

CARRIER

THE PAPER

10

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YOUR CURATED GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL LUXURY EXPERIENCES

WILD AT HEART

The majesty of the Namib Desert

Place complete trust in ancient methods of travel and survival

TRUE GRIT

Nature in its purest form

Confront the rawest form of wilderness on the west coast of Canada

CHASING THE SUNRISE

Catch the early hours of morning

Take cues from nature as our clock to boost mood and start the day

LANDING ON THEIR FEET

Reviving big cats from the brink

Labours of love to conserve these graceful creatures and their habitats





Carrier cares

Here at Carrier, we look beyond simply your journey and your destination – we also recognise that we have a responsibility to help protect the fascinating habitats, cultural sites and communities that we experience when we travel. We're committed to reducing our carbon footprint and being an advocate for human rights and animal welfare; taking steps to ensure we have a positive impact on the world.

Welcome to CARRIER, *The Paper*

As humans, we sometimes forget that we share our planet. We coexist alongside flowers, plants, trees, insects, mammals, reptiles, birds. Each as important as the other. With busy lives and the sparkle of cities, understanding our responsibility to them is more important than ever.


Nowhere is this clearer than in the efforts across two different continents to restore the mysterious power of the big cat. Bringing India's graceful tigers, lion habitats in Africa and the elusive leopards of Sri Lanka back from the brink are life-changing encounters (p.18).


There's so much we can learn from animals, too. Watching them survive the blazing sun of the Namib Desert (p.16) or thrive in the humidity of the Borneo jungle (p.10), teaches us humility and reminds us who's in charge. Of course, natural majesty is not just found on land. A myriad of underwater worlds can be accessed if you know where to look (p.12). A cruise with a team of wildlife experts, explorers and skippers adds new, knowledgeable chapters to personal stories (p.9), while the elegance of old-world sailing can take you from swimming with turtles one moment to walking with Komodo dragons the next (p.24).

Following nature's tempo transforms feeling and perspectives. Slowly rising with the early morning sun aids better sleep at night (p.22), and fast-paced adventures across Iceland's volcanic landscape (p.8) or Canada's raw wilderness awakens the senses (p.27). What's left behind is a renewed sense of respect for the world we live in.

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Confronting pure wilderness in Canada



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Luxury selection

WHAT TO LOVE AND WHERE TO BE RIGHT NOW



The fashion

A BOHEMIAN PLAYGROUND

Clinking cocktails, moody jazz and silk slippers. It's easy to taste the sophistication of the 1920s French Riviera in Olivia von Halle's latest collection. Each dress, pyjama set, dressing gown and bralette is inspired by the sapphire stretch of the Côte d'Azur between Menton and Saint-Tropez. The area became an inkwell of inspiration for artists and writers, from the fiery F. Scott Fitzgerald to the surrealist Salvador Dalí. Be dazzled by a flash of sun and sea, as well as von Halle's signature playful hint of animal exotica – in this case the black and white flash of zebras.

The Azure Collection
oliviavonhalle.com



The jewellery

FOLKLORE AND FAIRY TALES

"I believe the wonder of life is in the people we love, the stories we tell, and the art we create." Born into a family of artists and bohemians, the jewellery designer Cecelia Fein-Hughes was immersed in the magical world of storytelling from a young age. Each necklace and ring draws on mythological tales and the bold style of old-school tattoos, which are hand-enamelled on 18ct gold. From snakes that tussle with the moon, to butterflies that flit past the night sky, each finds its own meaning with the wearer, becoming a talisman of personal empowerment.

18ct Yellow Gold & Enamel Signet Rings, from £2,860, Cece Jewellery, photography by Jessica Mahaffey

cecejewellery.com

The art

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

The flutter of a bee's wing. A plume of spores from a mushroom. Sweat off a bison's back. The level of detail captured in the latest Wildlife Photography of the Year awards is as astounding as ever. It's like you can almost feel the presence of each animal. Not only are the pictures bold in colour, they're also bold in subject. From conservation efforts for endangered species to animals in war evacuations, the photos find creatures in all corners of the world, facing all manner of trials and tribulations.

*13 October 2023 – 30 June 2024
Wildlife Photographer of the Year 59,
Natural History Museum, South Kensington, SW7
nhm.ac.uk*



© Alex Mustard



© Caitlin Henderson



© Bruno D'Amicis



© Max Waugh



The interiors

CANINE COUTURE

In most homes, pet pooches get treated like royalty. So, it's only right that they're given the best of the best when it comes to home furnishings. Ivy & Duke is a family-run business handcrafting dog beds and travel accessories with the help of a specialist team of expert artisans. The beds are designed for extreme

comfort deserving of lucky mutts but also to suit the sophisticated interiors of their owners. And every detail is personal, from the bespoke customisation and personalised monogramming down to the handwritten notes of thanks that come with them.

ivyandduke.co.uk



The theatre

CREATURES OF IMAGINATION

As the founder of the famed Studio Ghibli finishes his final film, there couldn't be a better moment to celebrate the fruits of his labour. The sell-out theatre adaptation of *My Neighbour Totoro* by the Royal Shakespeare Company returns with a blast of puppetry. The coming-of-age story follows two sisters as they spend a summer exploring the Japanese countryside and befriend mystical, cuddly creatures who live in the nearby forest. The audience are invited along for the ride and to dive back into the fantastical world of childish imagination.

21 November 2023 – 23 March 2024,
My Neighbour Totoro, Barbican Theatre, EC2Y
barbican.org.uk

Photography by: Manuel Harlan

The insider

The responsible care for flora and fauna is something we care dearly about at Carrier. Here are some ways to look out for the planet's most precious beings.



ADOPT AN ORPHANED ELEPHANT IN NAIROBI at the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and you'll not only save a life, but track their progress in personal videos, photos and monthly watercolours.



WATCH ON AS GIANT HUMPBACK WHALES flock to the bay of Samaná between January and March to give birth. The Dominican Republic monitor boat numbers and licenses and prevent swimming to make this one of the most ethical experiences on water.



REST EASY WITH THE 'MINIMAL IMPACT' initiatives on the private island of the Bawah Reserve in Indonesia. There are protected marine life and endangered flora in abundance, and visitors here use recycled rainwater and stay in suites built without machinery to reduce their footprint.

TRAVEL UPDATES

The News Flash

The latest openings, from high-tech entertainment to traditional architecture

1 THE SPICE OF LIFE

At first sight, you could be mistaken for thinking *Six Senses La Sagesse* is a traditional Grenadian village, but on further inspection you'll find a collection of new residences and a five-star resort, the brand's first in the Caribbean. Perched on a bluff, the rooms and villas are sensitively built no higher than a palm tree and deliver playful nods to this archipelago's moniker of 'Spice Island'. With doors opening in 2024, expect to see garden walkways made of repurposed nutmeg shells and cocoa skins, smell warm wafts of Creole dishes, and feel the soothing aromas of Caribbean healing traditions in the Six Senses spa.

2 INNER CIRCLE

It's hard to know what is real and what is surreal in *The Sphere*. The ocean's depths, spiralling fireworks or natural landscapes can be brought into vision instantly across the wraparound screen of this epic 18,600-seater venue. Hailed to be one of the most costly entertainment arena's to be built in Las Vegas at an estimated \$2.3 billion, it's a technological marvel. Continuing into the new year, you can disappear into American director Darren Aronofsky's high-definition exploration of sci-fi and nature, *Postcard From Earth*. Expect holographic images, sound displays, light shows and real-life humanoid robots who greet guests with their AI prowess.

3 NEW HORIZONS

Silver Nova, the newest addition to the Silversea armada, embarked on her maiden voyage in August this year and doesn't do anything by halves. Onboard, there are 10 signature bars, eight restaurants, a door-to-shore butler service, ocean-view suites and floor-to-ceiling windows for unobstructed views that allow people to ignite a deeper connection with each destination. But that barely scratches the surface around the kind of ground-breaking thought that's taken to build this ship. Streamlined designs help to reduce its carbon emissions and onboard systems convert waste into thermal energy, making it the most energy efficient boat in the fleet.

4 PISTES DE RÉSISTANCE

When high-octane sports are your passion in life, there are always ways to be stronger, better, faster. And for skiers heading to either Cervinia or Zermatt for the 2023/24 ski season, now's the moment. For its first winter season, a brand new cable car will be linking the alpine crossing between the two, making it quicker and easier to chase the crisp powder across 360km of fresh pistes around the Matterhorn. The gondolas whisk aficionados up to nearly 3,900m for guaranteed snow on high-mountain glaciers from early to late season.

5 FLIGHTS OF FANCY

The luxury helicopter at *Atzaró Okavango* will be touching down in March 2024, to open up a new part of Botswana's Okavango Delta. The camp is so remote that it relies entirely on solar energy. Canoe rides through the flooded grassland unearth unique encounters with wildlife, while leopards, giraffes and elephants can be seen on excursions with expert guides. Relaxation after wildlife spotting is also integral to enjoyment. Sinking into a lounge by the pool or drifting off in a chair surrounded by traditional crafts will be accompanied only by the captivating beauty of the locality.



LIFE LESSONS WITH...

Jón Ólafur Magnússon

Professional explorer Jón Ólafur Magnússon has always had a deep passion for the great outdoors. At 16, he was the youngest sea captain in Iceland. At 18, he had explored the entire Nordic island. He's led expeditions to Greenland, the North Pole, and climbed Everest. Then, in 2000, he founded HL Adventure with his wife Joanna to share his homeland, Iceland, with people far and wide, taking them to the wildest places in refined luxury.



Tell us, where does your love of being an explorer come from?

Pushing myself in the natural landscape, whether through Arctic expeditions or mountain climbs, is a reflection of my reverence for nature's challenges. It's a way for me to become at one with the environment, to understand my own limits and capabilities during my life on this earth. I never feel as good as when I have traversed harsh terrain and I'm humbly reminded of how small I am.

Has being surrounded by the wilderness in this way changed you as a person?

Being in Iceland's epic landscape has transformed me into a more grounded and mindful individual. It has taught me patience by observing the slow changes that shape the land. It reminds me that we are just a small part of nature, interconnected with it. It always deserves our deepest respect and care.

So, what is it about Iceland that makes it different to any other place in the world?

Iceland's nature holds a unique place in my heart due to its raw, untouched beauty and the harmonious dance between the elements. It's a land of glaciers and geothermal springs, volcanoes and vast lava fields, roaring waterfalls and serene fjords. The wildlife here is a testament to the resilience of life in extreme conditions.

How does nature that untamed effect those who experience it?

It's like embarking on a journey of self-discovery. The volcanoes remind us of Earth's creative power. The geysers provide inspiration within us. The lava fields speak of transformation and rawness. The thermal lagoons offer rejuvenation. And the waterfalls symbolise the power of life itself.

Mentally, it's humbling yet empowering. Physically, the therapeutic touch of hot springs or the brisk, strong wind against your face awakens your senses and invigorates your body. The landscapes demand mindfulness, as if nature herself is talking to you. It's a pure, confrontational language.

Of these epic and varied panoramas, if you had to choose just one, what would it be?

The highlands in the summertime, surrounded by vast landscapes that stretch into eternity. It's a humbling journey where you witness the raw power of the land, the delicate dance of life, and the quiet strength of solitude. It's like a pilgrimage to Iceland's soul.

You believe that cultural history and traditions are linked to nature and wellbeing, why is that?

For me, personally, Ancient Viking history offers invaluable lessons. Their respect for the land, their understanding of the rhythms of seasons, and their resourcefulness in the face of adversity are timeless teachings for us in this modern world. It's a reminder that a sustainable relationship with nature is not a new concept but a wisdom passed down through generations.

And how about the present day – can the wilderness connect with luxury experiences?

They coexist harmoniously. Our sustainable accommodations blend seamlessly with the surroundings. These spaces become sanctuaries where one can disconnect from the chaos of modern life and connect with the land's deep tranquillity. True luxury lies in the embrace of nature.

The soul of the sea

A cruise allows us to navigate the wild and wondrous journey of water, from expansive oceans to tiny tributaries. Along the way this varied voyage leaves its mark, helping us realign our values to the people, the places and the magnificent creatures we see along the way.

Words: Hannah Lemon

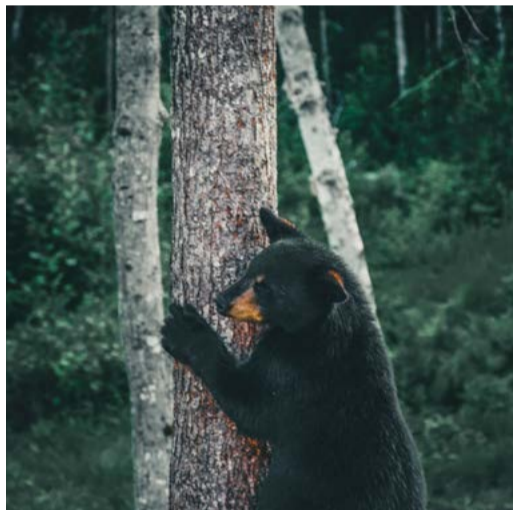
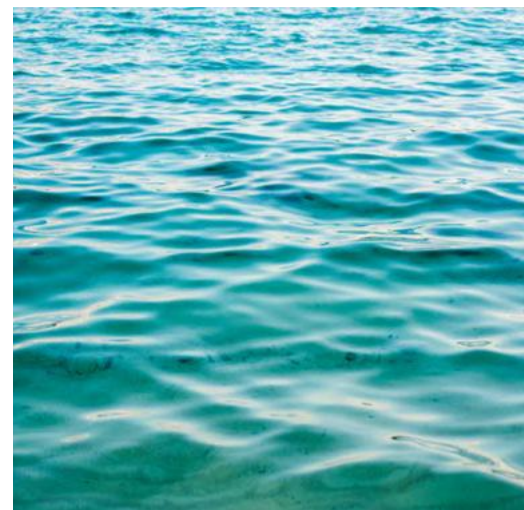
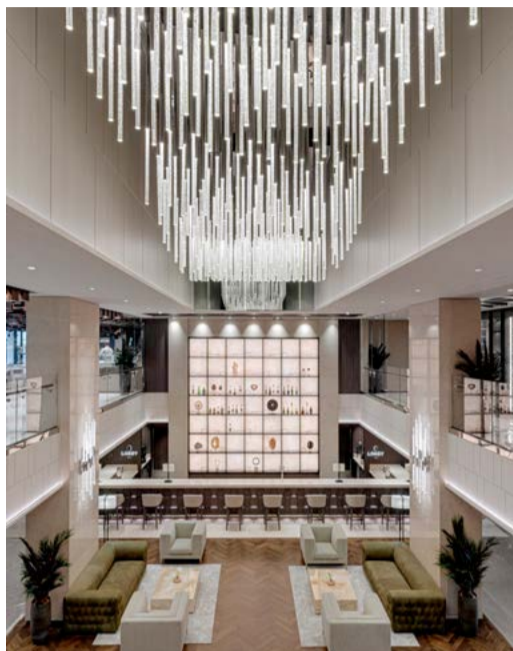
The still quiet of gliding along the Gulf of Mexico in a catamaran is a different kind of silence. Breath is held. Eyes dart from side to side scanning the water. The apprehension of missing bottlenose dolphins diving out of these shimmering waters is tantalising. A rush of bubbles to the surface is all that's needed to pique excitement. Spotting the sparkle of a water-drenched fin flicking to the surface or a large silver arc of body dipping over the glassy surface is a kind of euphoria.

A voyage with *Explora Journeys* navigates beyond boundaries to reveal moments like this that seem otherworldly. In one voyage, multiple destinations are traversed and nature is magnified to a far grander scale than if you were travelling by land. One moment might be spent eating warm mouthfuls of homemade bread washed down with traditionally brewed tea along the headwaters of Parc Nature de Pointe-aux-Outardes; the next being taught the erudite art of falconry on Prince Edward Island.

A cruise delves deeper into sensations as well as destinations. Wildlife experts, explorers and skippers are on-hand to share their specialist knowledge and challenge preconceived ideas. The delight in watching those dolphins frolic in the water, for example, is made all the more memorable when the practised crew expertly, and responsibly, navigate the dappled waves to just 50 yards from their aquatic playground.

It's not just by sea either. Washing up on remote shores with a leading expeditioner opens up opportunities to connect natural wonders with cultural heritage further inland. On Quebec's shores, a local naturalist can navigate the boreal forest – the world's largest land biome – while watching for black bears. Treasured stories of these revered creatures are whispered through the trees from the mouths of First Nations peoples who have lived alongside them for centuries.

In the sky, spectacular heights are reached via helicopter, towards the clouds and above Norway's fjords. Ensnared by towering mountain peaks, one of the most beautiful and untouched is Trollfjord, named



after a mysterious and scary troll from Norse mythology. Dreams and reality collide with almighty views of the cliff face that reaches over 1,000 metres.

Turning these soul-stirring memories into lifelong stories is best done back onboard the *Explora*. Evening meals with guides continue to add knowledgeable chapters to personal experiences. The final flourish is added by visionary chefs, sommeliers and mixologists, who tell their own gastronomic tales with rare ingredients sourced from sustainable farms and boutique vineyards.

Life at sea can start to influence our perspective of the world, and our role within it. There's time to focus on family with a 24-hour butler service to help pack and unpack or to set up surprise in-suite dinners. A new-found energy can be spent on bettering the self and broadening the mind; the onboard art gallery, culinary school and mindfulness practices allow for personal development when the moment arises. Or sometimes all that's needed is time out in complete seclusion; a private cabana or a sun-kissed ocean-front terrace with personal plunge pool provides a slice of solace.

Both onboard and off, energy from the ocean can have a profound effect. Water laps against the hull creating soothing sounds, sea mammals echo through the ocean, and cocktail glasses clink in harmony as the sun goes down behind the waves. These intimate moments at sea enlighten us, so that when we're back on land, things look a little brighter.



A leaf from the *jungle book*

If nature is the greatest teacher, then jungles are the most immersive classrooms. Teeming with a bewildering diversity of life – and home to half of all species on land – it's worth taking the time to look to the lessons these abundant ecosystems offer us.

Words: Lauren Romano

Dawn breaks at *Borneo Rainforest Lodge*, deep in the untouched Danum Valley and the jungle stirs. Gibbons whoop in morning greeting as angle-headed lizards dart stealthily between leaves as big as lily pads. Above, orangutans swing in hypnotic synchronicity through the trees – a vivid shock of tangerine against lush green – before dangling slowly down to drink from the river.

Set in Sabah, Borneo's northernmost state, a two-hour drive from the nearest town of Lahad Datu, waking up here is a transformative experience. As far as the eye can see, a thick quilt unravels into a 430 square kilometre swathe of untouched jungle, 130 million years in the making. A canopy walkway loops its way from the lodge through the forest, offering an elevated viewpoint to observe the unending display of wildlife.

The numbers are hard to wrap your head around. On average three new species are discovered each month in Borneo, a running tally to add to the existing 340 bird breeds, 100 types of mammals and 200 plant varieties

per hectare. All have made their home in a place where nature is at its most unstoppable – and it's there to remind you who's in charge. For once, our smartphones are not the font of all knowledge; it's humbling to discover how much of the world still slips under the radar unknown.

Combing the jungle with a local guide is the only way to make sense of the overwhelm. All thoughts of the 9 to 5 flutter away as fast as the fist-sized atlas moths – a goliath of the insect world here. At ground level, an army of whip scorpions, millipedes and termites scuttle across the forest floor. Observing every creature's size, shape, sound and colour involves such concentration, that not a second thought is given to anything else. In fact, it's proven to leave us feeling happier, calmer, and more energised.

Much like mindfulness, the jungle encourages stillness, patience and silence in order to tune into the present. It's a deeply spiritual place too. The indigenous Sugpan tribe believed that the higher you're buried the closer you are to heaven and ritually laid their dead to rest in the sheer-sided contours of nearby Coffin Cliff.

One of the few visible human traces in the Danum Valley, Jenga-stacked iron wood caskets have been embedded into the rock face in an act of reverence, perseverance and sheer strength. It's a reminder of the solace and significance civilisations have found in nature since time immemorial.

For other indigenous groups – like Jamaica's Windward Maroons – the jungle symbolises freedom. Descendants of enslaved Africans escaped plantations and fled to the Blue Mountains, and their fight for survival has shaped stories and customs that create a teleport to the island's chequered history. To this day, they're fiercely proud of their heritage and welcome any visitors to listen.

Continue retracing this past at *Strawberry Hill Hotel*. Nestled in the craggy contours of the mountains, at an altitude where you can almost touch its perpetual wreath of mist, the undulating landscape offers a throwback to the Jurassic era. A unique microclimate means an awe-inspiring 350 endemic and exotic plant species have been catalogued in the tropical gardens of the hotel – many of which have sustained communities like the Maroons.

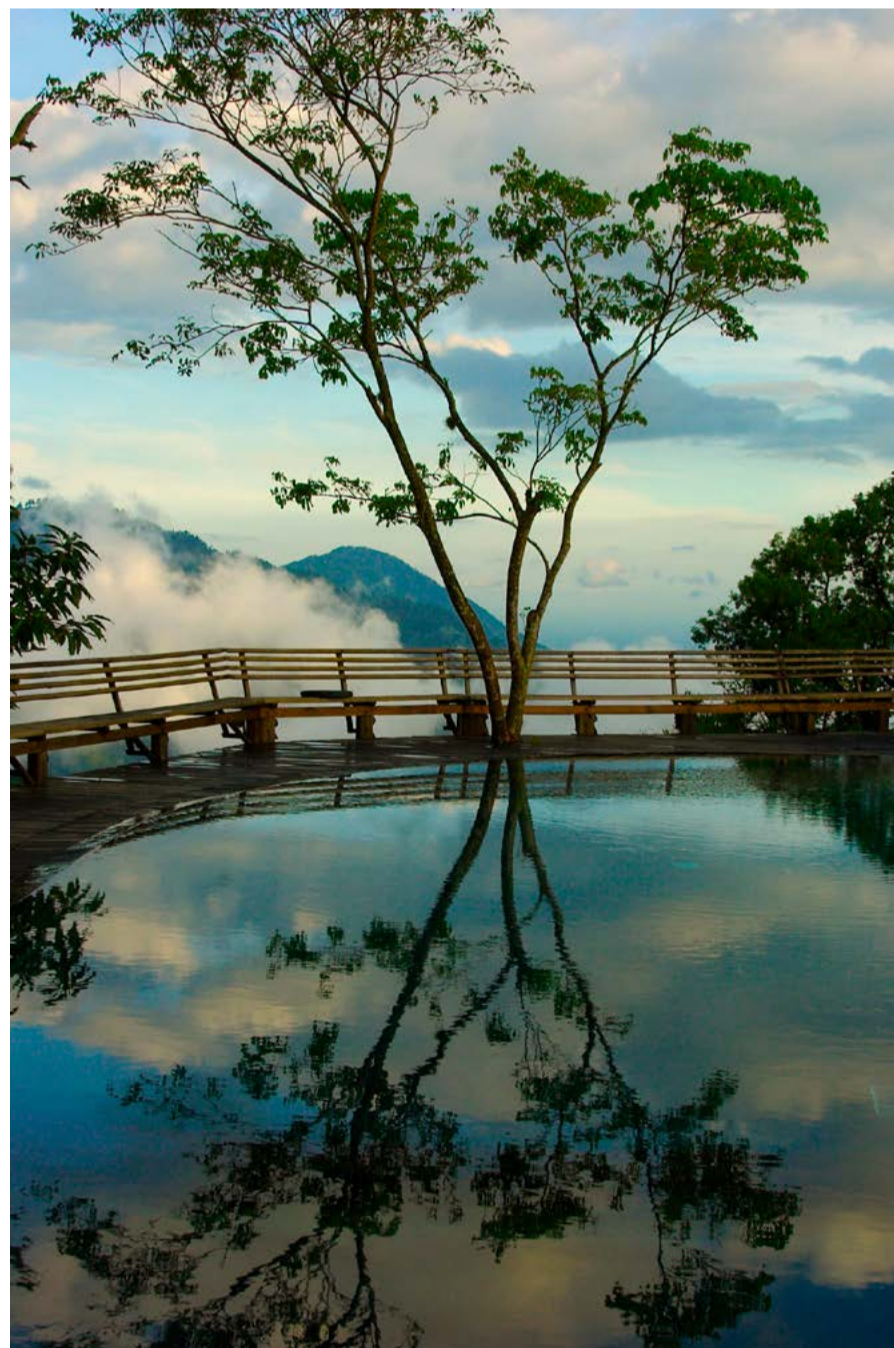
But to truly retrace the footsteps of those before us,

nothing beats trekking the Blue Mountain Peak Trail with a local guide. Winding to an apex 7,402 feet above sea level, its surface is a patchwork of dense forest, moss and lichen that's impenetrable in parts. Starting the ascent along the ancient mule trail at around 1am is the most magical time to climb. With floodlighting courtesy of the moon, and a muffled soundtrack delivered by a nocturnal chorus of unfamiliar creatures, all senses are sharpened. The reward that awaits when the new day breaks is worth every aching muscle. A steady stream of wispy pink and bruised purple dilutes the inky black skies as dawn erupts, the rising sun slowly uncloaking the surrounding ranges from darkness. Nature's most epic blockbuster, watching from the edge leaves you feeling exhilarated and – quite literally – on top of the world.

As Albert Einstein once mused: "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better". He was right. Immersed in the jungle, these forgotten but thriving pockets of the planet serve to remind us to sit still, be silent and take note.



Opposite: Mount Kinabalu, Borneo
Below: Orangutan with infant, Borneo; Strawberry Hill Hotel, Jamaica



"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better"



Unlocking the power of *UNDERWATER WORLDS*

Ours is truly a blue planet, with approximately two-thirds of the globe's surface covered in water. Entering these watery realms has the power to positively impact our lives back on land. Strengthen bonds with fellow explorers, put problems into perspective, or inspire action to protect fragile marine ecosystems.

Words: Estella Shardlow



A MEETING OF MINDS

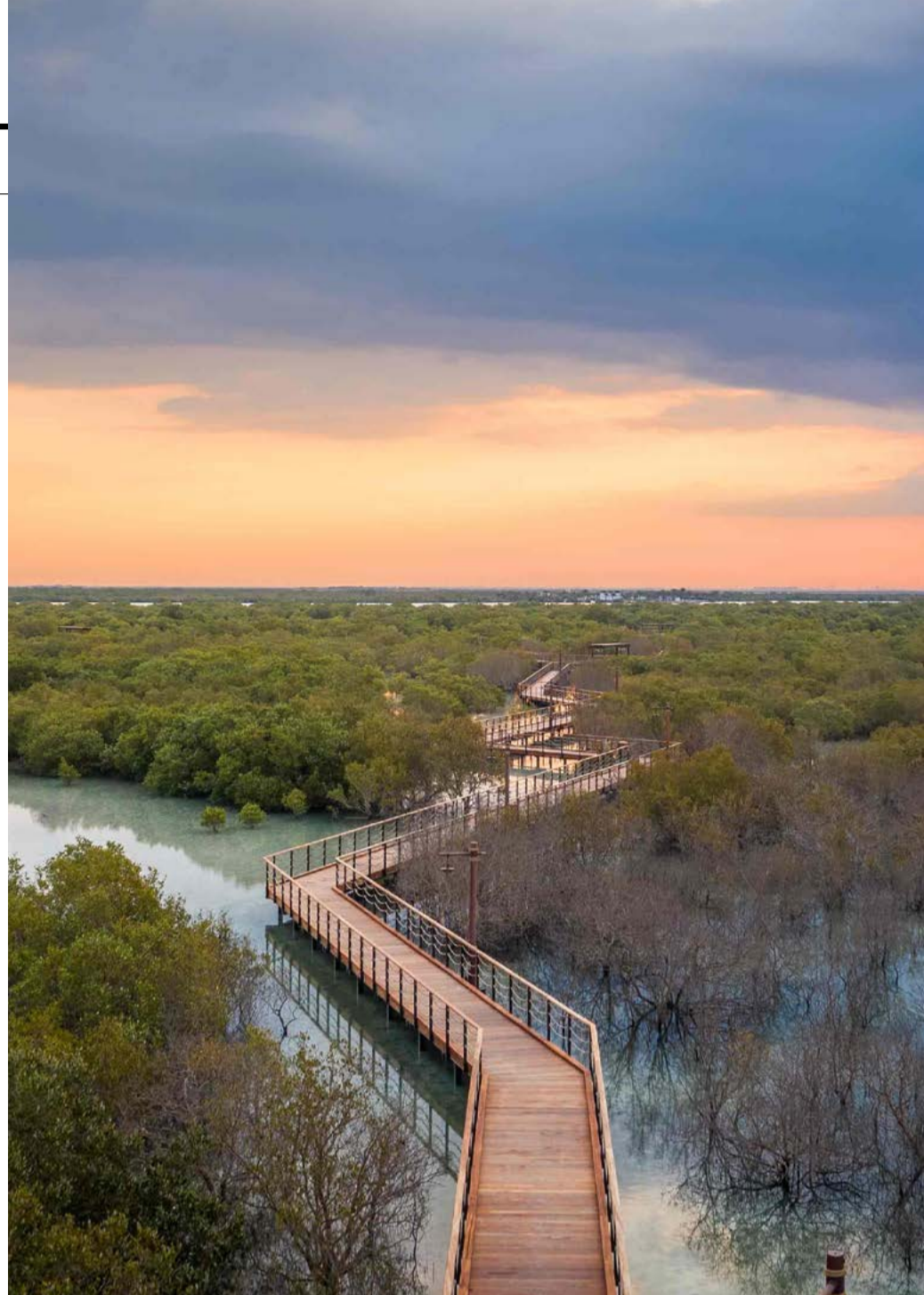
When a manta ray emerges from the blue depths, the first thing to marvel at is their vast size – an adult's wingspan can stretch up to 29 feet. Then there are those mesmerising, undulating movements. Few know more about the rays' behaviour than The Manta Trust team at *InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort*. In biweekly evening talks, resident marine biologists share research into this endangered species and the underwater ecosystem. After cluing up on conservation efforts, it's time to grab a snorkel and head into the most compelling classroom of all: the Indian Ocean. Mantas may seem shrouded in mystery – their name, after all, means 'cloak' in Spanish – but these experiences are a rare chance to peek behind the veil and feel humbled in the rays' enigmatic presence.

BEGUILING BACKWATERS

Mangroves exist in that liminal zone between land and sea – as is the case of *Jubail Island Mangrove Park*, where Emirati capital Abu Dhabi meets the Persian Gulf. Trees and shrubs with the rare ability to grow in salty coastal waters form a refuge for all manner of wildlife. Meander along the boardwalk trails that weave through the foliage or navigate the waterways by kayak at night. While you do, watch for turtles paddling through the shallows, the darting shapes of juvenile fish or the pink plumage of visiting flamingos. But this ecosystem is equally crucial for humans. Learn how it's the first line of defence against coastal erosion and storm surges, as well as its use as a carbon capture powerhouse, sequestering more CO₂ than terrestrial forests.

CHASING WATERFALLS

Mosi-oa-Tunya – that's what Victoria Falls is called by locals, meaning 'The Smoke that Thunders'. The name evokes the Zambezi River's mighty roar as it plunges off 100m high precipices, sending billowing clouds of spray high into the sky. Watching the world's largest waterfall in action is thoroughly invigorating – and research tells us so. The rapid collision of water charges the air and when it hits our bloodstream, the resulting reactions can relieve stress, boost energy and improve mood. Anyone staying at *Matetsi Victoria Falls*, benefits from an aerial perspective too, aboard the 'Flight of the Angels'. As the helicopter swoops over the falls, remember the words of explorer David Livingstone on first seeing this place: "A sight so wonderful that Angels must have gazed down on it in flight".

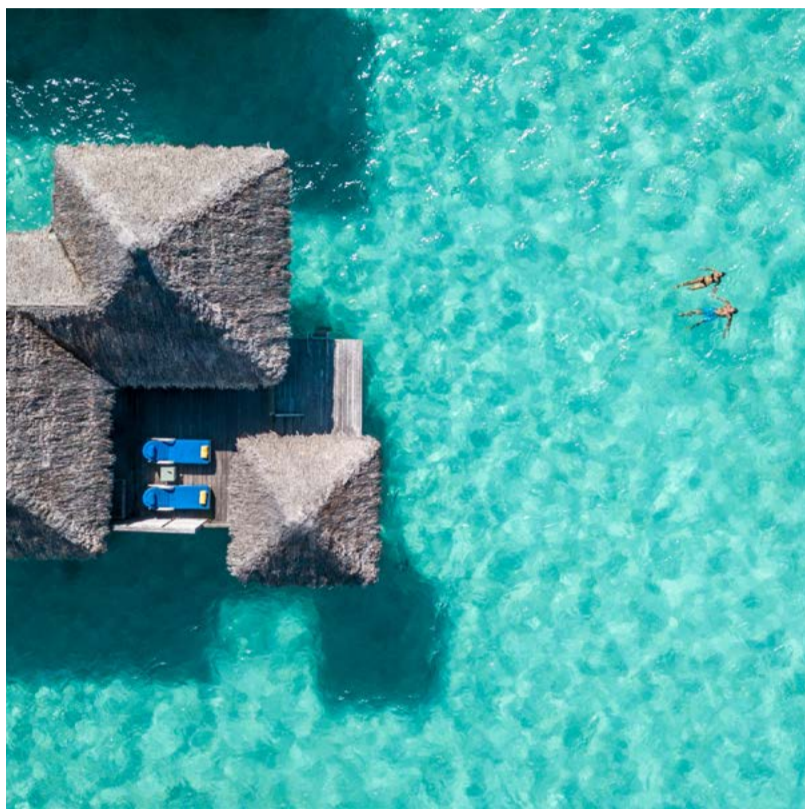


MAKING WAVES IN MARINE CONSERVATION

Ibiza may conjure visions of all-night clubbing, but dip into the sea encircling the White Isle and a different dance is underway. Scuba divers float weightlessly in the Mediterranean, surveying coral reefs, shipwrecks and sea caves that pulse with marine life. Catch glimpses of a neon-green moray eel and the silver shimmer of barracuda shoals, alongside starfish and urchins. The island's surprising biodiversity is supported, in large part, by underwater prairies of seagrass. Do more than simply observe this aquatic world; help conserve it by attending a *Marine Conservation Citizen Science Workshop*. With studies linking volunteering to improved wellbeing levels, there's even more reason to turn that new-found passion into positive action.

HEIGHTENED EMOTIONS

Water's shifting states stimulate the senses in varied ways, and *Grenada's* waterborne attractions run the gamut of emotions. A tubing excursion on the Caribbean island's Balthazar River sets adrenaline levels pumping, testing participants' mettle and promoting mental clarity. Feel-good endorphins flood the body when hiking up Turfton Waterfall, buoyed by a spirit-lifting soundtrack of cascading water and verdant jungle backdrop. The tempo switches to a more restful pace at Grand Etang Lake, formed from a volcanic crater and set within a national park. Meditating on its tranquil, tree-fringed shores, contemplate the fathomless depths of the 'bottomless lake' – so-called because Sonar has been unable to locate its deepest point.

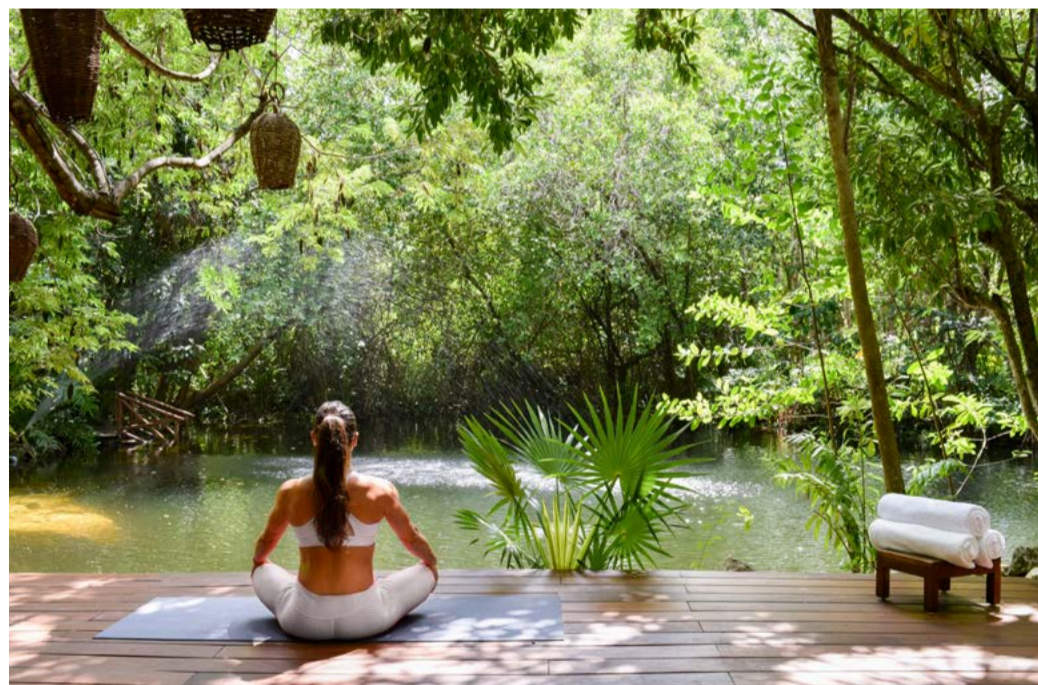


CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

For a lesson in the art of living together harmoniously, look to coral reefs. Clownfish (aka Nemo) provide nutrients to sea anemones in exchange for a safe home, while Napoleon fish eat the crown-of-thorn starfish to keep populations in check. Seeing these relationships first-hand is a poignant experience to share with loved ones. *The St Regis Bora Bora* private Lagoonarium makes for a safe, sheltered spot where families can learn about coral health and meet charismatic reef residents. With the distractions and responsibilities of everyday life all too often intruding into quality time together, a full-day snorkelling boat tour around this tiny Pacific island provides the perfect opportunity to reconnect.

HIDDEN DEPTHS

Water and spirituality are deeply intertwined – think of baptisms, pilgrimages to sacred rivers, or ablutions before worship. The Ancient Mayans were no different. For this civilization, cenotes weren't only vital sources of drinking water, but also portals to the underworld, symbols of re-birth and transformation. Venturing into these otherworldly chambers needn't require an odyssey, though. There are 10,000 cenotes dotted across the Yucatán Peninsula alone and *Rosewood Mayakoba* runs excursions to its favourite three. Hear about both the mythology and geology of these subterranean sites, naturally formed millions of years ago by collapsing bedrock. To the metronomic drip of water and flutter of bat wings, meditate on the marvels of Mother Nature and after a cooling dip, just maybe, emerge transformed.



Clockwise from far left: Matetsi Victoria Falls; Jubail Island Mangrove Park; The St Regis Bora Bora; Rosewood Mayakoba; Ibiza Beach

Wild at heart

In the desert, everything we usually take for granted becomes precious. Infinite, blazing horizons and paths that can change with a gust of wind make it one of the most challenging and disorientating environments we can ever experience. Nature holds all the power here, where no amount of modern comforts can aid us. We must rely on those who have studied the sand for generations, and place our trust in ancient methods of travel and survival instead.

Words: Marianne Françoise Dick

Namibia's Skeleton Coast is one of the most sublime yet unnerving expanses on earth. Even its own indigenous San people call this 500-kilometre stretch of shoreline 'the land that God made in anger', because, still today, its churning elements make it resistant to human habitation. The moniker 'Skeleton Coast' is thought to have been whispered by mariners, for whom this perilous place is the stuff of ghost stories. The sand and sea constantly pulsate and evolve, swallowing up whale skeletons and shipwrecks and spitting them out again, reminding us of its relentless power. Around 500 vessels are thought to have met their end here, and their wrecks offer a history of boatbuilding that spans centuries.

While desolation prevails in north-west Namibia, there are still some magnificent creatures who call it home. Desert-adapted elephants, lions, brown hyenas and giraffes can be seen replenishing at a waterhole near the Hoanib River. Front-row seats to the spectacle can be found at *Wilderness Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp*, a crescent-shaped beacon of tented suites that sits inconspicuously next to the oasis. It's easy to understand how the animals have adapted for survival when there's a resident researcher to tell you.

The elephants have smaller bodies and broader feet than their East African relatives, helping them to survive without water for up to three days. While Hoanib lions and giraffes rarely drink at all, getting all the moisture they need from their food. Back in camp, the wildlife education continues at the Research Centre, which is hidden among the olive-toned tents. The camp is designed to blend into the landscape, leaving it as unaltered as possible. At night, those relaxing in a solar-powered suite with a warming nightcap might even hear the unmistakable call of a jackal puncture the stillness of the desert night; a reminder of the untameable surroundings.



Further inland, down the Hoanib River, is the *Natural Selection Hoanib Valley Camp* set amid teetering mountains and untouched dunes. It is so remote that it neighbours the settlements of the cattle-herding Herero people. They settled in northeast Namibia in the 1500s, however they faced tragedy and genocide at the hands of German colonisers in the early 1900s. Such an experience has only served to make this community more resilient, and they can be recognised by their striking Victorian-style dresses and headscarves that resemble the horns of their livelihood – the sacred cow.





Opposit: Angolan Giraffes amongst the trees in Etosha National Park, Namibia; Natural Selection Hoanib Valley
Above: Wilderness Little Kulala

Witnessing the wilderness like this leaves a deep admiration etched into the hearts of those that see it – forever.

Meeting them is like stepping into a unique time capsule. They share their stories of survival in such a harsh climate, working the land for crops and tracking animals. The latter can be put into action with the help of a guide; endangered rhino and a myriad of other desert dwellers can be sought out the Herero way. Afterwards, tall tales can be told after dark around the torch-lit camp fire or by morning on the deck of the plunge pool.

Meanwhile, the Namib Sand Sea, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the south of the Namib Desert, presents vistas bathed in fog that could be mistaken for apparitions. Through a private gate from *Wilderness Little Kulala* camp, footsteps will lead you straight into the salt pan of Sossusvlei, which is surrounded by imposing martian dunes, stained rust red. A hike up the 300-metre peaks reveals life-affirming panoramas of the tranquil white valley below.

From camp, taking to the skies in a hot air balloon turns into another extraordinary escapade. The perspective of the arid landscape is astounding, particular of Deadvlei. This white clay pan is home to preserved camel thorn trees that emerge eerily from the parched ground. Thought to be 900 years old, these sculptural wonders are just another example of how the oldest desert in the world has overpowered those who dare to conquer it. Floating silently above the painterly terrain, where ant-like herds of game might disturb the otherwise untouched surface, encourages a soul-stirring moment of reflection.

Despite the rest of our planet's seemingly constant metamorphosis, in the formidable Namib Desert, history is preserved and time seems to almost stand still. Witnessing the wilderness like this leaves a deep admiration etched into the hearts of those that see it – forever.



LANDING ON THEIR FEET

There are growing numbers of India's graceful tigers, renewed lion habitats in Africa and united efforts to bring the elusive leopards of Sri Lanka back from the brink. Delve into these labours of love that prove conservation of the world's big cats is down to more than just feline-famous luck.

Words: Hannah Ross

According to Japanese legend, it was the wave that caught the man's attention – an unlikely gesture to come from a cat. Intrigued, he walked towards it, only to narrowly be missed by lightning striking the exact spot he'd been stood. Since then, the iconic lucky kitty (or maneki-neko) has been a dear tale in the island nation's folklore. They're not alone in their fondness for our whiskered friends either. From the Norse goddess Freya's chariot pullers gifted to her by Thor, to symbols of divinity and protection for the Ancient Egyptians, felines have been intrinsically linked to humans for millennia, whether it be for their god-like qualities or simple companionship.

While domesticated cats may be a familiar sight in UK gardens, elsewhere their larger cousins reign. They may be bigger, but the symbiotic relationship is still pivotal. Where these apex predators roam, ecosystems are balanced, controlling species populations and keeping the food chain firmly linked. Now, after years of persecution, the race is on across India, Sri Lanka and the African continent to turn the tides and protect these all-important animals. But while it's the permanent boots on the ground that keep these initiatives flourishing, travellers also play a vital role – and it's as easy as hopping aboard a jeep.



Left and below: A female lion with her juvenile son resting in a tree; Moremi Game Reserve, Okavango Delta, Botswana; game drive Six Senses Fort Barwara, Ranthambore National Park
Opposite: Indian leopard resting on rocks



A NATIONAL TREASURE

An amber glint behind grass, soft shoulders hiding a fierce might, movements as fluid as a stream; it's little wonder why India bestowed the title of national animal onto its precious Bengal tigers. A symbol of grace, agility and power, the pure strength of these big cats is palpable even when gazing wide-eyed from the safe confines of a safari jeep. It's a stark contrast to the guide explaining that since the end of the 19th century, these creatures have been vulnerable to threats like poaching and habitat damage. All is not lost though.

Celebrating its 50th year in 2023, the country's 'Project Tiger' has turned the fates of their beloved Bengals around. Nine designated reserves have become 53, and good intentions have grown into a current population of over 3,000 and counting. Now home to approximately 75% of the world's tigers, the chances of catching a

glimpse of one in India's wildernesses are pretty good, especially when staying in a base where they're practically on the doorstep.

Sitting pretty a mere 30 minutes from Ranthambore National Park (one of the original nine reserves), the lovingly restored palatial refuge of *Six Senses Fort Barwara* makes heading out to see the conservation work effortless. In-the-know naturalists lead the way on game drives, armed with facts about the tigers and how the park preservation has helped not only their striped neighbours but other flora and fauna too. Later, back within the hotel's 700-year-old walls, a new yet not dissimilar chapter emerges. Staying here helps to fund the hotel's rewilding project which is leading a nature metamorphosis in the surrounding area. Aiding the project's ongoing legacy while simultaneously creating one of their own.

GREAT MINDS THINK ALIKE

Across the Indian Ocean another legacy was born and has since expanded to fund 150 projects in 28 countries. Some 13 years ago, dynamic duo Derek and Beverly Joubert, both National Geographic Explorers, started the Big Cats Initiative – an organisation aiming to protect wild felines and their ecosystems primarily in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Kenya. The group's work is multi-faceted, but two core threads focus on land and locals. First, acquiring and safeguarding areas once used for hunting to allow big cats like lions and cheetahs to breathe freely. And second, spending time shaping communities with workshops on how to balance living with these animals via the Great Plains Academy.

However, Derek believes "the biggest threat isn't hunters, poachers or poison makers – it is our own complacency, the lazy hope that someone else is taking care of the great beasts of Africa." So, the foundation created a group of properties to showcase their efforts and immerse guests into the wilderness they're working to protect. One of which is Relais & Châteaux's first accredited property in Botswana *Zarafa Camp*; a 1920s-style safari dreamland languishing on the banks of the Zibadianja Lagoon, in Selinda Reserve. From here, ailurophiles donning shades of khaki head out into the varied terrains, passing zebra and wildebeest as casually as you would sheep on a moor, in search of Africa's most renowned big cats. Small groups make these safaris an intimate affair, as if seeing the initiative's work first hand is a privilege reserved just for the camp's guests.

While they're playing the long game, conservation efforts have already resulted in a healthy population of predators. So as rangers wax lyrical about the initiative and local lion prides, eyes are best kept trained on the open panoramas – there's a really good chance of a private performance of their hunting prowess in action.

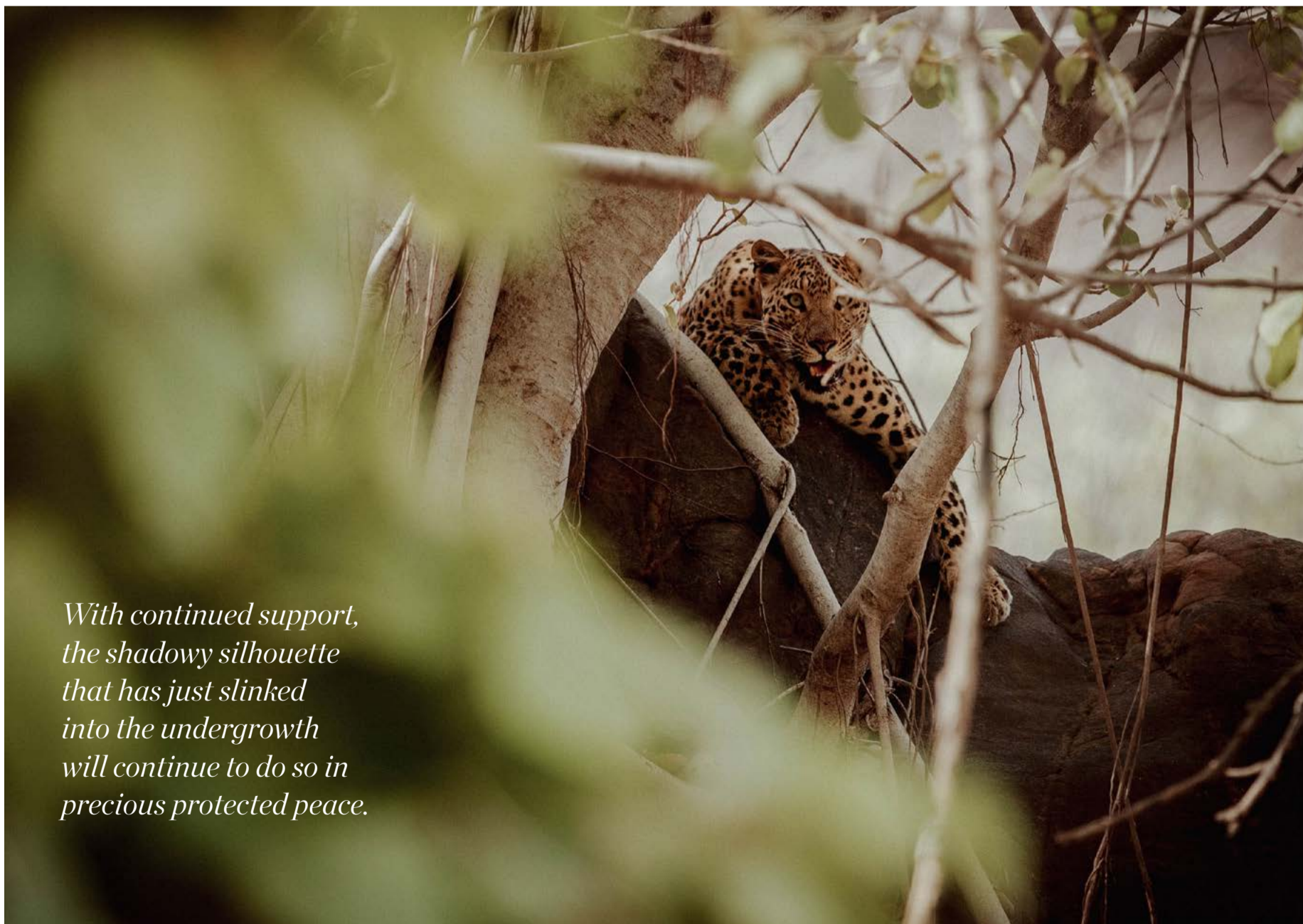
RESTORING A RARITY

Sharing the lush environment of Sri Lanka's esteemed hunter, the leopard, conjures up a similar air of closeness in the curve of the country's teardrop. These elusive animals are rapidly declining not only through habitat loss but commercial hunting for furs and traditional medicines. They're becoming even harder to find, with the current wild population sitting at around 800 and the numbers are still decreasing.

This makes the Leopard Research Centre's already crucial work in Yala National Park even more vital. Resplendent Ceylon's *Wild Coast Tented Lodge* teamed up with Dilmah Conservation in 2020 to create the centre as the island's first private conservancy. This five-researcher strong non-profit works in harmony with the government to introduce visitors to their core objectives – to fund, facilitate and support projects surrounding its namesake. A passion for the work goes right to the top, with Malik J. Fernando, Resplendent Ceylon's Managing Director saying, "I am happy that [we] took the lead to create a private protected area supported by scientific research, a new conservation model that could be scaled to protect our natural assets and support the work of government agencies".

Visiting the centre itself opens up a world of knowledge, providing insights into the habitat relished by both lodge guests and leopards and putting into perspective the impact of the behind-the-scenes activities in a way game drives can't. From their extensive research, which has developed a process to identify individual leopards, to their community work educating the younger generations about them. So, when you're curled up beneath the domed ceiling of a tented suite taking in the sunset soundtrack of the outside wilds, know that with continued support, the shadowy silhouette that has just slinked into the undergrowth will continue to do so in precious protected peace.

While taking part in initiatives around the globe will leave a satisfied cat-got-the-cream smirk in the short term, the lasting effect is one savoured and appreciated for years. It is the belief of some that cats symbolise rebirth and regeneration, so to help these beautiful creatures thrive once more seems entirely fitting.

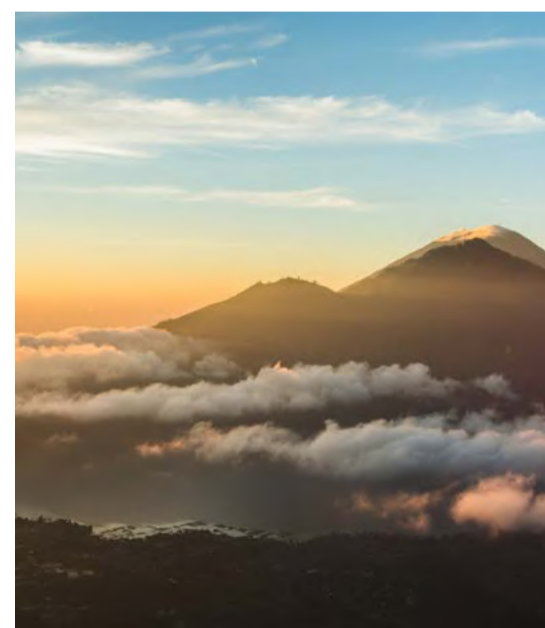
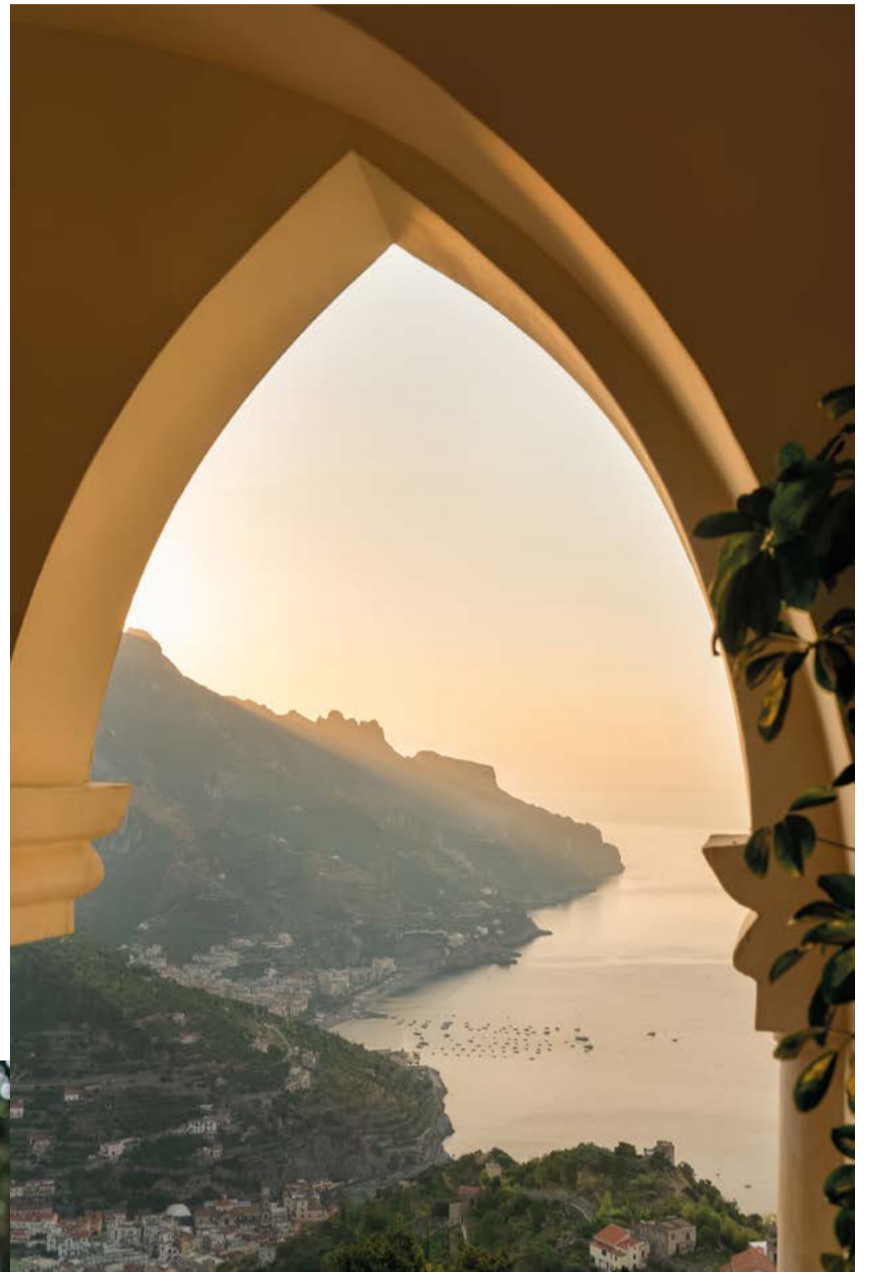


*With continued support,
the shadowy silhouette
that has just slinked
into the undergrowth
will continue to do so in
precious protected peace.*

Chasing *the sunrise*

Those people who are the first to catch the early hours of the morning say it changes their life. It boosts mood, reduces depression, and can even help us sleep better at night. Taking cues from nature as our actual clock is something we rarely do – find the time to rise with the sun and start your day in this transformative way.

Words: Estella Shardlow



Left to right: Six Senses Vana; Caruso, A Belmond Hotel; Mount Batur at sunrise; Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts Collection

“There is a moment in every dawn when light floats, there is the possibility of magic,” penned English author Douglas Adams. Those who routinely wake up early to witness this ‘magic’ of sunrise swear by the wellbeing benefits. A growing body of scientific research and a burgeoning number of high-profile figures, such as the Obamas, Gwyneth Paltrow and Jennifer Aniston, are there to back it up. Stepping outside our habits and taking a cue from nature presents the perfect opportunity to kick-start an early-rising routine.

LA DOLCE VITA AT DAWN

The Amalfi Coast is still shrouded in darkness as the first notes pierce the air. The score swells as the sun rises – a unique synthesis of music and landscape that makes the dawn concert one of the most lauded events at Ravello Music Festival each summer. By the time the orchestra reaches their crescendo, the Villa Rufolo clifftop stage is revealed in all its glory.

The crowd sits in spellbound silence. Inside their minds, however, it’s a different story: the rousing music instigates a rush of happiness, simultaneously putting any stress at bay. Music has been shown to heighten the production of ‘happy hormones’ oxytocin and dopamine, and these mood-boosting melodies seem only intensified in an enthralling fresco setting.

With the concert commencing at 5am, night owls can join locals revelling round-the-clock in the town square beforehand. Alternatively, *Caruso, A Belmond Hotel, Amalfi Coast* offers an early wake-up call, with hot coffee and freshly baked pastries served as sustenance for the show. But of course, after the orchestra has taken their bow, a full breakfast awaits back on the hotel’s sun-bathed terrace.

WATERBORNE AWAKENING

Tempting as it is to snooze under crisp white cotton sheets at Hawaii’s oceanfront resort *Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts Collection*, there are myriad reasons for forcing yourself out of bed to join the Sunrise Canoe Paddle. Of course, it’s a feast for the eyes; daybreak paints the sky around the volcanic peak of Mauna Kea watery shades of violet, orange and pink. Then there are the sleep-filled nights. Rising with the sun aligns the body to the natural circadian rhythm, resulting in longer, better sleep.



Another reason to hop aboard is for an immersion into native Hawaiian culture, in which outrigger canoes have been a mainstay for some millennia. As sunrays begin to sparkle over the ocean’s surface, traditional indigenous chants and storytelling join the sound of gently lapping waves.

SUN SALUTATIONS

Waking up both mind and body with an energising flow practice is appealing anywhere in the world – but it takes on a deeper resonance in Uttarakhand, the birthplace of yoga. Nestled in the Indian state’s hardwood forests, *Six Senses Vana* ushers in each new day with a 7am sun salutation.

Following resident yogi Manoj through a sequence of postures, distractions are tuned out and intentions are set. The muscles flex after the past night’s slumber and the senses slowly tune into the lush natural surroundings. Yogis step off the mat primed to make the most of the day’s plans – whether it’s a Tibetan medicine consultation, meandering along the resort’s walking trails or unwinding with Ayurvedic treatments in the spa.

A RISING CHALLENGE

There are few more impressive ways to start the day than summiting an active volcano before sunrise. Mount Batur rewards active early-risers with mesmerising, mist-swathed vistas over north-western Bali, soaring some 1,717 metres above sea level.

The hike sets out from *Capella Ubud, Bali* by starlight, accompanied by a local guide, with physically fit climbers making the ascent in around two hours. Sunrise reveals the dramatic volcanic valleys below, pitted with calderas – cauldron-like hollows formed when magma chambers empty. The distant silhouette of the island’s tallest peak, Mount Agung, rises in the distance.

No wonder legends swirl around this place in Balinese folklore, which holds that Mount Batur was formed from the body of a buried giant. There’s time to savour the site’s spiritual ambience while tucking into a well-deserved breakfast at the summit. There’s something deeply moving about the sense of achievement that follows reaching the roof of the world.

These early morning moments are about more than waking up to smell the fresh air. They welcome in a new dawn that stretches the imagination, that brings deeper cultural connections and reveals sights you’ve never seen before – all before breakfast.



Lost in navigation

By land, by sea, the tropics of Indonesia demand to be explored. The changing landscape across the islands has created distinctive dens for reptiles and mammals that need to be seen to be believed.

Words: Hannah Lemon



Bali has built such an iconic legacy for tropical relaxation that its reputation precedes that of Indonesia itself. But to focus only on Bali is to disregard more than 18,100 vibrant and varied islands within the archipelagic state. Some of the larger landmasses have human civilisation rubbing shoulders with the tropical depths of the jungle. Other smaller isolated islets have become hiding places for delicate sand crabs and washed-up pieces of driftwood. Learning to navigate these droplets of land allows us the rare view of seeing creatures in their natural habitat, from ribbons of bats that adorn the sky, to giant land reptiles that are continuing a prehistoric legacy.

SPIRITUAL SILENCE

In the north of Bali, roads zig-zag past boutiques selling handcrafted bamboo lamps, smooth teak tables and rows of delicate pottery. Then, out of nowhere, the Ubud jungle merges with the bustling high-street offering respite and relaxation when you need it, particularly after a long flight. Lizards skitter up trees, palm-sized butterflies float up to the sky and scarlet-headed flowerpeckers do as their name suggests. It's no wonder the Hindu culture here has a deep reverence for nature; it is entirely inseparable from human existence. Uniting the body with these elements can be done with a deeply spiritual holy water blessing by a local priest at the 11th century temple, Pura

Mengening. Afterwards, celebrations are brought to a head with a 'babi guling', or suckling pig, at the home of Bapak Enong Ismail, a local museum curator. Locals and visitors alike tuck into this rich Balinese meal filling the air with turmeric, coriander, lemongrass and shared laughter.

WHERE TO STAY:

Just 10 minutes from downtown Ubud, *Mandapa, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve* embodies the spirit of the area completely. Hidden in a cocoon of giant leaves and tall palms, the spa absorbs the quiet lull of the Ayung River and the suites back onto mesmerising views of surrounding rice paddy layers, which are stacked up like delicate slices of green cake.



Clockwise from far left: Komodo National Park; Mandapa, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve; Balinese long-tailed macaque; butterfly on a flower; Komodo dragon; Vela Luxury Yacht; Mandapa, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve; Tirta Empul Temple, water purification pool



THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT

Walking into the protected Komodo National Park is like walking into the Jurassic era. The island is hilly and desolate; the ground parched and sandy. Branches and leaves are interwoven and, up close, everything is a mottled brown-grey. This is the terrain for spotting the world's largest, and endangered, monitor lizard, the *Varanus komodoensis*, more fondly known as the Komodo dragon. These three-metre beasts are our last link to the dinosaurs, and it certainly feels that way with their slow, menacing movements and slithering tongue. Spotting them in the undergrowth on a bespoke trek is no easy feat, but is made even more life-affirming when you do. Even more so when your personal guide says they reach speeds of 20km per hour to kill their prey.

WHERE TO STAY:

Navigating the Komodo islands is something the *Vela* does as part of its Golden Coral Triangle route, and the crew on board this luxury yacht know every inch of these waters. That means more private islands to see, perfect for a romantic picnic or a family castaway. With nothing but blue expanse and each other, it's like stepping into a your own dream world.

FLOWER OF THE SEA

A short flight to Flores changes the landscape from lush, leafy jungle to turquoise waters. The best way to see the island is aboard a boat. The surrounding marine protected areas make this the most remarkable place to snorkel in Indonesia, with coral that's vividly alive. Fluorescent yellow anemones and watermelon pink sponges carpet the rocks. Schools of multicoloured fish flit between legs and through rocks, while spotting turtles becomes child's play. Looking above the water is equally mesmerising; you might catch glimpses of glistening grey dolphins feeding on fish or whales moving along their migration route. Gazing up at night brings its own surprises too. Every evening, a migration of fruit bats make the daily journey from water-logged mangroves to Flores, filling the sky with thick splatters of silhouettes. Sitting in the dark, senses heightened, it's hard not to appreciate the majesty of nature's magic pattern.

WHERE TO STAY:

The elegance of old-world sailing is best experienced aboard the *Vela*. Impressive canvas sails billow in the wind on this luxury yacht that sleeps 12, making everyone onboard feel like an intrepid explorer – but with bountiful luxuries to hand. Expert diving explorers, wellness therapists and interiors finished in Hermès fabrics and custom local teak furniture make sailing the seas simply celestial.

Right and below: Vela luxury yacht; Stateroom Vela; Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay



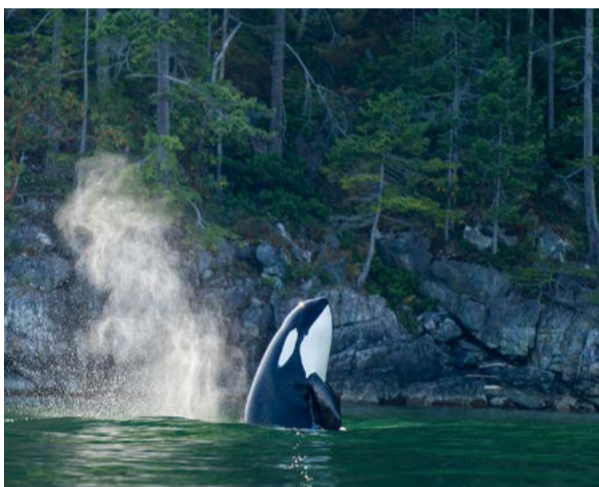
CALM WATERS

From teeming underwater worlds to the dinosaur's distant relative, Indonesia's landscape leaves a lot to ponder. To take it all in, the quiet shores of south Bali offer up a slice of tranquillity before the return home. Jimbaran Bay, once a fishing village, has opened up this impressive 4km-long sliver of sand to those looking to share in paradise. It's almost impossible not to curl your toes in the sand or stare out at the ocean's infinite abyss. But for those saving resting for the journey home, boarding a helicopter to Mount Ijen on East Java gives you a chance to see this famous volcano's acidic turquoise crater from great heights. Hypnotic hues of sulphuric gases and sun rays hit differently at 3,000 metres. On the way back, a sumptuous feast is served under the bamboo roof of the beach club at Menjangan Dynasty on West Bali – a secluded secret. Sink into a herb-filled national nasi goreng rice dish in unadulterated privacy.

WHERE TO STAY:

In the west corner of Jimbaran Beach sits *Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay*. Visitors here are encouraged to return with sensory memories, rather than souvenirs. Authentic arts experiences, breezy villas and Balinese cooking classes with vegetables straight from the garden bring a deeper understanding of the area's inimitable cultural scene and traditional customs.





TRUE GRIT

When do we ever feel truly confronted by nature? We're never far from traffic, people, phones or planes overhead. That is, until you reach the west coast of Canada. Land, sea and sky are delivered in their rawest form, occupied only by bears, whales and orcas. And you. This is a place that puts the outside world on mute, replacing it with the wilderness in its purest form.

Words: Lauren Romano

No roads lead to *Sonora Resort*. Nestled away in the remote Discovery Islands amid the churning roil of the Yuculta Rapids, the journey to this extended rustic lodge feels like travelling to the end of the earth. Arriving by helicopter, civilisation 190 kilometres in the distance, coniferous-spiked landmasses scattered like iron filings in a magnetic field swirl into view.

This is nature's realm. A gateway to another world – one where steller sea lions cavort in the shallows, writhing fish clamped between their jaws, and majestic pods of orcas breach the blues. Overhead bald eagles soar, their two-metre wingspans outstretched, staking their claim as the undisputed rulers of the skies. Then there are the bears. In the autumn months, spawning salmon tempt grizzlies from their forest cathedrals to feast at the water's bubbling edge.

Local-led tours of the land, sea and sky bring this glut of wildlife into even sharper focus. Deep in the moss-blanked woodlands of nearby Bute Inlet, for example, bear watching expeditions run by the indigenous Homalco First Nation evoke a palpable sense of the thrill. Anticipation hangs in the air as heavily as the scent of cedar, as the guides share stories of the bears and their significance through the ages. Having lived side-by-side for generations, their respect and mutual understanding for these notoriously elusive creatures makes the reward of seeing them in the wild even more satisfying.

The act of creating connections in the wilderness of Western Canada is all-consuming, particularly with the absence of phone signal and outside interference. The unforgiving nature of the great outdoors gives a new, invigorating energy to the body. The thwack

of chinook against galoshes when fishing in a glacial lake perhaps, or being showered in the sea spray of a breaching humpback whale. Both of these scenarios are a possibility at *Nimmo Bay Wilderness Resort*, a collection of forest cabins that cling to the shores of the mercurial Mackenzie Sound – a body of water that's as reflective and motionless as a mirror.

One moment intrepid travellers might be gliding silently across the glassy surface in a kayak, an interloper in the daily lives of porpoises, seals and sea birds. The next, they could be raising the stakes and the altitude in a helicopter up to a 10,000-year-old glacier tarn to paddleboard through luminous waters a shade of cerulean blue. Different angles, different colours, different sights and sounds – these confrontational moments challenge perceptions at every turn.

Ditching the paddleboard altogether at *Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge* to plunge into the icy channels of the Bedwell River reveals its own rewards. Nothing is more invigorating for mind, body and spirit than being immersed in nature's own bathtub, feeling shoals of fish weave between your limbs. Endorphins rise, racing thoughts slow, and mental clarity heightens with every second. Emerging feels like being reborn – and induces a restful night's sleep in the tented suites. The evening holds more meaning when there's just a canvas between you and some of the last remaining temperate rainforests in the world.

It's been said that nature is the purest portal to inner peace. Accessible only by seaplane, helicopter or boat, Canada's untamed nature is a soothing departure from the everyday – physically and emotionally. Surrounded by unrelenting panoramas and surreal palettes of deep blues and halcyon greens, there's nothing left to do but breathe.



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