* serve tapas-like snacks called *cicchetti*. Nibble while you drink an Aperol spritz – a very Venetian aperitif. The area around the Rialto Market is packed with these bars – try Cantina Do Mori, a legendary spot dating from 1462 – or head to Dorsoduro to the newer, hip Estro Vino e Cucina.

22.30

Cicchetti-stuffed, board the complimentary water taxi from Piazzale Roma and head to Casinò di Venezia. Founded in 1638, it is the world's oldest casino – though the gaming house only moved to this location in the 1950s. Composer Wagner died in the building in 1883 and his suite is now a museum if you're feeling more culturally inclined.



A water wonderland – the view from the top at T Fondaco dei Tedeschi



St Mark's Square

DAY 2

09.30



In the Dorsoduro *sestiere*, you'll find the must-visit Peggy Guggenheim Collection. At the former home of the American heiress, cubist, futurist and surrealist works by the 20th-century's greatest artists are on display, including Pollock, Picasso, Matisse and Dalí. Or, if the more modern schools don't float your boat, the 16th-century Chiesa di San Sebastiano houses resplendent paintings by Veronese or the Gallerie dell'Accademia is full of works by Venice's Old Masters.

13.00

Overlooking the Grand Canal across from the Gritti Palace, Antinoo's Lounge & Restaurant is a posh spot for lunch with a view. For something lighter, try Cantine del Vino Già Schiavi or people-watching hot spot Al Chioschetto.

14.30

After lunch, visit gondola maker Roberto Tramontin, one of only four artisans left in Venice making this centuries-old mode of transportation. His great-grandfather founded the *squero* (boatyard) in Dorsoduro. See the process of boat-building from start to finish – it involves eight types of wood being prepared, manipulated, carved and decorated. Afterwards, try one out for yourself, gliding serenely along the canals.

17.30

Take yourself to church – Basilica di San Marco is a spectacular reminder of how often Venice has drawn inspiration from the east and the Orient. A complicated building with its cupolas, domes and mosaics, John Ruskin called it a "treasure heap... a confusion of delight". It's widely considered to be the best example of Byzantine architecture in the world.

20.30

If you want to splash out, Quadri in St Mark's Square is worth a stop. It was taken over by the Alajmo brothers a few years ago and has since earned a Michelin star. On the first floor, chef Massimiliano (Max) has a masterful hand when making dishes such as rolled raw beef with caviar langoustines, lobster and bergamot clam sauce. On the ground floor, in bistro Grancaffè Quadri, he turns out simpler but no less delicious Venetian staples including pizza with burrata and cured pork.

DAY 3

08.30

Often referred to as Venice's Deux Magots, Caffè Florian is the grande dame of Venetian cafés. It serves up coffees and pastries with a side of mirrors, stuccoes and frescoes. Rousseau, Goethe and Byron all hung out here. Be warned – all that history comes with a hefty price tag.

09.55

Leave the crowds in your wake on a behind the scenes Secret Itinerary tour of the Doge's Palace (must be pre-booked via the A&K Villas Concierge service). From Casanova's prison cell to the secret archives and the Chamber of the Three Head Magistrates with its artworks by Veronese, this is a fascinating, alternative view of Venice.

12.00

Board a water taxi and head to the island of Giudecca: it's the hot spot that international art collectors flock to thanks to its thriving contemporary arts scene, with ateliers, galleries and exhibition spaces. Elton John apparently owns an apartment here. It's (mostly) free of tourists and life on the long, thin island is authentically Venetian. Marvel at the city from Giudecca's banks or visit its famous church, Il Redentore.

13.00

Lunch on the waterside of Cip's Club, located on the far eastern tip of Giudecca at the Belmond Hotel Cipriani – a five-star classic. It's the perfect spot to say *ciao*.

| VENICE |

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



Split Apple Rock in Abel Tasman National Park

Five WAYS

TWO ISLANDS. FIVE EPIC EXPERIENCES. WHETHER YOU PACK IT ALL INTO TWO WEEKS OR SPEND A LITTLE LONGER EXPLORING NEW ZEALAND, HERE'S HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF THIS NO-COMPROMISE DESTINATION. BY A&K'S **LISA WARNER**



In the world of travel, we spend a lot of time making lists. We compile top fives and top 10s. We put together photo galleries and make compendiums of our go-to countries and decide on exciting outliers. We review these lists extensively and frequently make changes as new experiences are launched, trends change and evolve, and social media turns “listicles” into must-have Instagram fodder. The aim? To fuel and inform your wanderlust. To add line items to your wish lists (as surely as these lists cause our passports to accrue stamps).

Recently we compiled a catalogue of countries where everything is on offer, where bucket lists can be started and finished in one, epic holiday experience, and where there's no need for compromise. Unsurprisingly, top of that line-up for many of us at Abercrombie & Kent was New Zealand.

Bigger than the UK by 25,000 square kilometres but with 60 million fewer inhabitants, New Zealand has a whole lot of space to fill. And filled it's certainly been – with an extensive range of truly unforgettable experiences that guarantee The Land of the Long White Cloud a place on any respectable bucket list.

White-water rafting, whale watching, wine tasting, glacier and rainforest walks, and that's just for starters. The good news is that you can experience all this and more in a perfectly balanced two-week itinerary. A holiday in New Zealand equals action-packed adventure and traditional culture by day and, come evening, luxurious accommodation and gastronomic delights. Sounds too good to be true? Look at these five epic experiences and you'll start to see what we mean.

EXPERIENCE ONE: DIVE INTO THE CULTURE

Landing in New Zealand and checking into a luxurious, nearly 2,500-hectare estate with views of the Pacific Ocean, you could be excused for never leaving your room. That would be a mistake though because New Zealand's Northland is the birthplace of this magical country and where every traveller should begin their journey.

In New Zealand, the culture of the Maori, the indigenous people, is present in all aspects of everyday life and its influences are visible everywhere you look. Maori history, traditions and language are regarded as central to the country's identity and the integration of modern Kiwi and Maori is well balanced. Visiting the historic site of Waitangi Treaty Grounds, where New Zealand's founding document was written in 1840, you'll learn about the people and stories that have helped to shape a nation. With traditional performances, a museum and a private guided tour with a local Maori, this is the perfect starting point for any tour of this country.

Chase away any lingering jet lag with a spot of diving, sailing, fishing or simply relaxing on the beach while staying at The Lodge at Kauri Cliffs. Enjoy a leisurely game of golf on the estate's par 72 championship course or treat yourself to a relaxing massage at the spa.

EXPERIENCE TWO: EXPLORING THE GREAT OUTDOORS

There is no doubt that the country is renowned as an outdoor adventurer's paradise. National parks abound and New Zealand's Great Walks are famous for good reason. If it's crystal-clear waters, stunning beaches, wildlife spotting and endless ways to explore that you're after then Abel Tasman National Park is a must. It may be compact but great things really do come in small packages.

The Abel Tasman Coastal Track is one of the island's best walks, passing through golden beaches, cerulean bays and ancient coastal forests. Pick from a short hour-long stroll along beaches to the full five-day trek, enjoy a day trip kayaking the marine reserve or jump in one of the water taxis for effortless sightseeing by boat.

No matter how long you choose to stay or how you choose to explore, one thing is for sure – a stay at Edenhouse is a must. One of the world's finest boutique properties, it has been described as one of the 101 Best Hotels of the World in *Tatler's* internationally acclaimed Travel Guide, was the only luxury New Zealand lodge to feature in *House & Garden's Hotels by Design* supplement and was included in the prestigious *Robb Report's* annual list of The World's Top 100 Resorts.

Hosts Peter and Bobbie Martin epitomise Kiwi hospitality, and the extensive grounds and beautifully designed interiors make this luxury lodge the perfect base from which to explore.

EXPERIENCE THREE: PURE INDULGENCE

New Zealand's sauvignon blancs have taken the world by storm in the past 20 years. Often quoted as the sauvignon blanc capital of the world, the Marlborough region is also a gourmet's haven. It's not just wine they do well here – talented chefs have been drawn to the region because of its high-quality ingredients. Scores of cafés, restaurants and farmers' markets have opened and it'd be considered downright rude not to sample at least some of the local fare. Smoked salmon, blue cod and greenshell mussels are all a must, sauvignon blanc, pinot noir and riesling

tastings a definite, and the best news of all? The relatively flat terrain makes it easy to explore by bike on a gentle, gourmet cycle tour. Alternatively, for epic views of these vineyards, take a private helicopter tour over the area.

EXPERIENCE FOUR: COAST DRIVES

For a one-day, Instagram-worthy drive take the Picton to Kaikoura road, which will reopen in 2018. This route hugs the incredible coastline of South Island. Stop to experience an up close and personal encounter with the many seal that dot the coastline, enjoy a tasty lunch of freshly caught lobster and finish up in the town of Kaikoura, New Zealand's whale-watching capital. Enjoy a unique perspective with a Wings Over Whales tour, viewing these spectacular mammals in their natural habitat, while appreciating their scale and majesty viewed from the air.

Staying at Hapuku Lodge, you'll be surrounded by an expansive deer farm and 1,000-tree olive grove, in one of the country's most spectacular settings. It's located between the Kaikoura Seaward Mountain Range and famed Mangamaunu Bay. For total peace, quiet and tranquillity opt to stay in one of their five treehouses – the property's star attraction. Perched 10 metres up in the branches you can treat yourself to a spa bath, while enjoying panoramic views of the stunning surroundings.

EXPERIENCE FIVE: BUZZING ADVENTURES

Frequently called the adventure capital of the world, no visit to New Zealand would be complete without a stop in Queenstown. If it raises the pulse you'll find it here: jet-ski safaris, white-water rafting, kayaking, off-road tours and zip lining. You can throw yourself off a bridge, jump out of a plane, jet up and down glacial rivers or glide above forests, valleys and lakes. For those looking for bragging rights, there's always the ultimate eBiking experience. Fly into remote locations and ride the backcountry trails on an electric bike with just the local wildlife for company.

Just make sure you catch a breath and enjoy the other side of Queenstown too. Set against a backdrop of the snow-capped Remarkables and blue-green sheen of Lake Wakatipu, this town also offers a buzzing arts scene and cosmopolitan restaurants.

Stay at Matakauri Lodge, one of Queenstown's most elegant secret escapes and the perfect base from which to enjoy the very best the region offers. ☺

| NEW ZEALAND |

A&K's 16-night Ultimate New Zealand itinerary starts at £9,875pp (based on two sharing, includes premium economy flights, luxury lodge accommodation and select meals*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 826.

**100% PURE
NEW ZEALAND**
newzealand.com/luxury

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



Waitangi Treaty Grounds is New Zealand's most important historic site



An aerial view of Marlborough's vineyards



Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses



Matakauri Lodge in Queenstown



Lightning bolt-shaped Lake Wakatipu

TOP 10

Culturally immersive experiences

Abercrombie & Kent specialises in connecting travellers to interesting places, peoples and cultures in a real and authentic manner. From the Sacred Valley to a holy mountain in Japan, we reveal our top 10 ways to really get under the skin of a destination

1 *Meet the local community in Chinchero, Peru*

In the Sacred Valley, close to Chinchero town, you can meet the people of a living, breathing Andean community, and learn about their daily lives. They'll show you how they use plants for medicine, prepare adobe bricks to build their homes, weave colourful cloths, farm the steep landscape and, of course, use what they grow to make time-honoured cuisine. Whether it's turning the fields with a cow-drawn plough or sampling guinea pig, this is an enriching experience, exclusive to A&K customers keen to truly understand the country and its people.

2 *Waltz at a ball in Vienna, Austria*

If you've ever dreamt of swirling across a dance floor with effortless elegance and grace, you can make that fantasy come true in Vienna. Take a private introductory waltzing lesson in Austria's capital, and you'll be transported back to the early 19th century of Johann Strauss, in the glamorous surrounds of a baroque ballroom. After breaking for coffee or sparkling wine and cake, you can perfect your steps and receive a certificate to prove your moves – and later demonstrate them with entry to a ball, where you can waltz the night away in a Viennese whirl.



Local weavers in Chinchero



3 *Tracking with bushmen in the Kalahari, Botswana*

While on a trapping expedition in the Makgadikgadi Pans in Botswana during the 1960s, safari guide Jack Bousfield made contact with the Zu/'hoasi bushmen of the Kalahari. Now you too can spend time trekking with these renowned hunters. You'll be greeted by the Zu/'hoasi elders with a traditional ceremony performed by members of the tribe, before the bushmen teach you how they have survived in this harshest of environments for generations, using their deep-seated knowledge of plants, animal behaviour and the landscape.

Zu/'hoasi bushman

4 *Spend time with children at a school in Delhi, India*

Because every child deserves the chance of an education, Abercrombie & Kent Philanthropy sponsors 70 students in south Delhi, covering the cost of education, uniforms, books and meals at the Deepalaya Learning Centre and Community Library. Here, welcomed with garlands and a tilak, you can meet the librarian, walk through classrooms and spend time with the children, who come from some of the poorest, most underprivileged families in the region, and take an active part in helping to give them a better future. Families can join in storytelling and crafts sessions, and volunteer at the library to help cover books.



AKP project in Deepalaya



The Duomo in Florence

5 *Paint frescos in Florence, Italy*

Surrounded by some of the world's best examples of the art of fresco, you may feel moved to get involved yourself. At the Museo dei Ragazzi on the Palazzo Vecchio, formerly the palace of Duke Cosimo I, you can take a private fresco painting class. A local expert will lead you through the basics of this ancient, delicate skill, as you learn each stage of the process, from preparing the plaster base and paints to applying the colour. After creating your own fresco, you'll have the option to take it home with you – or you can simply enjoy a few more of the local masterpieces.

6 *Discover a secret dining experience in Chiang Mai, Thailand*

Off the tourist track lies one of Chiang Mai's rarest treasures – the kitchen of Sumalee, widow of acclaimed writer and photographer Rong Wong-savun. At The Writer's Secret, 40 minutes north of the city, she serves up family recipes, passed down through generations. To eat an alfresco lunch here is to experience some of the most authentic, memorable Thai dishes you will ever taste – and not an elephant ride in sight.



The Writer's Secret, Chiang Mai

7

Stay in a temple in Mount Kōya, Japan

One of the most magical places in Japan, Mount Kōya is the centre of Shingon Buddhism, with traditions stretching back more than 1,200 years. In a unique opportunity for visitors to the region, A&K guests can stay at Kongōbu-ji, the head temple of the sect, and Okunoin, which houses the mausoleum of founder Kobo Daishi. You can then be part of the monks' morning prayer ritual, immersing yourself in the mountain's atmosphere of spiritual peace.

8

Go behind the scenes at the musical academy in Rome, Italy

Experience the Eternal City from a unique perspective with a personal tour across the Ponte della Musica, the Music Bridge, a public space for festivals and exhibitions which was also the first footbridge built across the River Tiber since Roman times. The experience continues with a behind the scenes visit to the Auditorium Parco della Musica, designed by Renzo Piano in the shape of a scarab beetle. Here you can drink cappuccino with one of the teachers while discussing the heritage of the Santa Cecilia Academy, the oldest music school in the world, alma mater of artists as diverse as Sergei Rachmaninov and Ennio Morricone.

9

Be a shepherd for the day in Jordan

You and your family can spend the day immersed in a way of life that hasn't changed for centuries when you join the shepherds and their flocks in the hills around Petra and Wadi Musa. Be lulled by the "symphony of the hills", created by the bells of the donkeys, bleating of the sheep and soft, guttural calls of the shepherds. Your children can take a turn riding the donkey and watch a shepherd expertly milk his sheep before trying the fresh milk, heated over the fire and sweetened with sugar. Jordanian tea is also brewed for the adults as you gaze out over the tranquil hills.

10

Dine out on fruit bat in Mahé, the Seychelles

Even the most seasoned gourmand will admit that dinner at Marie Antoinette's on Mahé is something a little bit special. The oldest restaurant in the archipelago serves up traditional Seychellois cuisine, a Creole fusion of African, Asian and French flavours, typified by the signature dish – curried fruit bat. The open-air dining rooms, framed by bird of paradise flowers, are the only place in the islands to serve this sweet, spicy introduction to local culinary traditions. After your meal, you can also meet the rare Aldabra tortoises in the backyard run.



Kongobu-ji Temple





Small but **MIGHTY**

MEGADIVERSE MADAGASCAR OFFERS WILD ENCOUNTERS WORTHY OF ANY AFRICAN SAFARI – JUST ON A DIFFERENT SCALE. WITH A NEW LUXURY LODGE OPENING ON THE ISLAND, IT'S THE PERFECT TIME FOR NATURE LOVERS TO PICK THIS DREAM DESTINATION, SAYS A&K'S **BEN HARRISON**

The island retreat of Miavana from the air



Miavana resort



Beach bliss

I'm often asked about safari holidays to Madagascar and it always jars. To me, the words just don't sit comfortably together. The term "safari" conjures up images of manfully bumping around in 4x4 vehicles across the open plains in search of the Big Five – sizeable animals, who could, in other circumstances, do you a mischief. In Madagascar, the best experiences are to be had on foot, and turning you into a snack is the last thing on the mind of anything you're likely to encounter.

The protagonists also differ greatly. On the Indian Ocean island, there are no leopard or wild dog. And unlike the eponymous film, there are definitely no lion, giraffe, hippo or zebra. Instead fossa spend their time in trees and foraging on the ground. A relative of the mongoose, fossa are the top predator on the island and unique to the island's forests. You also can forget seeing monkey on Madagascar. Instead there are 100 or so species and sub-species of lemur, most of which are on the endangered list. Millions of years ago, this island was joined to India as part of the supercontinent of Gondwana, explaining why the wildlife is so different to that of mainland Africa.

“ESTIMATES SUGGEST THAT 90 PER CENT OF MADAGASCAR'S FLORA AND FAUNA ARE FOUND NOWHERE ELSE”

Many of Africa's pre-eminent safari destinations, keen to distinguish themselves from each other, are shifting the focus of their expeditions. It's increasingly common to tick off the "Small Five", a collection of more diminutive species, instead of elephant, lion, leopard, rhino and buffalo. Most visitors to Madagascar are already doing this – filling up their Instagram

feeds with shots of the island's plethora of utterly bizarre insects, unique reptiles and stunning flora.

Many minutes can be spent staring at a branch attempting to unpick the astonishing camouflage of a leaf-tailed gecko (think back to the Magic Eye images of the 1990s). Top-heavy giraffe weevil stagger around preposterously, somehow avoiding toppling. Madagascan cockroach hiss should you inadvertently disturb their cover. Myriad-coloured chameleon strut deliberately past. Hedgehog-like tenrec snuffle in the undergrowth and leaf insect sit motionless to avoid detection and contemplate their identity crisis. Estimates suggest that 90 per cent of Madagascar's flora and fauna are found nowhere else: no other safari country can even begin to compete.

While some of its people hail from Africa, Madagascar's first settlers and those who colonised the fertile highlands arrived in canoes from Borneo. The upshot is a diverse melting pot of cultures and fascinating traditions and beliefs, rarely better witnessed than in the Ifotaka Forest in the south of the island. The Antandroy people who settled in the arid part of southern Madagascar, characterised by inhospitable spiny forests (often juxtaposed against vast sisal plantations), are known for their ancestor worship as well as their elaborate tombs. Their accumulated wealth is measured by the number of zebu (a species of cattle) they possess, the skulls of which adorn their often brightly decorated tombs to demonstrate the stature of



A bedroom at Miavana



A curious crowned lemur



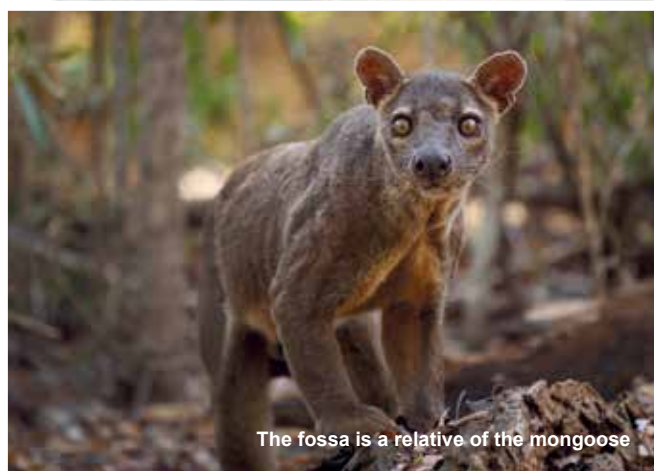
Native lizard

the occupant. From the raised decks of the impossibly serene Mandrare River Camp, it's possible to watch Antandroy women planting sweet potatoes in the fertile floodplain of the river's receding waters, as they have done for centuries. There are no beaded goods for sale at Antandroy markets, nor will anyone try to sell you anything else for that matter – there's a refreshing lack of association between foreign visitors and wealth.

For seasoned safari goers used to the elegant, canvas charms of East or South Africa's air-conditioned luxury lodges, the restricted choice of top-notch lodgings in Madagascar was a compelling reason not to make the hop across the Mozambique Channel. The plucky few camps and lodges offering wisps of high-end accommodation, experiences and dining have tended to be the exception amid a sea of three-star buffet mediocrity.

Recently however, there have been rumblings in the jungle and intermittently over the last few years, new lodges have opened, raising standards to new heights, and in prime position to tap into this potential natural goldmine. The opening of Miavana, an idyllic, private island retreat, off Madagascar's northeast coast, is already enticing a new clientele to this natural paradise, and the rest of the country is set to reap the benefits.

It's only a matter of time before others join the high-end party and Madagascar finally takes its rightful place among Africa's other luxury safari destinations. So make sure you go soon, before word gets out. ☺



The fossa is a relative of the mongoose

| MADAGASCAR |

A stay at Miavana starts at £2,105 per person per night (based on two sharing, includes flights*). For more information, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 702.

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

What kind of traveller are you?

What type of traveller are you? All Abercrombie & Kent customers share a love of exclusive experiences, luxury accommodation and world-class cuisine, but beyond that you're an eclectic bunch. Which is why we offer an equally wide-ranging selection of trips, taking in temples and castles; safaris and wildlife cruises; thrill seeking drives; family fun; and the great outdoors.

On A&K's Small Group Journeys, you'll meet like-minded adventurers with whom you can share some of the most fascinating places on the planet. No matter what kind of traveller you are, whether adrenaline junkie, culture vulture or nature lover, there's a Small Group Journey for you. Take our quiz to find your perfect match.

1. Your first ever A&K holiday was...

- A. Dogsledding in Norway
- B. Learning cowboy skills at Goosewing Ranch in Wyoming, USA
- C. Exploring "Africa's Camelot", the castles of Gondar, Ethiopia
- D. To California, including Universal Studios and San Francisco
- E. Scuba diving and snorkelling around Fiji's nature reserves

2. The best time of year for you to get away from it all is...

- A. Whenever conditions are most extreme
- B. Summer, for long days and balmy nights
- C. Around the dates of cultural festivals and international holy days
- D. During school holidays
- E. Migration season

3. You never set off on holiday without...

- A. A grab-bag containing crampons, nylon rope, a multi-tool and goggles
- B. Hiking boots
- C. Three city guides and a credit card
- D. More luggage than you thought was possible. And snacks
- E. Binoculars

4. At the airport you always...

- A. Have a nap, because you're going to need all your energy when you arrive
- B. Hide in the meditation room
- C. Research and cross-reference all the landmarks, museums and galleries you want to visit
- D. Find a window to watch planes from
- E. Worry about leaving your dogs behind in kennels



- B. Sir Ranulf Fiennes
- C. Phileas Fogg
- D. The Swiss Family Robinson
- E. Sir David Attenborough

9. It's music to your ears when...

- A. You hit the first track on your heli-boarding playlist
- B. The orchestra strikes up the first bars of Dvořák's Symphony No.9 *From the New World*
- C. You witness a geisha playing traditional melodies on her shamisen
- D. All is quiet
- E. You hear whale song in the wild

10. Your screensaver is...

- A. A shot of you diving with sharks, taken on your new underwater camera
- B. An aerial view over the French Alps
- C. *South Wind, Clear Sky (Red Fuji)* by Katsushika Hokusai
- D. A snap of your kids, building sandcastles
- E. A montage of your dogs/cats/iguanas

11. When in Rome...

- A. You want to make like a gladiator at the Colosseum
- B. You're already planning a day trip to Sabina
- C. You go to the Pantheon. And the Vatican. And the Borghese Gallery. And...
- D. You have to find a real, live centurion. And gelato
- E. You feed the birds in St Peter's Square

12. When you book a cruise, you're looking for one that will take you...

- A. Down the white water rapids of the Zambezi River
- B. To the Southern Ocean, where only you, the icebergs and albatross ride the wind and waves
- C. Down the Nile, past the temples, tombs and statues of Ancient Egypt
- D. On a yacht charter around Croatia's secluded coves and beaches
- E. From Ecuador to the Galápagos Islands

13. And your ideal vessel to take to the water in would be...

- A. *Spirit of Australia*, which broke the water speed record in 1978 and still holds it today
- B. A clipper-rigged sailing yacht, fitted for a transatlantic crossing, and no motor in sight
- C. A replica of Columbus's *La Santa María*
- D. A narrowboat wide enough for everyone
- E. Noah's Ark

14. You think that bungee jumping is a great way to...

- A. Warm up for some properly challenging activities
- B. See incredible river gorges up close
- C. Put your back out
- D. Entertain the kids while you watch from a safe distance
- E. Impersonate a diving osprey

15. Your last expedition was to...

- A. The Rockies
- B. Patagonia
- C. Machu Picchu
- D. Disneyland®
- E. Madagascar

5. Your favourite selfie was taken...

- A. At 20,000 feet
- B. Because there was no one for miles to take a picture for you
- C. In front of the Taj Mahal
- D. By your youngest
- E. Up close and personal with a giant panda in its natural habitat

6. Your accommodation of choice is...

- A. A ski-in, ski-out lodge in the Dolomites
- B. The mobile camping safari in Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania
- C. A luxury apartment in Venice
- D. A villa in Tuscany – with a pool and tennis court
- E. The Amazon Clipper, cruising down the "River Sea"

7. Your perfect meal is...

- A. Energy bars and a protein shake
- B. Venison jerky and clear mountain spring water
- C. The cheese course served under the crystal chandeliers of Alain Ducasse at Plaza Athénée in Paris
- D. For two
- E. Vegetarian

8. Your travel hero is...

- A. Annie Smith Peck



Morocco 4x4 Desert-Drive Adventure

16. You worship at the temple of...

- A. Autodromo Nazionale di Monza, Formula 1's temple of speed
- B. Drakensberg's natural Amphitheatre in South Africa
- C. Angkor Wat in Cambodia
- D. CBeebies
- E. Artemis, Mistress of the Animals

17. The first thing you pack on day one of your holiday is...

- A. Your parachute
- B. A topographical map of the surrounding landscape
- C. A local phrase book
- D. Sunscreen and tissues
- E. A camouflage jacket

18. If heaven is a place on Earth, it can be found in...

- A. Christchurch, New Zealand
- B. Iceland's Golden Circle
- C. Among the ancient cities of Persia
- D. Costa Rica
- E. Serengeti National Park

19. While your idea of a holiday in hell would be...

- A. A sun lounger, a pool, an on-site spa, and a pile of chick lit
- B. A city break in Shanghai
- C. Benidorm
- D. A walking tour of New York's art galleries, followed by a walking tour of its great architectural sites
- E. Sea World

20. Your perfect travel companion would be...

- A. Dervla Murphy
- B. Bear Grylls
- C. David Starkey
- D. Jo Frost
- E. Bill Oddie

21. Your dining room of choice is...

- A. The Huashan Teahouse in China, 2,160 metres above sea level and apparently nailed to the side of Mount Hua
- B. Around a campfire, under the stars
- C. Blackfriars in Newcastle, the oldest dining room in the UK, dating back to 1239
- D. Naples' finest pizzeria: wafer-thin bases, delicious tomato sauce, oozing mozzarella and kid-friendly
- E. Ithaa Undersea Restaurant in the Maldives, surrounded by marine life

22. On a trip to Australia, you absolutely have to...

- A. Dive the Great Barrier Reef, sail the Bass Strait, kayak the Snowy River, surf Manly Beach...
- B. Head to the Red Centre
- C. Catch a show at the Sydney Opera House
- D. Hit Dreamworld on the Gold Coast
- E. Go dolphin spotting in the Whitsundays

23. Your top Wonder of the Ancient World is the...

- A. Statue of Zeus at Olympia
- B. Hanging Gardens of Babylon
- C. Mausoleum at Halicarnassus
- D. Temple of Artemis at Ephesus
- E. Great Pyramid of Giza

24. If you can't live in a world without walls, the wall you'd choose would be...

- A. A climbing wall
- B. Hadrian's Wall
- C. The Great Wall of China
- D. The Wailing Wall
- E. Offa's Dyke

25. The first article you turned to in the last edition of Sundowner was...

- A. Pioneering Adventures
- B. A Dip Into Gaucho Life
- C. Beyond Cherry Blossom: Japan's Festivals
- D. Oman: Half-Term Hero
- E. Four Seasons of Wildlife in Latin America

MOSTLY As: HOOKED ON ADRENALINE

You're a thrillseeker, an adrenaline junkie, and every trip you take needs to be packed with excitement. Not for you lazing by the pool – you'd rather be bombing down sand dunes, crossing glaciers or trekking to the Pole.

A&K's *Iceland 4x4 Ice-Drive Adventure* will take you to the edge of your comfort zone, with up to six hours of challenging driving each day. You'll steer your super-jeep along the ice roads to the Golden Circle past Great Geysir and Strokkur geysers, the Gullfoss Waterfall and Kerið volcanic crater lake, and across the lava fields of the Reykjaneskagi Peninsular. Or head even further into the icy wastelands for the *Ultimate Arctic Adventure*, staying at the most northerly lodge on Earth, run by three generations of polar explorers. All-terrain vehicle driving, kayaking, rafting and hiking are just some of the thrills that await. If you prefer your excitement a bit hotter, the *Morocco 4x4 Desert-Drive Adventure* will take you to the Sahara, and along a section of the old Paris-Dakar Rally route.

MOSTLY Bs: INTO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Your heart's desire is to be out among nature in all its glory, breathing clear Arctic air, climbing mountains, trekking across awe-inspiring landscapes, and feeling as if you're going where no traveller has gone before.

The *Ultimate Arctic Adventure* will land you in an environment barely touched by human hand or foot, including the Cunningham River estuary, seasonal home to hundreds of beluga whale. Alternatively, *Climb Kilimanjaro: Summiting the Machame Route* takes on Africa's most famous mountain, with Tanzania spread out beneath you; or choose *Western Canada: Rockies & Wilderness*, exploring by train, helicopter and foot. *Patagonia: The Last Wilderness* takes you into the last great untouched landscape, where you ride, kayak, trek and sail on a route to Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world.

MOSTLY Cs: TOTAL CULTURE VULTURE

It's cityscapes, not landscapes, you long for, and you'll happily spend your days winding in and out of cobbled alleys, stepping back in time at ancient sites, wandering into museums and art galleries, before whiling away your evenings at cultural events, getting under the skin of the country you're in.

The *Sudan & Ancient Nubia* experience will take you back to the ancient kingdom of Kush, show you the Meroitic Pyramids and the Temple of Soleb, built in the 14th century BC. For a more modern day journey, choose *Italy: Food & Walks in Puglia & Amalfi*, soaking up the undulating scenery, walled towns and Baroque architecture of Italy's loveliest region, before sampling regional specialities and local wines at charming eateries. In contrast to these relaxed delights, *Japan: Temples, Shrines & Geisha* transports you into a world of formal traditions, with musical performances, a tea ceremony and dinner on a private *yakatabune*, a classic wooden boat.

MOSTLY Ds: FAMILY FOCUSED

You love to travel – and you want to take your children with you, showing them the glories that the world has to offer, and opening their minds to new cultures and experiences, while also having a lot of fun!

Costa Rica: A Family Adventure will have the kids thrilled to drive along the volcanic craters of the Pods, take a safari float on the Penas Blancas River, and zip-line over the Arenal mountains. Or choose *Kenya: A Family Adventure* where they'll have the unforgettable experience of meeting the last three white rhinos on the planet, go on a night-time game drive, learn to track a lion, and visit a Maasai village and school to see how the children in this part of the world learn and play.

MOSTLY Es: ANIMAL LOVER

David Attenborough has nothing on you: when it comes to the natural world, you're the first in the queue. Whether it's diving with whale shark, searching for giraffe on safari, or looking for gorilla in the mist, you plan your holidays around the species you'll be able to spot.

On *Alaska Wilderness & Wildlife*, you can dogsled across a glacial ice field, take a whale, walrus and sea otter watching cruise in the Kenai Fjords and visit the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Centre to meet bison, moose and grizzly bear. Alternatively, choose *Mongolia's Golden Eagle Festival* where hunters show off their birds' speed and agility, before seeing endangered takhi, the native horses in the Khustain Nuruu National Park. Follow *The Great Migration: Safari in Style* across the Masai Mara and Serengeti to see lion, giraffe, zebra, hyena and, of course, wildebeest. On the *Galápagos Wildlife Adventure*, in the world's most famous nature reserve, you can share Charles Darwin's wonder amid flightless cormorant, marine iguana and Sally Lightfoot crab.

The Great Migration: Safari in Style

| SMALL GROUP JOURNEYS |

For more information on A&K's Small Group Journeys, or to book your escorted tour, call our travel specialists on 01242 547 892.

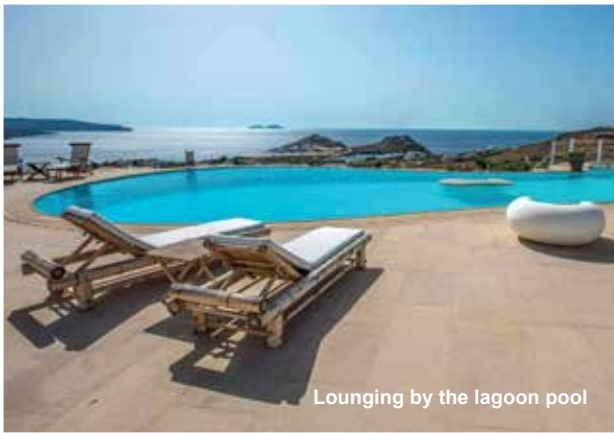
THE
BLACK
COLLECTION

Introducing A&K Villas & Ski's Favourite 40 for 2018

Infinity pools, moats, gyms, tennis courts, voice-activated assistants, wine cellars, yoga pavilions, turrets, helipads, private cinemas... At A&K Villas we know the features that really wow our guests. And then there are some villas with a little something extra, a certain *je ne sais quoi* that elevates them into the realms of the rarefied and extraordinary; and earns them a place in The Black Collection, our annual list of the *crème de la crème* from our range of holiday properties.

Each year no more than 40 villas are chosen by an expert panel based on décor, amenities, location, popularity with guests, star quality and Instagrammableness, among other wow factors. The honourees awarded Black Collection status must be able to provide A&K Villas' Gold or Platinum concierge service – thus ensuring that a stay at any of these properties comes with access to our concierges' little black books, providing in-location insider access... The Black Collection: a mark of excellence.

A fabulous five from The Black Collection



Lounging by the lagoon pool

Zarassi Estate, Mykonos

Sleeps: 26 | Price: from £1,123pp per week

Best for: Fun in the sun

A favourite with the glitterati, Mykonos is the Cyclades' most glamorous destination. Jackie Kennedy put the island on the tourist map in 1961. Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor and Rudolf Nureyev all followed her lead. Skip forward to now and it's still the place to come in the region. Located on the southeast coast, the Zarassi Estate is an opulent 7,000-square-metre private compound featuring four properties with 13 bedrooms between them. Hang out by the lagoon-shaped pool, be pampered in the mini spa, get pumped in the outdoor gym and enjoy wonderful sea views.



Pool and pizza oven equals alfresco perfection



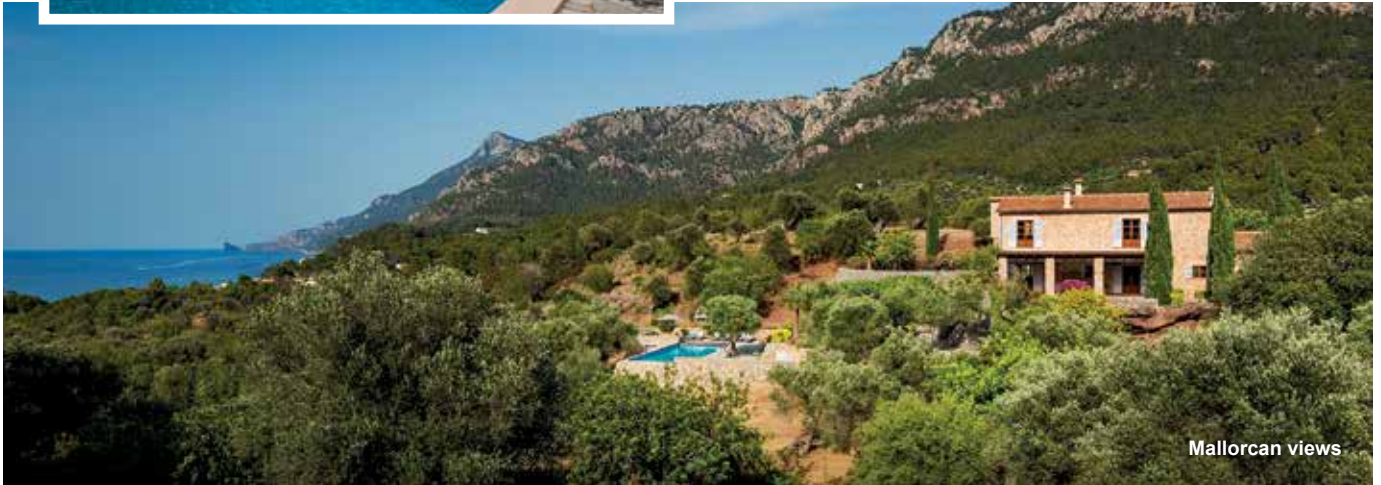
The saltwater pool

Sa Terra Rotja, Spain

Sleeps: 8 | Price: from £2,026pp per week

Best for: Switching off in style

Set in a 275-hectare private estate on the northwest coast of Mallorca, the property's name translates as "Red Earth". It's an appropriate moniker. The villa is topped by terracotta tiles and constructed of red-hued stone and mortar, it features four en suite bedrooms, an alfresco dining area, indoor and outdoor lounging areas and a pool. The interiors are coffee table book worthy. Bright artworks in each room make the taupe palette pop. Sa Terra shares a tennis court with the estate's two other villas and is a 15-minute walk from the private pebbled beach.



Mallorcan views

Podere le Colline, Italy

Sleeps: 18 | Price: from £888pp per week

Best for: Half-term or holiday high jinks

This villa is truly Tuscany at its most regionally authentic. Views of Pienza's rolling hills wow from every compass point. Cypress and olive trees punctuate the views, helping to instil a distinctive sense of place. Dotted on one of Tuscany's golden hillsides, Podere le Colline is an 18th-century, stone-built villa comprised of nine en suite bedrooms, large lounging areas, a sleek pool, wine cellar and outdoor dining area. The littlest guests will love the soccer field, playground and games area.



Typically Tuscan



The heated pool



The cosy wooden interior

San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge, Italy

Sleeps: 6+4 | Price: POA

Best for: Conquering the slopes, and more

For many, the pleasure of a skiing holiday lies as much off the slopes as on, so this Italian mountain lodge will appeal to both the most dedicated powder hound and determined après-ski. Set in a 170,000-square-metre estate, the Alpine chalet commands a sauna, outdoor swimming pool, Jacuzzi, extensive wine cellar and private 19-hole golf course. Skiers and boarders will love being in the Dolomiti Superski – the world's largest interconnected ski area. One lift pass, 12 skiing areas and 1,200 kilometres of piste.



Ski-in perfection



French fancy

Le Jardin d'Eden, France

Sleeps: 14+4 | Price: from £741pp per week

Best for: Experiencing earthly delights

Just a few kilometres outside the town of Noves lies Le Jardin d'Eden, a spacious eight-bedroom abode. The unique rooms and suites are chic in a fabulously French way. As you can imagine from the house's name, this villa's *pièces de résistance* are the grounds in which it lies. Surrounded by beautiful themed gardens – French symmetrical, African and Portuguese – there are also two pools, a tennis court, basketball court, boules pitch, kids' play area and garden-viewing platform in a plane tree. There is also an outside dining area for eating *en plein air*.



Pleasing symmetry



The Ray Residence on the Dalmatian Coast



Quinta Pienza on the Algarve



The Black Collection 2018 list

Croatia

- Castle Voda** Dalmatian Coast – sleeps 12+4
- Ray Residence** Dalmatian Coast – sleeps 12+2
- Villas Mali Raj** Dalmatian Coast – sleeps 20

France

- Villa du Cap** Cap Ferrat – sleeps 12+4
- La Signoria** Corsica – sleeps 12
- La Bergerie** Côte d'Azur – sleeps 12+4
- La Cannoise** Côte d'Azur – sleeps 18
- Villa Med** Côte d'Azur – sleeps 10+2
- Villa Sunset** Côte d'Azur – sleeps 12+4
- La Bastide Des Etioles** Provence – sleeps 14
- Le Jardin d'Eden** Provence – sleeps 14+4
- Moulin de Gordes** Provence – sleeps 12

Greece

- Villa Kamy** Crete – sleeps 8+2
- Zarassi Estate** Mykonos – sleeps 26
- The Caldera Estate** Santorini – sleeps 10
- Villa Lavana** Santorini – sleeps 6

Italy

- Casa Porpora** Amalfi – sleeps 8
- Villa Giuseppina** Lake Como – sleeps 14
- Villa Del Duca** Pisa – sleeps 20
- Masseria La Residenza** Puglia – sleeps 10
- Podere San Giorgio** Sicily – sleeps 16
- Villa Machiavelli** Tuscany – sleeps 20
- Villas Nereo** Tuscany – sleeps 14
- Castello Tedite** Umbria – sleeps 16
- Podere le Colline** Valdorcia – sleeps 18
- Palazzo Ambasciatori** Venice – sleeps 6

Portugal

- Quinta Pienza** Algarve – sleeps 12+4

Spain

- La Maroma Estate** Andalucia – sleeps 8+6
- Mas Mateu** Costa Brava – sleeps 18+17
- El Maravillo** Ibiza – sleeps 12+4
- Residencia de Vall** Mallorca – sleeps 14+4
- Sa Terra Rotja** Mallorca – sleeps 8
- Villa Can Caya** Mallorca – sleeps 16+4
- Villa Estila** Mallorca – sleeps 8+6
- Villa Vivent** Mallorca – sleeps 10

UK

- Fox Hill Manor** Cotswolds – sleeps 16
- North Lodge** Cotswolds – sleeps 15

Ski Chalets

- Chalet Uberhaus** St Anton, Austria – sleeps 10+4
- San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge** Dolomites, Italy – sleeps 6+4
- Backstage Chalet** Zermatt, Switzerland – sleeps 10

| THE BLACK COLLECTION |

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

Mission: Thailand



There's so much more to Thailand than its palm-fringed beaches, aquamarine waters, buzzing nightlife and golden temples. On our Discover holidays, we want you to really get to the heart of a destination and give you the space and time to explore – albeit with our unparalleled access and insider knowledge opening doors for you along the way. We recently teamed up with Sarah and Terry Lee from LiveShareTravel and sent them behind the scenes and off the usual tourist trails in Thailand. We set them seven challenges, which they shared online (they're still available to view on Abercrombie & Kent's Facebook

page). The Lees' challenges included the best way to get around Bangkok on two wheels or two feet; they cooked up a storm in Chiang Mai; were taught to make cocktails in Phuket (where else?); learned Thai massage at the Banyan Tree Academy; and trained in Muay Thai, a martial art believed to have originated 1,000 years ago. At the end of each of the seven challenges, LiveShareTravel and A&K's online communities chose the winner, voting for how they'd prefer to see Bangkok or if they'd like to dine on traditional dishes or an innovative insect menu. Here's how the Lees pursued their journey of discovery in Thailand.

Transport challenge: Pedal power vs hoofing it

"It's taken seven trips to Bangkok to go beyond the tourist traps and really discover Thailand," Sarah and Terry posted on their Twitter feed. Terry biked around the city on a cycling tour, while Sarah walked, boated and took a tuk-tuk. Together with their A&K guides, Sarah and Joey, they explored areas such as the canalside paths in Thonburi and visited Portuguese Catholic churches as well as getting up close and seeing a new side to Wat Arun. There was no clear winner of this challenge. Needless to say, however you choose to get around Bangkok, you'll see amazing sights.



Artisan challenge: Here's one they made earlier

In Chiang Mai, Sarah was tutored by master sculptor and carver Pech Viriya from Baan Jang Nak, and carved an elephant scene. Terry visited Bor Sang Umbrella Village and hand-painted a traditional umbrella with the help of his patient teacher, Noi. The couple put it to their followers, who preferred Terry's umbrella.



Cookery challenge: Ready, steady, cook...



The Lees visited The Wildflower Home, a safe haven for woman and their children who are in crisis. This home is supported by Abercrombie & Kent Philanthropy and its project, Chiang Mai Mushroom House, which enhances the women's lives by teaching them how to mushroom farm. Using farm funghi, Sarah made a tom yum soup and Terry cooked up a mushroom and tofu stir fry. The home's resident children judged the offerings and picked Sarah's soup as the winner.



Eating challenge: Getting grubby vs formal fare



Sarah visited Insects in the Backyard in Bangkok and sampled water-beetle oil, bamboo caterpillar and ant larvae. Terry, meanwhile, visited the Whole Earth restaurant in Chiang Mai and enjoyed far tamer traditional dishes (pictured below). Sarah was the winner and managed to convince followers that insects would be worth a try.



Shopping challenge: The Real Deal in Bangkok

LiveShareTravel visited Chatuchak Market in Bangkok with their local A&K guides, to see who could pick up the best souvenir. Wowed by the sheer scope of choice on offer, the couple browsed the market extensively before making their selections. Sarah managed to haggle and got a great price for her chosen souvenir – handmade coffee cups and bowls. Terry opted for three chic silk scarves, a pashmina and a tie. It was a close call, but Terry's sartorial souvenirs won the day.



LiveShareTravel

Sarah and Terry Lee (pictured, right) are founders of LiveShareTravel, an award-winning online travel and lifestyle magazine with a focus on luxury travel and shared ownership. Sarah is a print journalist and editor, who is a member of the British Guild of Travel Writers. Terry's background is in PR and communications.



| THAILAND |

A&K's 12-night Discover Thailand itinerary starts at £2,795 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



A&K PHILANTHROPY

THIRSTY FOR A CHANGE

AKP teams up with LifeStraw to bring safe drinking water to over 7,000 children in the Masai Mara. AKP co-ordinator **Camilla Rhodes** reports

According to the United Nations, there are 633 million people around the world – one in 10 – without access to an improved source of drinking water. An “improved source” is one that is designed to protect against contamination. With water scarcity affecting over 40 per cent of the global population, a figure that is projected to rise, a core target of the United Nations’ sustainable development goals (SDGs) is to achieve access to safe and affordable drinking water for everyone by 2030.

Almost half the people drinking from unprotected sources of water live in sub-Saharan Africa. For Abercrombie & Kent Philanthropy (AKP) clean water is key. Collaborating with LifeStraw, which already has a well-established operation in Western Kenya, AKP is now bringing the award-winning water filtration technology to the Masai Mara. Driven by mutual missions to impact the livelihoods of at risk community members, the launch of this clean water initiative is bringing access to safe drinking water to 7,078 students in 11 schools throughout the Mara region.

The LifeStraw Community Filter is designed to provide high-volume point-of-use water purification with built-in storage. With gravity-fed, hollow fibre technology, each filter can remove 99.99 per cent of bacteria, viruses and protozoan parasites. A single filter can provide up to 100,000 litres of water in its lifetime, that will serve 100 schoolchildren every day for up to five years.

Globally, approximately 2.5 million children miss school each day due to unsafe water and resulting water-borne diseases. A team of AKP and LifeStraw staff, working together with the Ministry of Education, identified schools in the area that are currently facing a challenge in gaining access to clean water. Many of the water sources that schools are dependent on



A community demonstration



Before and after LifeStraw



Healthy, happy children

are shared with livestock and neighbouring wildlife, making collection dangerous for the children as well as unsanitary.

Sustainability is paramount, and together with LifeStraw, AKP can ensure that this programme has longevity and will provide clean water into the future. This is achieved through comprehensive water-filter maintenance training for all the teachers and a dedicated team of school prefects who perform daily checks on the filters, in-depth

health and sanitation education as well as a five-year supply of spare parts with free repair and maintenance services to the schools.

With a team of local support staff on the ground in Kenya, AKP plans to conduct regular follow ups at each location to gauge the impact and with a dedicated real-time electronic data collection system, tracking the data and impact couldn't be easier. At less than \$1 for safe water for a schoolchild for an entire year, it couldn't be more efficient.





Abercrombie & Kent

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For further information, please contact **Abercrombie & Kent** on **01242 547 760** or visit **abercrombiekent.co.uk**

*Bedding by The White Company will be rolled out on routes to other destinations throughout 2018.