

FINANCIAL TIMES

# how to spend it

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**RED OVER HEELS**



# travelista

Wander woman Maria Shollenbarger fast-tracks international intelligence on where to be and what to see

→ It was more than two decades ago that the Euro-Kenyan Raguz family opened Breezes, a low-key beach and dive resort on **ZANZIBAR**'s hen-deserted Bwejuu beach. Three hotels and a much refined aesthetic later, the star of The Zanzibar Collection, as the Raguzes' portfolio is now called, is **Zawadi** ([www.thezanzibarcollection.com](http://www.thezanzibarcollection.com); from €500), a new nine-villa retreat. "Tasteful" is the word that springs to mind here, the decor eschewing the overt spice-trader references of poufs, ornate lanterns and swathes of metal and gilt in favour of white, white and more white – from the stone floors to the slip-covered sofas to the massive, liberally netted beds.

But Mswakini beach, along which the villas meander, might be what really seals the deal: all the dazzling turquoise purity of Bwejuu, and virtually none of the madding crowds.

→ Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in **UGANDA** is something of a ground zero for mountain-gorilla tracking. So it's welcome news that one of the more intrepid operators in southern and eastern Africa, **Natural World Safaris** ([www.naturalworldsafaris.com](http://www.naturalworldsafaris.com)), has brokered a unique experience for its clients: a full day (or more, for those willing and fit enough) spent with conservationists on habituation-research missions (from \$5,873 per person, excluding flights). This is not a cream-tea-and-sundowners iteration of safari

(think trekking and more trekking, followed by prolonged crouching and silence), but the payoff – intimate, protracted proximity to one of nature's great, and greatly endangered, animals – is an irreproducible wildlife encounter.

→ **SAUDI ARABIA** – the next frontier of experiential tourism? Not as improbable as it may sound, given the kingdom has announced it will imminently introduce a limited tourist visa scheme, the first time it has done so since 2010. Jonny Bealby of excellent outfitters **Wild Frontiers** ([www.wildfrontierstravel.com](http://www.wildfrontierstravel.com)) has his ideal itinerary (about £4,500 per person, excluding flights) already mapped in anticipation of the day, with provisional stops in Jeddah; the Sarawat, whose sere peaks shear the skies in a line from the Jordanian border all the way south into Yemen; and Mada'in Saleh, the rock city – Saudi Arabia's first Unesco World Heritage Site – created in the 1st century by the Nabateans (better known for the carved



Above: Mswakini beach in Zanzibar, alongside which Zawadi's nine villas sit. Below: Inside the Renzo Mongiardino-designed Villa Nalades in Portofino



Above: Natural World Safaris is now offering unique gorilla research experiences in Uganda





Above: Wild Frontiers is planning trips to the 1st-century rock city of Mada'in Saleh, Saudi Arabia. Below: the reserve at Nekupe, Nicaragua, with Mombacho Volcano in the distance

*memmohotels.com; from £220*) – opening next month in the tranquil neighbourhood of the same name, just north of Bairro Alto – will fit right in. Oak and steel furniture mingle with contemporary art in the rooms, many of which have capacious terraces; and, as at sister hotel Memmo Alfama, all guests have access to a knockout rooftop terrace, complete with sunken pool and alfresco bar.

→ The small coastal villages of Liguria and Campania in **ITALY** are ideal turf for private villa stays. Two come new to the market this summer courtesy of Cédric Reversade, co-founder/director of **Unique Properties & Events** ([www.uniquepropertiesandevents.com](http://www.uniquepropertiesandevents.com)). **Villa Naiades** (from €40,000 a week) in Portofino – which has the distinction of being one of the few Renzo Mongiardino-designed seaside villas not just in Italy but anywhere – radiates easy chic, from the amply furnished multiple grass terraces to the whimsical decor (think profusions of pretty embroidery and hand-painted tiles) to the sigh-provoking views across the port and the Castello Brown museum. Down by Sorrento, meanwhile, it's all about contemporary minimalism and sea's-edge vistas. **Villa Nimmo** (from €15,000 a week) isn't for the traditionalist; but if midcentury furniture, a blue-chip art collection with works by Man Ray and Anish Kapoor, and organic veg from the house garden (prepared by private chefs) sound like your thing, Reversade is your man.

→ **NICARAGUA** is a country that's taking pains to get it right on the tourism front: witness the \$250m sustainable resort initiative at Guacalito de la Isla, spearheaded by the billionaire businessman-philanthropist Carlos Pellas. Now his brother Alfredo

Pellas Jr has opened the far smaller but equally luxurious (and sustainably minded) **Nekupe Sporting Resort and Retreat** ([www.nekupe.com](http://www.nekupe.com); from \$990), an eight-room retreat – four stone-and-glass villas and one large four-bedroom residence – built into the native forest an hour's drive inland from the Pacific. Nekupe is calibrated above all for active but wholly sensitive participation in nature, with stables, hiking guides, clay-shooting excursions and naturalists who lead explorations of its 1,300 protected acres. ✦



Above: Villa Nimmo's terrace overlooking the sea near Sorrento

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