



Lekkerwater Beach Lodge

Beach paradises

An ex-presidential hideout, a cool Caribbean clubhouse and a tiny island at the centre of the world – sun, sea and sand as chic as can be

CAPELLA LODGE

Lord Howe Island, Australia

On an ink spot of an island (population 382) 600km north-east of Sydney, Capella Lodge is the epitome of tropical splendour. Overlooking a coral-filled lagoon, foaming reef and the wild ocean beyond sits this icon of beach-shack chic, hiding among Kentia palms and frangipanis and shimmering from a recent facelift. The nine suites and pavilions in their glorious sun-blasted wooden rusticity are strung out along a boardwalk dripping with jungly foliage and tropical ferns. From the Gowers Terrace, you can watch distant white terns ride the winds that spin around soaring Mounts Lidgbird and Gower, while the boardwalk leads to the two-level Lidgbird Pavilion, which has simple but chic interiors and glorious views from a king-sized bed. This is a 'lazy days' place: diving, swimming, snorkelling, body scrubs at the new spa, eating fresh kingfish and drinking elegant wines, such as a Stefano Lubiana Pinot Noir from Tasmania. The service is slick, the whole place is spotless, and everything is designed to save you conscious thought – this is a beautifully run oceanic heaven. *Abercrombie & Kent (abercrombiekent.co.uk) offers five nights from £4,500, including flights and transfers.*

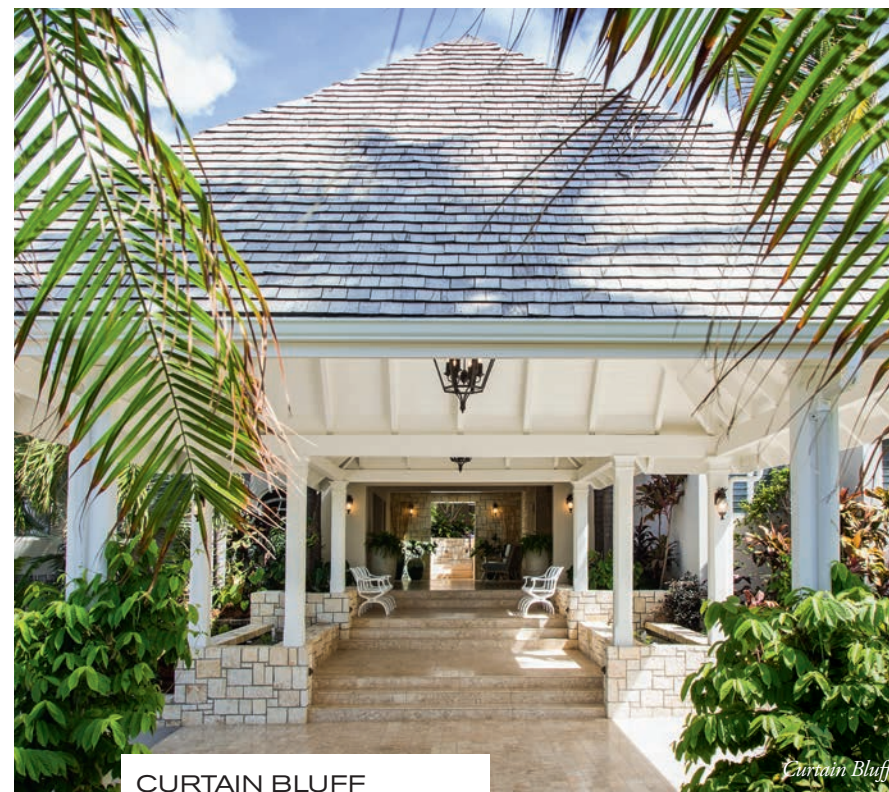


Capella Lodge

LEKKERWATER BEACH LODGE

De Hoop Nature Reserve, South Africa

This is one of the most exciting new beach resorts to open this year. Once home to President Frederik Willem de Klerk, who chose this spot on the Western Cape as his Camp David, a place where he could plan his vision for South Africa undisturbed. The sleek seven-room Lekkerwater Beach Lodge might have replaced de Klerk's historic house, but its magnificent natural surroundings remain unchanged. The Indian Ocean is right on your doorstep, its gentle lapping lulling you to sleep. When you wake in the morning, you only have to step out onto your private wooden deck to see large pods of dolphins surfing the waves or southern right whales coming in to calve in the shallower waters. The luxuriously simple rooms, all lining the sea-facing cliff, are a melange of glass and driftwood, with nautical-inspired interiors of ocean blues and soft greys and bathrooms kitted out with Africology soaps. Food, served on long communal tables beside the deck (where binoculars are at the ready for some mid-meal wildlife watching), could be smoked snoek fish cakes, paired with a crisp Whale Pod Sauvignon Blanc. And the best thing? You could leave on the night flight to Cape Town and be here, in this paradise, in time for lunch. *Red Savannah (redsavannah.com) offers seven nights from £2,480, including flights and transfers.*



Curtain Bluff

CURTAIN BLUFF

Antigua, Caribbean

This is a do-nothing paradise. Days drift by as you float in the sapphire sea, gazing back at the lush green hills rising above a pristine beach, or laze on a daybed by the finest sugary sands at this much-loved glamorous all-inclusive bolthole – it is exactly the sort of hotel you dream about in the dog days of February. Curtain Bluff is charming and unfussy, the guest rooms are spacious, with lots of wicker and rattan furniture, enormous bathtubs and absolutely no TVs, ensuring that you really do switch off. The place is run with sunny enthusiasm and relaxed bonhomie, and the charming staff constantly spoil guests with homemade cookies and banana bread. Their mission is to keep you in a state of utmost relaxation, with a refreshing facial at the dreamy spa or a frozen cocktail at the Bay Beach bar. The food is fabulous: specialities include just-pulled-from-the-sea fish at weekly barbecue lunches, or mahi-mahi with gnocchi and black pineapple soup for dinner. You'll drift away each night to the sound of the sea's gentle roar. *Carrier (carrier.co.uk) offers seven nights from £6,060, including flights and transfers.*

PHOTOGRAPH: NATURAL SELECTION

PHOTOGRAPH: DANIEL PINHEIRO



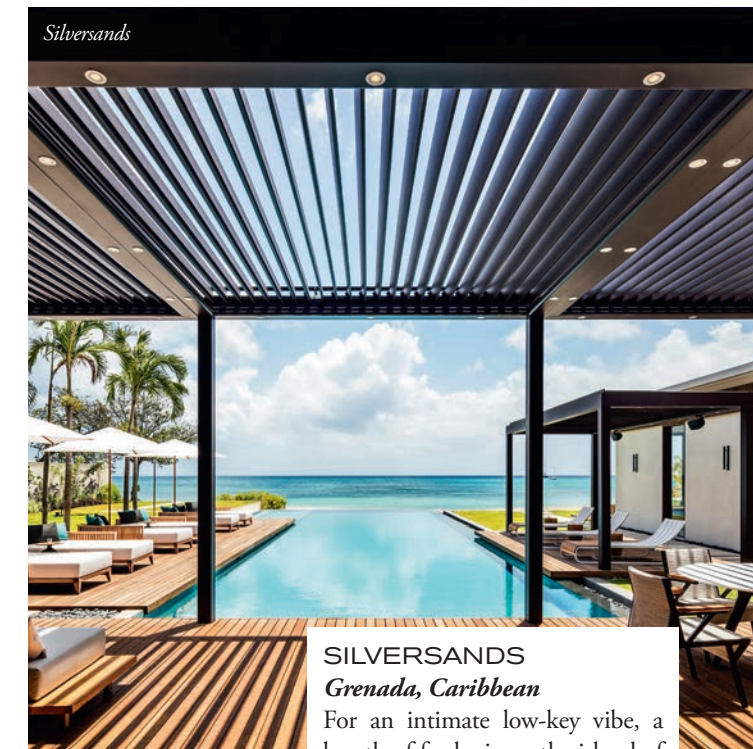
Fasano Angra Dos Reis

FASANO ANGRA DOS REIS

Angra dos Reis, Brazil

With a different jungle-covered island for every day of the year, more than 2,000 white beaches and protected waters, the vast bay of Angra dos Reis is the favourite weekend escape of Brazil's boated and helicoptered elite. Half of Rio's beautiful people and São Paulo's smart set keep their own villas here, but now this tropical Hamptons has its first ever upscale resort – and boy, is it a stunner. Owned by the Italian-Brazilian Fasano family (the country's most fashionable urban hoteliers), it is big, but effortlessly stylish. Wooden screens soften sharp lines of concrete and glass outside, while the calm pale interiors and Brazilian

modernist furniture are to die for. Expansive rooms boast sea-facing balconies, deep bath tubs and rain showers. Thrill at the zing of scallop ceviche at Crudo restaurant, try a healing ritual in the fragrant spa, or while away days beside the rooftop pool, watermelon caipirinha in hand. But, whatever you do, don't miss the main attraction: island-hopping – jump in a speedboat and in no time you'll be picnicking on deserted beaches, snorkelling over rainbow reefs, or hiking into the jungle to cool off beneath crystalline waterfalls. *Journey Latin America (journeylatinamerica.co.uk) offers three nights as part of a 10-day itinerary from £3,585, including excursions, flights and transfers.*



Silversands

SILVERSANDS

Grenada, Caribbean

For an intimate low-key vibe, a breath of fresh air on the island of Grenada, Silversands has perfected a grown-up, upbeat and modern clubhouse aura. Forget the ubiquitous Caribbean aesthetic of teak wood and shuttered windows – this is stripped back simplicity and sophistication in equal measure. In sexy, low-slung buildings, the 43 suites and the penthouse overlook the best stretch of Grand Anse beach, where the clear blue sea and sky seamlessly merge. So as not to distract from the gorgeous views, the rooms have a zen-like elegance, complete with sweeping terraces made for curling up with a book. To really maximise the view of that twinkling, sun-soaked ocean, insist on booking a super-sleek beach-side villa with private pool. The courtyard spa, flanked by Turkish baths, treatment rooms and saunas, is guaranteed to leave you feeling revitalised and ready to sample the famous bang bang shrimp and local seafood at Asiatique, to swim in the Caribbean's longest pool or simply to sink into an oversized sunbed with a slice of homemade truffle pizza. Fresh and unexpected, this is Grenada with a clear-cut twist. *Inspiring Travel Company (inspiringtravelcompany.co.uk) offers seven nights from £3,469, including flights and transfers.*

101 HOTELS

BEACH PARADISES

ROÇA BELO MONTE

Príncipe Island, São Tomé & Príncipe

At the geographical centre of the world, in the Gulf of Guinea (the closest landmass to the Equator), the tiny island of Príncipe is a lush, forgotten paradise. The newly restored Belo Monte, a former cocoa plantation house dating back to 1922, perches high over the mist-cloaked jungle canopy within walking distance of the island's most perfect beach. The stroll down to the sea is like walking into a benign story-book jungle: scented pink begonia blossom flutters down like confetti; coconuts tumble with a thud; fat drops of water plop from glossy jungle fronds after a short downpour; semi-wild piglets snuffle in the undergrowth; and capuchin monkeys, babies in tow, swing high up in the canopy. After a 20-minute stroll you reach Banana Beach: a creamy crescent of soft sand, lapped by safe warm turquoise surf and book-ended by granite boulders like giant Gormley sculptures. This fantasy deserted beach comes with a handful of charming staff to catch and grill fish and shimmy up palms for coconuts that are punctured and handed to you for a thirst-quenching drink straight from heaven. *Rainbow Tours* (rainbowtours.co.uk) offers a trip to Roça Belo Monte Príncipe Island from £285 per night.



Roça Belo Monte



Kumu Beach

At Banana Beach, charming Belo Monte staff catch and grill fish and shimmy up palms for coconuts

KUMU BEACH

Balapitiya, Sri Lanka

Kumu Beach is a seafront hotel with soul on the west coast of Sri Lanka, encapsulating the style and spirit of a world that existed before package tourism discovered the Island of Serendipity. The main house sits above a secluded bay, onto which the surf breaks noisily and into which the sun melts every evening. You are but a short stroll away from a turtle-nesting beach and a quick drive from Sri Lanka's largest reclining Buddha at Galagoda. Without a hint of gimmickry or any sense of trying too hard, Kumu Beach is an ideal place to decompress. Its charming colonial-style bedrooms come with blue and white giant ginger jars, four-poster beds and balcony views over the ocean (the vista is even more impressive from the garden hammocks). The food – think fresh lobster and mango ice cream for dessert – is delicious. Kumu Beach is a fabulous addition to the portfolio of small, characterful Teardrop Hotels established in sensational locations by the Bryanston School alumni trio of Michael Davies, Charlie Austin and Henry Fitch, along with Sri Lankan Viraj Premasinghe. This is their first beach-front jewel, and perhaps the best one yet. *Wix Squared* (wixsquared.com) offers three nights as part of a seven-night trip from £2,200, including flights.