

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AUTHORITY

DECEMBER 2015

THE ART ISSUE

AT HOME WITH
TODAY'S TOP
COLLECTORS

8

ARTISTS TO
DISCOVER
NOW

PLUS:
YOUR
ULTIMATE
HOLIDAY
GIFT GUIDE

\$5.99US \$6.99FOR

12 >



03430 357076

NOW, VOYAGER

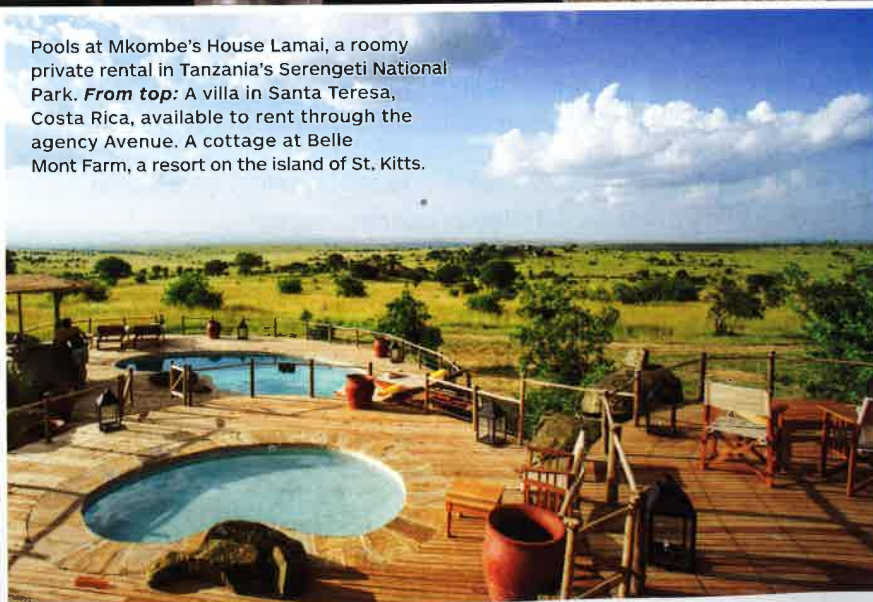
Smart vacations to book this winter, from Caribbean idylls to stylish safaris

As winter holidays approach, the search is on for somewhere magical to gather with family or to make a romantic getaway. Of course, this can be a tricky proposition given the pressures of the season, when occupancy rates run high. But there are plenty of strategies for finding a great escape: renting a private house with the amenities of a world-class hotel, booking an untested new property, or venturing to remote locales, for example. This time of year, taking the road less traveled often makes all the difference.

In the Caribbean it can pay to head away from the coast to more secluded inland havens. **Belle Mont Farm** (cottages from \$675/night; bellemontfarm.com), a hillside retreat on the West Indian island of St. Kitts, highlights organic cuisine with its 400 acres of working farmland. On a visit this past spring, the elegant resort, designed by architect Bill Bensley, wasn't quite ready for travelers brought up on the St. Barts scene; only 27 of its 84 cottages had been completed. But the property's remaining accommodations opened November 1, along with a new restaurant, Arthur's, a sea-to-plate spot in a yellow-trimmed oceanside house a short bike ride away.

For a taste of low-key sophistication, consider Costa Rica's Santa Teresa, a Pacific-coast surfer's stretch frequented by A-listers like Gisele Bündchen and Gwyneth Paltrow. British rental agency **Avenue** (avenueproperty.com) is ahead of the pack with 18 roomy villas (from \$400/night) that mix local charm and cosmopolitan comfort. A more upscale beachfront stay awaits at the Dominican Republic's **Amanera** (villas from \$850/night; aman.com), debuting in November. Tucked along 60-foot-high cliffs, it sits between the rain forest and the pristine mile-long Playa Grande. →

Pools at Mkombe's House Lamai, a roomy private rental in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park. **From top:** A villa in Santa Teresa, Costa Rica, available to rent through the agency Avenue. A cottage at Belle Mont Farm, a resort on the island of St. Kitts.



TRAVELS



Farther afield, on the Indonesian island of Sumba, is the sprawling **Nihiwatu** resort (villas from \$950/night; nihiwatu.com), defined by its spectacular sea views. Previously a simple surf lodge, the property was acquired three years ago by retail entrepreneur Christopher Burch and a business partner, who spent \$35 million transforming it into a 33-villa compound committed to sustainability and understated luxe. The centerpiece is Burch's own residence, **Raja Mendaka**, a five-suite thatched-roof fiefdom (\$12,000/night) stunningly perched above Occy's Left, a break surfed by adventurous souls from pop star Pink to members of the family behind the Hermès brand. "I can sit here for hours and listen to the waves hit," Burch says. "The blue water, the long beach, a massage in the open air—it puts the rest of my life on hold."

It's also easy to lose track of time in the meditative environment of East Africa. Savvy globe-trotters are complementing their safaris with a stay on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar, a 20-minute flight from Dar es Salaam. New this season is a private beach rental called **Qambani** (from \$5,820/night, minimum of three nights; qambani.com),



with six cottages that together accommodate up to 16 people. Here, Indian Ocean breezes, marlin sashimi, and soporific afternoons in hammocks are the order of the day. Contact insider travel specialist Will Jones at **Journeys by Design** (journeysbydesign.com) to ensure a soft landing.

In Africa, renting private houses, as opposed to booking lodges, is a relatively new phenomenon. Leading the way is **Mkombe's House Lamai** (from \$655 per person/night, minimum of four people; nomad-tanzania.com), a spacious villa in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park. Its unbeatable location on the Kogakuria Kopje outcrop affords endless vistas of the remote Lamai Wedge area, home to cheetahs, lions, and antelope.

Another safari standout is **Richard's River Camp** (from \$715 per person/night; richardscamp.com), in Kenya's Masai

Clockwise from top left: A tent at Richard's River Camp in Kenya's Masai Mara game reserve. The cliff-top Amanera, an Aman property in the Dominican Republic. Raja Mendaka, entrepreneur Christopher Burch's villa at the Nihiwatu resort in Indonesia.

Mara game reserve. Run by third-generation safari guide Richard Roberts, it's an effortlessly chic outpost of tents furnished with Moroccan rugs and Indian block-print linens. In February and March the camp has a close-range view of the Loita wildebeest migration, and this season Roberts has begun involving guests in his Mara Elephant Project. In return for a donation, visitors can tour the park's headquarters and, if timing works, join an expedition to collar local herds with satellite tracking systems. "We expose some of the most privileged travelers to a world beyond the infinity pool," Roberts says. "The experience is life-changing." —SOPHY ROBERTS