


SECTION 6 06.09.2015 THE SUNDAY TIMES

# TRAVEL

## THE TROPICAL ISSUE



Feel the heat with our complete guide to sunshine holidays this winter

### SCHOOL RUN



Scott Dunn  
ANYTHING ELSE IS JUST A HOLIDAY



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Unless stated, prices are for seven nights, B&B, including flights and transfers

**21 BAREFOOT ATOLL, THE MALDIVES**  
X 13H15M 129 \* 9

It's tempting to take an atoll and turn it into a stilted outpost of urban chic, with underwater spas, wine cellars and Hoxton-style fish'n'chip shops. Cocoa Island prefers a simpler approach, selling the purest form of desert-island idyll in the Maldives. It has just 33 suites, all above the sea, a tiny beachside spa, a bar and a restaurant. Activities include free yoga classes, fishing, swimming and sleeping, and the only celeb you'll meet is Abdullah, the one-legged heron.

● From £3,499pp; 01244 355370, itluxurytravel.co.uk

**22 A-LIST BAJA, MEXICO**  
X 20H 126 \* 10

The Mexican resort of Cabo San Lucas is a two-hour flight from Los Angeles, which explains why this glamorous town on the tip of the Baja peninsula is crawling with celebrities. The A-list favours Esperanza, the epitome of luxury, which has hosted DiCaprio, Aniston, Pitt, McCartney and Obama. Come for the views of the Sea of Cortez, the ultra-luxurious garden casitas, the Hollywood-on-holiday vibe of the resort and the lime-drenched sea bass ceviche – and don't worry about paparazzi. Discreet but effective security guarantees your privacy.

● From £4,900pp for 10 nights, including two at the Beverly Wilshire, in LA; 0161 492 1356, carrier.co.uk

**23 AWESOME ARCHIPELAGO, MOZAMBIQUE**  
X 14H50M 131 \* 7

The Bazaruto archipelago might be the most beautiful place you'll ever see: a master jeweller's *chef-d'oeuvre* of sapphire, emerald and white gold, hidden away 400 miles north of Maputo. Bengueria is the second largest of the four islands, a semi-wilderness of wild cashew, orange trees and unbroken beaches. Bengueria Lodge is the oldest on the island, and it reopened in June after a refurb, with 13 beachfront *casinhas* and cabanas with private pools. Game-fishing, diving, snorkelling, kayaking and loafing are on offer, and if you're lucky, you'll spot one of the resident dugongs – the last remaining population in Africa.

● From £3,085pp for eight nights, all-inclusive; 020 8150 7216, aardvarksafaris.co.uk

**24 CHIC CARIBBEAN, ANGUILLA**  
X 11H45M 128 \* 8

The best island in the Caribbean is the irritatingly hard to reach Anguilla, which rewards persistence with the region's finest beaches, tastiest barbecues, dreamiest beach bars and slurrpest rum punch. The Malliouhana, on a low cliff at Meads Bay, with the biggest wine cellar in the region, an enormous spa and silver-service dining, was the island's *grande dame*, but she was closed due to the recession. Now, after a £32m refurb, she has been revived, and is being run by the people who run the celebtastic Esperanza, in Cabo San Lucas (see above). The ambience is as quietly sophisticated as it ever was: if your Caribbean fantasy includes classic cocktails, fabulous views, dressing up for dinner and a sense of exclusivity, this is the place.

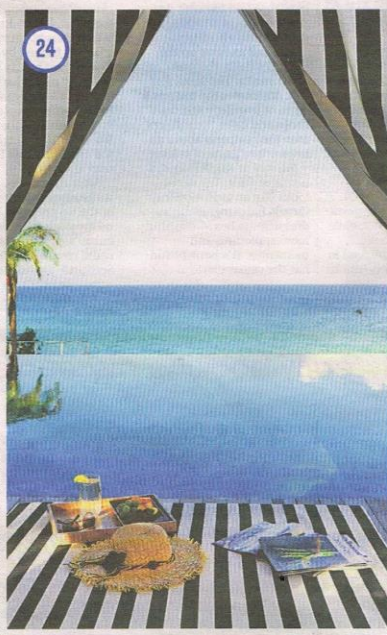
● From £3,240pp; 020 7666 1234, westernoriental.com



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# LUXURY

Splash out in style



I'd go back to... Sumba, Indonesia

The island's locals still fondly recall a time when they practised head-hunting. It's rare to find somewhere so raw these days, and borderline ridiculous that it should also be home to Nihlhwatu, one of the world's classiest barefoot-luxury resorts (nihlhwatu.com)

Susan d'Arcy



**25 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, FLORIDA**  
X 9H10M 123 \* 6

Ah, Florida: the winter playground of American snowbirds and British sunseekers alike – a plastic fantasy of theme parks, flamingos and art-deco hotels, where understatement is smothered beneath a gold-embroidered blanket of bling. Except Little Palm Island, three hours south of Miami by car. You get there from Little Torch Key on the Truman, a 35ft teak and leather vintage launch named after the former president, who was a frequent visitor when the island was a private fishing retreat, and that sets the tone for the stay. The adults-only resort has 30 villas and exudes a languid atmosphere. It has a small beach, a pool and a spa, but the best bit is the beachside fire pit, where Cubano-smoking guests gather for cocktails at sunset.

● From £3,295pp; 020 3582 4990, originaltravel.co.uk

**26 FIVE-STAR CAMBODIA**  
X 15H10M 131 \* 9

Just 10 minutes' drive south of Angkor Wat, Phum Baitang is the newest five-star hotel in Siem Reap. Opened last week by the award-winning hotelier Arnaud Zannier, it has 45 thatched and stilted villas – some with private pools – laid out like a village around the ancient farmhouse that serves as the restaurant, where you can pick your own ingredients and spices or, better still, let the experts make the selection for you. Three nights' B&B here is followed by four all-inclusive nights at the ultra-chic Song Saa Private Island resort. It's actually two private islands, joined by a footbridge, and acclaimed as much for its ecofriendliness



as for its beach barbecues, Khmer feasts, exotic cocktails and fiery sunsets.

● From £3,270pp; 0843 778 9661, steppestravel.com

**27 ROMANTIC THAILAND**  
X 11H15M 132 \* 8

Breakfast is served all day at the Sarojin, presupposing that loved-up guests will be spending longer than average in bed. When you finally emerge, you'll find yourself amid lily ponds in a garden of tranquillity at the midpoint of a mile and a bit of white sand. The hotel has 56 rooms with garden bathrooms and a big pool lined with highly sought-after four-poster day beds. If you need to leave, a free shuttle runs to Khao Lak.

● From £1,449pp, staying in a luxury Sarojin suite; 020 7001 4112, travelbag.co.uk

**28 DOMINICAN REPUBLIC DELUXE**  
X 8H50M 128 \* 6

The new branch of Aman is opening this autumn on Playa Grande, a